

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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## Editorial Apology

*Some might have wondered about “The Way of Cain” last month, that it seemed repetitive. Indeed it was — an old version repeated. So the issue this month has the same title as the one last month, but is the start of the concluding section of the study.*

*I must apologize to Bro. Matthew and all so unfortunately confused by this error!*

## Requests for Articles

*I am always receptive for new articles, especially in two categories:*

*1) Stand alone “reflections” on episodes in a life, or any other type of thought, that have relevance to our discipleship. They can be of any length, form a few hundred words to a few thousand.*

*2) Topics that might be a series, or a stand-alone topic, in areas that I personally would like to see covered:*

*(a) Topics plucked from today’s hot button social issues (you know what I mean!)*

*(b) Major thoughts on minor characters*

*(c) Does God preserve Christadelphians?*

*(d) The other commandments of Christ (Foot washing, Holy Kiss etc.)*

## Editorial

### The End of the World

*“Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven” (Luke 21:10-11).*

*“lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding,” (Psa 148:8).*

#### One winter’s morn

I immigrated to Rhode Island, and the first few winters did not live up in any way to the pictures of a New England winter I had expected. In fact, many said to me “they don’t have winters like we used to”. Then, one morning, my wife and I woke up, after enduring a difficult, snowy commute home, to a true winter wonderland. All outside was totally white and howling: the storm-blown snow had drifted up to totally block all the doors into the house, so we could not have gone out, even as the near hurricane force winds continued the pile the snow up as the blizzard continued. So, quite naturally, we went back to bed. Before it finished, the storm had dumped well over three feet of level snow, although the snow was far from level. And it was almost a week before we went back to work.

So I experienced the first of my “hundred year” snow storms, but not the last. A few years later we were told we were experiencing the “blizzard of the Century” (not in my mind, I must admit), and we continue to experience extreme weather events, from “Polar Vortexes” to extreme droughts, earthquakes, tsunamis, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions.

It is not surprising that we are experiencing frequent reports of catastrophic “natural” disasters, or that these dominate the news. They make good television, and it is natural for many of us to gobble up such news: after all, another’s problems let us feel happier in our circumstances. In addition:

- The news of such events can flash around the world at the speed of the internet.
- People are increasingly moving into areas subject to the effects of nature, whether to the coasts where hurricanes and storms occur, to the flood plains of rivers, or to fire-prone forests.
- There seems little doubt that humans by their exploitation of fossil fuels are contributing to an increase in global temperature, which have at least some influence in the frequency and intensity of hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and droughts.

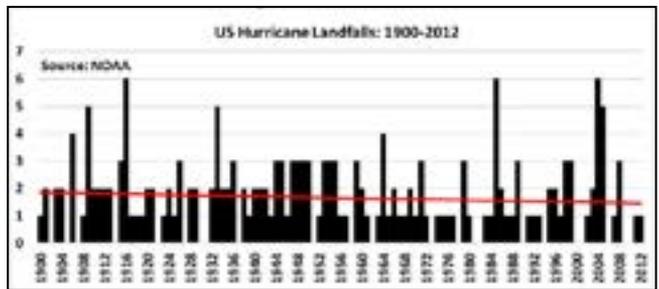
#### Our preaching

We need to take careful stock of what we preach, and the basis of our appeal. As many of our Bible talks reveal, we believe there are many signs in the world

around us indicating that we are living in the Last Days. We point to all the factors of increasing population, environmental mismanagement, volatility in the commercial world, and the stockpiling of nuclear weapons, in order to show our friends they cannot assume that “*all things (will) continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*” (2Pet 3:4). We also speak about the approaching day of Armageddon, and of the kingdom conditions only being introduced after the Lord Jesus has destroyed those who rise up against his leadership.

We also, on occasion, talk about the weather induced catastrophes around us as evidence of the soon coming return of Christ, and refer to the latest earthquake, or the latest famine in Africa, and say they are only a small portent of what lies ahead. We sometimes quote the economists who prophecy an economic collapse as imminent, and again play on our fears of such a collapse, as occurred in the 1930’s and to a lesser extent a few years ago.

But these arguments are in fact quite hard to make. I heard comments about Hurricane Sandy being a sign of the impending catastrophes we can expect, when in 2012 it devastated the New York area. Although it was extremely costly (the second most costly hurricane in the USA), its strength was only a class 1. Its impact was due almost entirely to the place where it struck. In fact, for at least the last 100 years hurricane impacts on the USA have been decreasing.



### The example of the Bible

Following the apostle’s lead in Heb 4:9, where he shows that “*There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God*”, we have always seen the account of God resting on the seventh day of His creation as involving a prophecy of a millennial rest for His people. Six thousand years of man’s dominion on earth are to be followed by a thousand years during which the earth will be subdued and God’s dominion will spread “*from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth*” (Psa 72:8; Zech 9:10).

But if this was all our message, we would not be preaching a full gospel. There must have been many occasions in the lifetime of the Apostle Paul, when it would have been easier or safer for him to refrain from preaching certain aspects of the Lord’s teaching. Yet he was able to say to the elders of the Ephesian ecclesia, “*I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*” (Acts 20:27).

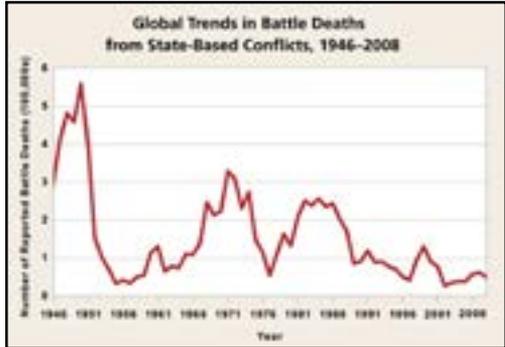
We must be no different, whatever difficulties may be caused as a consequence. Doubtless it would have been much easier for Noah not to warn of the impending

destruction coming on the world, but it was his response to the message he had received from God, and he undertook the work faithfully despite scorn, rebuke and apathy.

I sometimes wonder whether we are following the example of some of the cults around us, who rely on fear to encourage converts to their cause: fear of what lies ahead. We should not be surprised by these things, for the Lord Jesus prophesied about the time of his return to the earth as an age when *“Men’s hearts fail them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth”* (Luke 21:26).

We often cite *“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet”* (Matt 24:6). We might indeed hear of wars every day, but in fact the world is now more peaceful than any time in at least the last 50 years, since the end of WW2.

However, the truth of the Scriptures is not based on, and nor does it rely upon fear for its appeal. As we proclaim in our Statement of Faith, during the thousand years:



*“sin and death will continue among the earth’s inhabitants, though in a much milder degree than now ... The mission of the kingdom will be to subdue all enemies, and finally death itself, by opening up the way of life to the nations, which they will enter by faith, during the thousand years, and (in reality) at their close”* (Clauses 26, 28).

There is no talk here of the complete destruction of the rest of the world’s inhabitants in an Armageddon battle at the end of the age, but of a process whereby the longsuffering of God will be revealed again as it was in the days of Noah (1Pet 3:20). Noah preached for about 100 years while building the ark, but this was after God had made the decision to destroy man and all other earth-born creatures.

If we wish to preach the whole counsel of God, then we have to preach about His patience, and His desire that all should come to repentance — as well as making it clear that He will not allow those who knowingly oppose His will to continue their wicked ways for ever. Our preaching should not be based on fear, whether it be of wars and rumors of wars, or great signs from heavens. God has used weather and earthquakes to fulfill his purpose in the past: but it seems certain that the coming of the Lord will be unexpected even to those watching for his return, as we should be always. The setting of dates, however carefully circumscribed they may be, only tends to make us relax until the date arrives, then disappointed when it passes.

*“Even so, come Lord Jesus”* (Rev 22:20).

Peter Hemingray

## Exhortation

### It is the Way the Record is Written

Enoch, Moses, and Elijah all have something in common. Their life stories end in curious ways. Enoch is translated that he should not see death (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5). His story ends like this and it mystifies us.<sup>1</sup> Moses dies in full vigor on Mount Nebo after viewing the promised land, and no man knows where he is buried (Deut 34:1-7). The unusual details surrounding his death stir our curiosity. And Elijah is swept up to heaven as he walks and talks with Elisha (2Kgs 2:11). His story also mystifies us; it is literally left in mid-air! Every one of these stories is open-ended. Every one of them calls for completion. It is the way the record is written.

Enoch, Moses, and Elijah all have something else in common. Their stories find some sort of resolution on the mount of transfiguration. So, in fact, do the stories of all faithful men and women. But we will come to this later.

#### **In the New Testament, also**

The New Testament is not without similar curious stories. Philip the evangelist is caught away by the Spirit after preaching Christ to the eunuch from Ethiopia. The eunuch sees this and goes on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:39). The apostle Paul is caught up to the third heaven — into paradise — and sees and hears glorious things that defy human description (2Cor 12:1-4).<sup>2</sup> And, in due time, we will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, a prospect that Paul says should comfort us (1Thess 4:16-18). In all of these cases life goes on.

It is worth thinking about these Biblical stories under one overarching theme. They are all “hereafter events”. They all involve faithful people. They are all miraculous. And they all hold promise for the future. They all tell us something about the things that God has in store for those who love him.

It is certainly no accident that God has provided at least one of these “hereafter events” in every age of man’s frailty. Enoch lived before the Flood; Moses in the earliest days of Israel’s history; Elijah during the dark days of Israel’s decline. Their experiences prompted hope in something better beyond this life. And when we come to the New Testament, hope finds fulfillment in the transfigured Lord Jesus Christ. It is the way the record is written.

#### **Enoch**

*“And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him” (Gen 5:21-24).*

The Letter to the Hebrews adds this:

*“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb 11:5-6).*

The story of Enoch is unique in the Old Testament, with the exception, of course, of Elijah’s experience in 2Kgs 2. The idea of his translation challenges us for explanation, as witnessed by the strange things that have been written about it over the years.

We get caught up, and we allow ourselves to get distracted, by the question of what happened to Enoch. The fact is that we are not told. So let it be said that we will be on solid ground, and remain on solid ground, if we avoid explanations that circumvent the fundamental Biblical principle of sin and death. In other words, it is axiomatic that all men die, without exception.

But having said this, the Biblical account of Enoch is deliberately framed to show us a man who lives and whose death is not recorded. It is the way the record is written.

And what kind of man is this? It is the man who comes to God and walks with God. It is the man who believes that God is and that he rewards those who diligently seek him. It is the man who pleases God. Enoch was this kind of man, and God gave him a unique foretaste of the reward. In a miraculous way, under circumstances that are only hinted at in the early chapters of Genesis, God gave Enoch life instead of death.

In 1870, the year before his own death, Bro. John Thomas wrote some wonderfully perceptive words about the translation of Enoch:<sup>3</sup>

*“Such was the religion of the righteous among the Antediluvians. They were faithful and obedient; and, as the earnest of what awaited them in the fullness of time, ‘Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God.’ Thus they were taught that the corruptible body should put on incorruption, and this mortal should put on immortality, and so ‘death should be swallowed up in victory.’”<sup>24</sup>*

Enoch was God’s archetype of the redeemed for a world that desperately needed redemption. His miraculous deliverance gave hope to those who were hanging on by faith.

## **Moses**

The unique experiences of Moses began long before his death. It is he who wrote about Enoch. It is he who wrote the word that was in the beginning, declaring God’s purpose to create men and women who would be with him and be like him:

*“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion ... over all the earth” (Gen 1:26).*

Almost certainly Moses understood that it was God’s purpose to show his glory

in a body of redeemed men and women. And Moses became God's archetype of the man of glory.

- God commanded Moses to draw near to him: *“Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him” (Exod 34:4).*
- And God drew near to Moses: *“And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD” Exod 34:5).*

There is resurrection language in the ascent of Moses, and there is advent language in the descent of God. It is the way the record is written.

And there was glory for the man who met with God: *“And it came to pass, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai ... that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him” (Exod).*

The glory that beamed from the face of Moses was temporary, as we know. None of the Old Testament archetypes — Enoch, Moses, or Elijah — experienced anything permanent. The enduring glory remains for the age to come. But Israel had a glimpse of the glory in Moses.

In due time, God commanded Moses to ascend another mountain: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou shalt be gathered unto thy people” (Numb 27:12-13).*

The fuller record is to be found at the end of Deuteronomy:

*“And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar. And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Deut 34:1-7).*

The story calls for completion. Moses was allowed to see the Promised Land but was not allowed to enter it. God is not unkind! He does not toy with His children and then toss them away! He gave Moses a glimpse of things to come: a “not now, but hereafter” lesson for him and for every faithful man and woman who reads what is written in the record.

And why tell us that Moses still had the vigor of manhood when he died? Is it not to make us understand that God interrupted the life of this faithful man when so much more could have followed? And is there not much more to follow, beyond

this life? God will renew the strength of Moses; this faithful man will mount up with wings as an eagle; he will run again and never be weary; he will walk again and never faint!

God alone knows where Moses is buried. That is all that matters for any faithful man or woman. It holds the promise of resurrection from the dead.

## **Elijah**

We turn the clock forward 700 years: *“And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal”* (2Kgs 2:1).

The story continues by telling us that Elijah and Elisha went from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho to the Jordan. It was a journey that took them back to Moab where Moses died. *“And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground”* (2Kgs 2:8).

The entire story calls for comparison with Deut 34 and the early chapters of Joshua. Elijah and Elisha were leaving the land that Moses had seen and Israel had entered under Joshua. In the process they made another “not now” statement. To leave the land of promise is to say that the kingdom is still future; the land that God will give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their seed, is an inheritance still to come.

Yet, in this context, Elisha asked for an inheritance! *“And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me”* (2Kgs 2:9).

A double portion is the inheritance of the firstborn; and in this case not just any inheritance.<sup>5</sup> A gift of the Spirit portends the inheritance of life. Elisha received a token of eternal life to come.

And then it happened: another “hereafter event” that held promise for the future: *“And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven”* (2Kgs 2:10-11).

The LORD came and took Elijah *to heaven*.

A point is worth inserting here. We often think of Moses as the representative of the Law and Elijah as the representative of the Prophets. But when it comes to the “hereafter events” of the Old Testament, Moses represents those who have died, and Elijah represents those who are alive:

*“And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that ... Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”*

What happened to Elijah? To be sure, he was simply but miraculously caught up *into the air*, into the enfolding whirlwind. The Hebrew word for *heaven* is also

the word for *air* in the Old Testament.<sup>6</sup> That this is the way to understand Elijah's experience is corroborated by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament:

*“For the Lord himself shall descend **from heaven** with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: <sup>17</sup> Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord **in the air**: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:16-17).*

The parallels with Elijah's experience are obvious. And in vs. 17 Paul uses a word that means *air*. It is not the customary New Testament word for *heaven*.<sup>7</sup>

Yet for all of this, *heaven* is perhaps the way to understand 2Kgs 2:1! The taking away of Elijah was an earnest of heavenly things to come. It pointed forward to the time, still future, when Elijah, and Elisha, and the prophets who looked on from afar, and we who also look on from afar, will be caught up together into the presence of God. Elijah's experience pointed forward to the time when heaven will come to earth. The Lord will descend and we will ascend, and faithful men will meet with God.

Where is Elijah now? The simple fact is that we are not told. It is worth repeating that we are on solid ground — and will remain on solid ground — if we avoid explanations that circumvent the fundamental Biblical principle of sin and death. In other words, it is axiomatic that all men die, without exception.

If we want the resolution of Elijah's story, then we need to accept the resolution that God provides and not speculate about things he doesn't tell us. The story of Elijah, along with the stories of Enoch and Moses, find their resolution in the New Testament, in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the way the record is written.

### **The transfiguration**

We turn the clock forward another 700 years.

*“But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:27).*

The way Jesus announces this to his faithful friends and the transfiguration that follows invite comparison with Enoch's experience:

*“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him” (Heb 11:5).*

This is not to say that *translation* and *transfiguration* are the same thing. Yet, like transfiguration, the translation of a man that he should not see death is a kingdom of God experience! When faithful Enoch is found again, he will be in the kingdom of God. He will be found in divine glory, forever beyond the reach of death. This is the resolution of his story.

And it is the resolution of Moses's and Elijah's stories as well:

*“And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed,*

*the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were **Moses and Elijah: Who appeared in glory**, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:28-31).*

The life stories of *all men and women* are incomplete until they connect themselves with the decease — the exodus from sin and death — that Jesus had to accomplish at Jerusalem. Everything turns on this, and now it is done.

The mount of transfiguration assures us that glory with Jesus on earth will follow. This is the kingdom of God in which Enoch will be found alive. It is the Promised Land that Moses will inherit when God raises him from the dead. It is the heaven where Elijah will also be found, in the presence of God. It is where we will ever be with the Lord.

This is the resolution of every faithful life that has been lived since the earliest days of man’s frailty. Therefore comfort one another with these words:

*“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4).*

*Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)*

**Notes:**

1. See Matthew Harrison, “The Way of Cain, (8) Enoch Versus Lamech”, *The Tidings*, May 2014, pp.167-173, for a helpful consideration of this subject.
2. Jesus equates paradise with his coming kingdom in Luke 23:42-43.
3. [Editor] Dr. Thomas wrote in *Elpis Israel* (p. 43., Logos Edition): “Jesus was changed to εἰς πνεῦμα into a spirit, and was therefore enabled to pass through it to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. Enoch, Elijah, and Moses, are also cases to the point.” Most would, however, disagree with him.
4. Dr. Thomas, “Immortality, Heaven And Hell, Section IX, The Tree of Life,” *The Christadelphian*, 1870, p.199. Emphasis added.
5. Deut 21:17.
6. H8064, *shaw-mah*, is translated *heaven* 398 times and *air* 21 times in the Old Testament (KJV).
7. In 1Thess 4:16, the word for *heaven* in G3772, *ouranos*; in 1Thess 4:17, the word for *air* is G109, *aer*.

---

*Leaving the presence of the Lord,  
Upon the sacred hill,  
On Moses’ face in splendor poured,  
The glory lingered still.  
Rapt in the vision of the place,  
The leader passes on,  
The light of God upon his face,  
Unwitting that it shone.  
So in communion with God,  
Touched with the light divine,  
His saints on heavenly heights have trod,  
Nor know how bright they shine. (C. A. Ladson)*

# First Principles

## God and His Son (4) Christ, A Created Person

### The pre-existence of Christ

An important part of the false Doctrine of the Trinity is the idea of the “pre-existence of Christ”. This teaches that Christ existed in Heaven with God the Father, and was sent to earth by God as His Son to become the Savior of mankind. If this is so, then Christ existed before or previous to the time that he was born of Mary. We have discussed this doctrine briefly in the last article, in connection with the Sonship of Christ.

This is a subject in which it is possible to be saying similar things in different words. So let us remind ourselves of the charge to “*avoid disputing about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers*” (2 Tim 2:14). We will try to use Biblical terms and words as much as possible. Also, let us acknowledge that the birth of the Son of God is a unique event, outside ordinary human experience. Therefore there are bound to be things about this event which are difficult or impossible for our limited human minds to understand. To put it another way, Jesus is the only Son of God. There is no other. So again, we cannot fully understand what it was like for him and how he did what he did. However, the Bible is a message given by God for us to understand. So let us try to see what it is saying to us, and neither add to it, or subtract from it.

### He came in the flesh

We are commanded to acknowledge the coming of Jesus in the flesh as a Son (1John 2:22; 4:2,3; 2John 7). His flesh was made the same as ours for a purpose. That purpose was so that he could, through his death, destroy the power of sin and death. Therefore “*he himself likewise partook of the same*” nature as men and women, flesh and blood (Heb 2:14). Now Jesus was one person; he was not partly Son of God, and partly Son of Man; he was both at once in one person, just as we are a child of both our father and our mother. He came in the flesh as Son of God as well as Son of Man. We cannot say that some things about him are due to his flesh and some other things are due to some other part of him. He was the Word made flesh. All of God’s plan was being carried forward in him.

Jesus was conceived in Mary’s womb by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:31-35). From that point on, we are not informed of anything unusual about her bearing of him or of his early development except, “*And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him*” (Luke 2:40). The fact that he never sinned, even as a child, indicates the wisdom (wise tendencies) referred to in the quotation, was what he had as Son of God. On the other hand, the text doesn’t go beyond this. A child who was quick to learn, and a good person is described.

## **Able to be tempted**

Having come in the same flesh<sup>1</sup> as we have, he was tempted (Heb 2:17-18; Matt 4:1-11) like we are and could have sinned. If it wasn't possible for him to sin, he couldn't be tempted and he wasn't in the flesh. And he couldn't have gained the sympathy and understanding which he has for us and our temptations, if he wasn't really in the flesh. James tells us that, "*God cannot be tempted*" (James 1:13). Comparing Scripture with Scripture in this way shows immediately that Christ was not God because Christ was tempted.

But Jesus **was** in the flesh and there were other things for him to experience besides temptation. Like an ordinary human child, one of his most important activities was to learn; increase in knowledge (John 5:19- 20; Luke 2:46), increase in wisdom (Luke 2:52) and learn about life and how to cope with it and still be completely obedient to his Father. "*Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered*" (Heb. 5:8). So, on the one hand, we see his childhood as almost within the scope of an exceptionally bright and obedient child of ordinary human parents (but beyond it in that he never sinned). On the other hand, he had to learn obedience to his Father. Thus there was nothing about his childhood (or early life) that indicates or requires that he had "pre-existed".

And having to learn, especially having to learn obedience, is inconsistent with his having "pre-existed". There would be no meaningful connection between the Jesus Christ in the flesh, and a pre-existent Christ in Heaven if Jesus Christ in the flesh had no awareness or memory of a pre-existent Christ in Heaven and didn't remember anything about a previous existence. If he did have awareness and remembrance of a previous eternal existence, then there could be no need for learning anything, especially obedience. Heb 5:9 tells us that Jesus was perfected. In the Bible, this has the meaning of becoming complete. The things which Jesus learned made him complete in God's eyes. The things that he learned were not trivial. They were necessary in order for him to become our Savior.

## **Avoid man's reasoning**

Jesus was in the mind of God before the creation. He was the Son of God. These things are what are revealed in the Scriptures. Was there some further way in which he was influenced because he was the Anointed Savior sent by God? Is there some way he was influenced which we are not told about in the Scriptures? Possibly, but we should base our beliefs on the Scriptures, not on speculation, not on the ideas, theories, and reasoning of men. We especially should avoid the influence of human philosophy, originally developed by pagans.

Those who think of Jesus as God come down to earth really do not give him credit for what he accomplished. God, who has all power and strength, would have no difficulty with temptation and no fear of death. Jesus, born a man of the same flesh as we, overcame temptation and all the weakness of the flesh, including the fear of death. He obeyed his Father's command to lay down his life for us even though he did not deserve to die, having never sinned. He is thus the greatest man who has ever lived, the Son of God.

To summarize, the facts that Jesus was subject to temptation, and that he had to learn, among other things, obedience, rule out the idea that he existed previous to his birth. These are just not the characteristics of a divine being who has already existed eternally. James spells out for us what we should realize for ourselves, “*God cannot be tempted*” (James 1:13).

### **Arguments for the doctrine**

Having considered some of the Scriptural problems with the idea of the “pre-existence” of Christ in this study and in the previous ones, let us now consider some of the Scripture used to support it, beginning with the Old Testament.

First, Gen 1:26. The fact that God said, “*Let us make man in our image*”, using plural pronouns, is thought by those who argue for the pre-existence to show that God and Christ worked side by side to create man. The Hebrew word translated God in the first five chapters of Genesis is always “*elohim*” or mighty ones (a plural word). “*Mighty ones*” is a good description of the angels: “*Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!*” (Psa 103:20 ESV). Thus it is reasonable to think of the above verse as referring to the association of the angels with the Father in the work of creation. Elohim is translated “*angels*” in Psa 8:5, at least in the KJV, “*For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels.*”. The writer of Hebrews quotes this passage and renders elohim as “*angels*” (Heb 2:7).

“*God*” in the Old Testament is usually from “*elohim*”, though not always. Now, it should go without saying, that the angels are **not** God. But, as we brought out when discussing the revealing of God in previous articles, many places in the Old Testament where God is spoken of, it is clearly angels speaking and acting for God. This was necessary because of God it is said “*no man has seen or can see [Him]*” (1Tim.6:16). So, it is quite reasonable to assume that plural pronouns are used in Gen 1:26 because the angels were involved in the creation. In light of the reasons to believe that Christ did not pre-exist, this view is the best interpretation of the passage.

We will discuss angels further in connection with the next passage, Gen 18:1 - 19:1. We are told that the LORD (Yahweh) appeared to Abraham, who saw three “*men*”. Later, two of them go on to Sodom, and we are told in 19:1 that they are angels. The LORD remains and talks with Abraham. Those who believe in “*pre-existence*” contend that the LORD is Christ. There is no basis for this in the Scripture itself, but let us think about the matter a little further by considering the Divine Name, Yahweh. This name was declared to Moses as recorded in Exodus 3. In vs. 2, we are told “*the angel of the LORD [Yahweh] appeared to him*”. Next, “*God called to him*”, and among other things, declared to him that the Name of God is Yahweh (vs 14, “*I Am Who I Am*”, or , “*I Will Be Who I Will Be*”).

### **Angel delivered message**

It is clear from Exod 23:20-23 and Acts 7:30-38 that the angel who appeared in the burning bush, Exod 3:2, also delivered the message (made the pronouncement, Exod 3: 6, 13-14). The angel spoke for God in the name of Yahweh. In Exod

23:20-23, Moses was told, “*my Name [Yahweh] is in him*” (the angel being sent “*before you*”). In Acts 7:35, Stephen tells us that God sent Moses “*as both ruler and deliverer by the hand of the angel that appeared to him in the bush.*” So the LORD who appeared to Moses *and to Abraham* **was an angel** representing or “manifesting” God. If it were Christ that appeared to them, Stephen would certainly have made that plain in his comment regarding the appearance to Moses.

The next passage sometimes used to support “pre-existence” is Dan 10:4-6, where the prophet has a vision of the appearance of a being who appeared very similar to the vision which the Apostle John had of Christ in Rev 1:12-16. The contention is that Christ appeared to Daniel, and that therefore he existed at the time. First, Daniel repeatedly says that this was a vision (vs. 7-8), weakening the assumption that this was some sort of literal appearance of Christ. Second, there are many connections between Daniel and Revelation. Many of the elements of the beasts in his visions in chapters 7 and 8 are used extensively in Revelation 12, 13, and 17. The prophecies in Revelation are more detailed versions of those in Daniel, or the giving of a later phase or recurrence of the same type of activity. Daniel was given revelations of the future, and this passage in chapter 10 is such a revelation. Moses and the Jews were also given revelations about Christ in the form of the Tabernacle, the Mercy Seat, the altars, and the sacrifices. These were also prophecies of Christ, as are many other parts of the Old Testament. There is thus a great variety of ways in which Christ was prophesied, and Daniel’s vision is one of these many. There is no indication that Christ actually appeared and so no support in Daniel 10 for the pre-existence of Christ.

### **New Testament passages**

Turning now to the New Testament, let us consider Paul’s exhortation to humility in Phil 2:5-11. The key passage relative to our study is in vs. 5-6, “*Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God*” (ESV). The question is whether “*in the form of God*” refers to a previous existence or has some other meaning. There is reason to believe that this passage is a quotation of an early hymn. The NIV and the Jerusalem Bible indicate this by setting it out in the form of a poem, as is done with the Psalms. When this is done, the parallelism between “*the form of God*” in vs. 6, and “*the form of a servant*” in vs. 7 becomes very apparent. It thus helps us to understand the first by considering the second.

So then, in what sense did Christ take “*the form of a servant*”? The thrust of the passage is that he had the humility of a servant (and in this is, as always, our supreme example to follow) and was willing to humbly serve his Father. He took on the place of a servant (Luke 22:27). In John 13, Jesus explains the statement of Luke 22:27. By washing the disciple’s feet, Jesus shows how they should serve one another. He explains in vs. 13-14, “*You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.*” He had acted as a servant, but he was their Lord.

We see that “*in the form*” does not mean “nearly identical with” but rather perhaps “resembling in some (important) ways”. Thus, Jesus being in the form of God means that during his ministry, he was like God in very important things about

him. This is brought out elsewhere as in 2Cor 4:4, “*Christ, who is the likeness (NASB - image) of God.*”, and Heb 1:3, “*He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature*”. Christ bears the stamp of God’s nature, being the Son of God. A son resembles his father, but is not identical to Him, and in the Bible, is never equal to Him.

### **Him only shall you serve**

Christ’s role as servant of his Father is brought out clearly in his temptation at the beginning of his ministry, (Matt 4:1-11). Each temptation begins with an appeal to his status as Son of God: “*If you are the Son of God*”. This might be paraphrased, “If you are in the form of God”. Christ ends the matter with a quotation about serving God: “*You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve*”, vs 10, quoted from Deut 6:13-14. Thus Christ assumed the role of servant to man, but he is mankind’s Lord. He, like all of us, is a servant of God, and is subject to God. Chapters 42, 49, 50, and 53 of Isaiah tell us that the Messiah is God’s servant. See also Acts 3:26, 4:27, 30 in modern Bible versions.

Returning to Phil 2:6-11, the passage is now clear. The Son of God did not reach for equality with his Father, but served in the role of servant of God, and of Lord and servant of mankind perfectly. “*Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed upon him the name which is above every name*”. God has exalted and bestowed! There is no hint here of the restoration of a glory which Christ had before. The sense of the passage is that Jesus Christ, who came in the flesh as Son of God, and as Son of Man, has been exalted from the flesh, and from his role as servant of man, to immortality and divine Lordship of all.

### **“That Rock Was Christ”**

“*For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ*” (1Cor 10:4), is clearly symbolism. Few would claim that a pre-existent Christ took the form of a rock. At the end of 1Cor 9, Paul is using symbolic runners or athletes to teach us how we should exercise personal discipline in all parts of our life to strengthen our spirits in faith and obedient service. He is leading up to an exhortation about idolatry (which begins in 1Cor 10:7). Athletes cannot “worship idols” such as lots of rich food or a perfect home and grounds, which interfere with their dedication and preparation for the race that they want to win. He then gives a lesson in symbolism (10:1-6) which helps the reader to understand the symbol of preparation for a race. In 10:4, he is also giving a hint to understand the important symbolism of Exod 17:6-7 and Numb 20:7-13. The striking of the rock to give water was a symbol of the crucifixion of Christ to give life. There is no indication that Christ was actually present, nor is there any reason to think so.

In the next article, we will consider subjects including the meaning of the world being created through Christ, Christ being subject to God, and more about Christ being a created person.

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#### **Notes:**

1. “In the Flesh” is a term probably used to counter the early view that Christ was a spirit, not really present in a physical way.

# Bible Study

## The Way of Cain (13) The Legacy Part 1

*“Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam’s error; they have been destroyed in Korah’s rebellion” (Jude 11).*

### The end of the line

The 10th generation came to a close with the construction of the ark and the advent of the Flood, a unique catastrophe in which Cain’s entire lineage was destroyed:

- Jabal’s tribes, who had migrated unto the ends of the earth — obliterated;
- Jubal’s music, by which the truth was corrupted and men and women were deified as gods — silenced;
- Tubal-Cain’s tools of bronze and iron which, while easing the burdens of mankind, gave humans the ability to wage war — broken;
- Naamah’s arts of seduction or cosmetology, which made women seem more attractive to weak-willed men — lost.

The scope of the flood was such that every living creature was erased from the surface of the earth,<sup>1</sup> which makes it clear that Cain’s legacy was utterly destroyed. Or was it?

Cain’s physical lineage may have been wiped out, but sadly his legacy was not. Murder and revenge, hallmarks of his character, continued unabated in the post-Flood era for 76 generations, the number of generations Lamech had unknowingly prophesied<sup>2</sup>, until the 77th generation, when a very special child was born:

*“To us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).*

The Prince of Peace was Jesus, not Cain. He was the *Coming One*, the *even Lord* that Eve had, in hopeful expectation, named her firstborn after. With his message of love and forgiveness, Christ offered a panacea to the cycle of vengeance, which had been founded by Cain, built upon by Lamech, and which had had such a profound and sanguinary effect upon mankind. The New Testament was built upon a foundation of love and forgiveness. As such, it might seem odd that Cain, the most notorious of murderers, was so often referred to by Christ and the apostles. Would not have Cain been more relevant in the Old Testament, when violence was common and the spirit of fratricide prospered among Israelites? The puzzle surrounding Cain’s exclusion from the Old Testament and his inclusion in the New Testament recalls the question posited at the beginning of this study: What was Cain’s significance to the ecclesia in the first century AD? Put another way, why was Cain relevant after being irrelevant for so many thousands of years?

## **The Old Testament: Nations as villains**

Before this question can be answered, it is helpful to understand why he was not referred to in the Old Testament.

It was generally uncommon<sup>3</sup> for Old Testament writers to refer to specific “villains” outside of the historical context in which they originally appeared. For example, Cain, Korah, and Jezebel, all of whom are mentioned in the New Testament, are not included in any of the books of prophecy or poetry for purposes of exhortation (i.e. as examples for instructional purposes).<sup>4</sup> Instead, Old Testament writers often referred to wicked nations or peoples. This is because most Old Testament prophecies and/or poetic compositions were composed in relation to the nation of Israel, not in relation to any one individual or group.

Moreover, God’s overarching complaint against the Jews was idolatry. This is because idolatry is all-encompassing: when one forsakes God, one forsakes all of His commandments. Thus, whenever a prophet chastised Israel for idolatry, other sins were not always indicated, but nevertheless implied. This was a very economical way to treat Israel’s general state of wickedness.

## **The New Testament: Individuals as villains**

In contrast, the New Testament letters were generally addressed to specific people (Theophilus, Timothy, Philemon, etc.) and small groups of believers or ecclesias (Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, etc.). Although the apostles routinely drew upon Israel’s history in order to connect the present with the past, when it came to exhorting believers on how to personally emulate Christ, God understood that historical individuals are more relatable than nations or peoples.

Moreover, while the Old Testament routinely condemned a wicked nation of idolatry, the New Testament most often focused on people who believed in God. Whether New Testament audiences faithfully understood and applied Christ’s teachings or whether they intentionally or otherwise misinterpreted and/or misapplied his teachings, they at least appeared to worship God; they were not, as in days of old, abandoning God for pagan gods.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, Cain was a murderer. As the first of such creatures, he was designated by God to be a sign concerning the relationship between murder and revenge (in that murder arouses in others a desire for vengeance). Thus, Cain, as a sign or a mark, is associated with vengeance. His absence from the Old Testament arises in part from the fact that the Law of Moses made some provision for vengeance.

The Law explicitly states:

*“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD” (Lev 19:18).*

Yet, in spite of this decree, God recognized that killing, whether deliberate or accidental, would nevertheless occur, and avengers would consequently arise.

In the case of premeditated murder, the Law stipulates: *“The murderer is to be put to death. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death” (Num 35:18-19).* In

the case of manslaughter (accidental death), the Law took a more pragmatic approach by providing the murderer with a place of refuge from the avenger (Num 35). If, however, the murderer met the avenger before they arrived at one of the seven cities of refuge, then *“the avenger of blood may kill the accused without being guilty of murder”* (Num 35:17). Because the Law made allowance for some instances of vengeance, Cain, as a sign or a mark to deter vengeance, would hardly have been relevant.

For these reasons, Cain was excluded from the Old Testament, but included in the New Testament. However, there are additional reasons for Cain’s inclusion in the New Testament: Cain also shares characteristics with the false brother: a type of person who emerged from within the Christian brotherhood to corrupt and destroy the truth. Moreover, Cain’s legacy and its relationship to the fate of the antediluvian era is a powerful reminder for Christians not to repeat the same mistakes.

### **Cain: A false brother**

Although Christianity celebrated an initial period where it closely resembled the spirit of Christ, it was short-lived. The letters of Paul, Peter, John, and Jude, which were written in the latter part of the first century AD, reveal that the simplicity and purity of Christ’s message was in danger of being corrupted by false ideas introduced, spread, and practiced by members of the ecclesia; men and women who appeared as though they were part of Christ’s flocks, but were in fact self-serving individuals intent upon twisting God’s word to serve or justify their own wickedness. Christ had warned the disciples to be on guard concerning this type of person: *“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves”* (Matt 7:15).

Paul clarified from where these “wolves” would emerge:

*“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flocks of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flocks. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears”* (Acts 20:28-30).

Paul wasn’t alone in warning the ecclesia about this *enemy within*, for Peter also cautioned his readers:

*“There will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.*

*“Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings; yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not heap abuse*

*on such beings when bringing judgment on them from the Lord. But these people blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like animals they too will perish.*

*Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood!*

*“For they mouth empty, boastful words and by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for ‘people are slaves to whatever has mastered them’ (2 Pet 2:1-3; 10-12; 18-19).*

As did Jude:

*“For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.*

*“Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord at one time delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling — these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire. [...] These ungodly people pollute their own bodies, reject authority and heap abuse on celestial beings. But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’” Yet these people slander whatever they do not understand, and the very things they do understand by instinct — as irrational animals do — will destroy them.*

*“Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam’s error; they have been destroyed in Korah’s rebellion. These people are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever” (Jude 4-13).*

Christ refers to them as “false prophets,” Paul calls them “savage wolves,” Peter declares them to be “false teachers,” and Jude notes that they are “shepherds who feed only themselves,” but regardless of the terminology used, they are all speaking about the same type of person: a false brother or sister.

Although Jews and pagans were the declared enemies of Christianity in the beginning, the real threat to the ecclesia came from within; individuals such

as Diotrephes, who, at the time when John wrote his third letter, “desired to be first,” and consequently was trying to discredit him and others by spreading malicious gossip (3John 9-10). Moreover, Diotrephes refused to welcome John and disfellowshipped anyone who did so. Because Diotrephes appeared as though he belonged to Christ, but acted in a contrary way, he is a chief example of the false teacher, savage wolf, false prophet, and self-serving shepherd, which Christ and the apostles spoke about. As has been shown, specifically in Jude’s letter, Cain was referred to in the context of the false brother. This is because he shares many of the same characteristics, which were also exemplified in Diotrephes. As the following comparison shows, Cain, Diotrephes, and the false brother are one and the same type of person.

### **Diotrephes and Cain: Men of authority**

Diotrephes was a brother of some standing in the first century ecclesia AD. Although it is unclear as to what role he held (whether he was a presbyter, teacher, deacon, or elder), John’s third letter indicates that he was some type of leader, for he says that Diotrephes “*loves to be first*” (vs. 9), which is an indication that he stood out among the brethren in his ecclesia. Moreover, John says that he was spreading malicious nonsense about him and others (vs. 10). In order for gossip to spread, it must be repeated by more than one person, which was the case in Diotrephes’ ecclesia. It is obvious that brothers and sisters were spreading the lies he told, and for people to have listened to his lies, he must have been a brother of some standing within the ecclesia. Furthermore, Diotrephes possessed the power to refuse to welcome (disfellowship) certain brothers, including John (vs. 10). The power he held must have been placed in his hands by others, which once more illustrates the sway he had over his fellow brothers and sisters.

Likewise, Cain was a child of unique standing within the Adamic family. He was special among men, for he was the first to have been born from a woman. Genesis, more than any other book in the Old Testament, emphasizes the importance of being the eldest. The eldest son was often the favorite of the father, as was in the case of Isaac. Moreover, the eldest was the recipient of the birthright (inheritance) and the blessings (designation as the head of the family). As such, much responsibility and promise was placed upon the eldest’s shoulders.

As the eldest, Cain was responsible for looking after his younger brothers’ and sisters’ spiritual well-being. In this role, Cain should have been the spiritual shepherd, not Abel. However, just as Esau did not take his familial responsibilities seriously, but instead traded away his birthright to his younger brother, Jacob, for a bowl of stew (Gen 25:28-30), Cain likewise neglected his obligations as the eldest, which were taken up by Abel.

Just as Diotrephes was invested by his brothers with authority, Cain also occupied a position of responsibility within his family. Yet, both men abused their positions of authority and in doing so displayed characteristics common to the false brother:

*“There will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing*

*swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories” (2Pet 2:1-3).*

### **Diotrephes and Cain: The appearance of men of faith**

Diotrephes had the appearance of a brother in Christ. He was one of many believers who John desired to visit. Moreover, John had, at one time, considered Diotrephes to be his brother, since he expected to be welcomed by him upon his arrival (3John 10).

Likewise, Genesis makes no distinction between Cain and Abel before they presented their offerings to the Lord, other than to note their order of births, their names, and their vocations. With hindsight, much can be deduced about his character from these scant details, but it must be acknowledged that Genesis makes no overt judgment concerning Cain's faith *before* he presented his offering to the LORD. Moreover, because Cain presented an offering to God, it suggests that, in the very least, he appeared to worship the LORD.

Although both Diotrephes and Cain initially appeared as men of God, in time they manifested their wickedness. Their metamorphosis from the appearance of believers into unrighteous men is another characteristic exhibited by the false brother:

*“They come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ferocious wolves” (Matt 7:15).*

*“Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:28).*

*“There will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies” (2Pet 2:1).*

*“For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people...” (Jude 4).*

### **Diotrephes and Cain: Pride and ignorance**

The apostle John was one of the first disciples; he had personally known, loved, and been loved by Christ, and he was invested with the Holy Spirit, a sign of God's authority on the earth. In spite of John's spiritual credentials, Diotrephes' desired “to be first” (3John 9). This desire was the source of his pride, and it resulted in making him ignorant of Christ, who says: *“If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last and the servant of all” (Mark 9:35).* These words were spoken by a man who demonstrated the supreme act of putting oneself last and others first:

*“Who, being in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!” (Phil 2:6-8).*

Diotrephes' example demonstrates the cause and effect relationship between pride and ignorance: pride blinds one to spiritual wisdom, since the obtaining of wis-

dom requires humility: “When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom” (Prov 11:2). Thus, by his pride, Diotrephes was made ignorant of Christ and subsequently God.

Cain’s prophetic name also instilled within him a great sense of pride, which blinded him to wisdom. As a result, he grew up ignorant of God, not knowing who He was or what He required. This resulted in the following errors: not knowing what sacrifice meant, Cain presented an offering devoid of blood; lacking humility, he refused to learn from his mistake and accept God’s advice to “do what is right;” unwilling to discover who God was, he believed that the Creator was merely the cherubim and this faulty assumption led him to believe that he could lie to the LORD about Abel’s whereabouts; and his pride in his prophetic name, along with his status as the eldest son, made the welfare of others, including that of Abel, beneath his concern, for he said to God: “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Pride and ignorance — qualities Diotrephes and Cain both possessed — are chief characteristics of the false brother:

*“Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings. ... These people blaspheme in matters they do not understand” (2Pet 2:10, 12)”*

*“These ungodly people ... reject authority and heap abuse on celestial beings. But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” Yet these people slander whatever they do not understand...” (Jude 8-10).*

## **To be concluded**

In the next (concluding) article, we will finish our look at the contrast and similarities between Diotrephes and Cain, and then conclude with looking at the legacy of Cain in the times since Christ.

*Matthew Harrison (Ottawa, ON)*

### **Notes:**

1. In Ellicott’s commentary on the Flood, he quotes Prof. Tayler Lewis in *Lange’s Commentary*: “We have no right to force upon him (the author of Genesis) and upon the scene so vividly described, our modern notions or our modern knowledge of the earth, with its Alps and Himalayas, its round figure, its extent and diversities, so much beyond any knowledge he could have possessed or any conception he could have formed.” Of course, this is just one opinion.
2. “If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times,” (Gen 4:24).
3. Balaam is the one exception. He is referred to by Nehemiah and Micah. Korah is mentioned in 1 Chronicles, but it is purely for the recounting of history and not for purposes of exhortation.
4. Excluding Genesis, of course.
5. At least not in the first century AD. As Christendom progressed, however, the simplicity of the truth was so corrupted with pagan and humanistic ideas that the worship of Yahweh was eventually transformed into a pagan concept, as is most notably expressed in the form of religion practised by Catholics.

## Life of Timothy

### (8) “I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus”

#### **Timothy remains in Ephesus**

There is compelling Biblical evidence that Paul left Ephesus during the three years he was based in that city to visit Macedonia and Corinth.<sup>1</sup> While he was away, he left Timothy behind to help guide the ecclesia at Ephesus. Paul wrote 1st Timothy while he was traveling to give instruction and encouragement to Timothy.

1st Timothy offers insight into Timothy’s life. It reveals he had doubts, fears, insecurities, and knew there were limits to his natural abilities. It shows people in his meeting did not always agree with him. It indicates he made mistakes he had to recover from and move beyond.

Timothy struggled to lead the ecclesia in Ephesus while Paul was away, and it appears he made some poor decisions even though his previous leadership and conduct in Philippi and Thessalonica had been exemplary. This episode in his life reminds us we may encounter circumstances that will challenge us spiritually even if we have done well with recent trials.

If do we find ourselves struggling, especially after we have had a period of relative spiritual strength, we should not become overly discouraged and succumb to the temptation to give up. (Note that Timothy was not given the option of fleeing to Philippi or Thessalonica — where he was liked — during this period.) Timothy’s struggles in Ephesus — and his response to them — are a reminder that we can get a handle on difficult circumstances, deal with them faithfully, and grow spiritually as a result of them.

1st Timothy provides guidance on how to respond to adversity by following Timothy’s example. It reveals Timothy remained humble during trials. He was teachable and willing to receive advice from Paul. He was also determined to follow God even when it was hard.

Timothy’s situation in Ephesus is a reminder that our trials alone do not determine who we become. Our response to them matters more.

#### **Problems in Ephesus**

The opening of 1st Timothy indicates that Timothy did not want to stay behind in Ephesus. He wanted to travel with Paul instead. Paul wrote: “*As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine*” (1Tim 1:3). A number of translations render “besought” in 1Tim 1:3 as “begged.”<sup>2</sup> Paul had to beg Timothy to stay behind in Ephesus. But even though he had to be urged, Timothy ultimately did agree to Paul’s request. He stayed behind in Ephesus and assumed leadership responsibilities. It is an example of Timothy subordinating his own wants — and fears — to the work of the Truth.

Timothy’s reasons for not wanting to stay behind in Ephesus are indicated by the content of the Epistle. Serious doctrinal problems were beginning to emerge in

the ecclesia. Some in the meeting were advocating Greek philosophy (1Tim 6:20). Others were corrupting the faith with Jewish traditions and fables, which were probably similar to those of the Talmud (1Tim 1:4,7).<sup>3</sup> Still others had reverted to a superstitious belief in devils and spirits (1Tim 4:1).

Lifestyle problems were also arising. Sisters were trying to usurp the role of brethren in the ecclesia (1Tim 2:11-15), and the wrong kind of men were trying to lead (1Tim 3:1-13). Some of the rich were looking down on the poor (1Tim 6:17), and some of the poor were seeking to be rich even at the expense of the Truth (1Tim 6:5-10). Meanwhile, others were content to live in idleness and be supported by the ecclesia (1Tim 5:3-16). Paul had already had to withdraw from some people in the meeting, including Hymenaeus and Alexander (1Tim 1:19-20). Alexander subsequently caused serious problems for Timothy and Paul for many years (Acts 19: 33, 2Tim 4:14).

Imagine if you had an opportunity to move to a new city and you found out that its ecclesia was experiencing what is described in 1st Timothy (e.g., “doctrines of devils”). Would you want to go? Circumstances in Ephesus were tremendously challenging, and Timothy had to try to lead the brothers and sisters and improve the situation. Judging by the the Epistle, it seems Timothy struggled to rise to the task of leadership. He faced a number of obstacles. Timothy was young, probably about 26. He was sickly (1Tim 5:23). He was also naturally timid (2Tim 1:6-7).

The ecclesia in Ephesus was deteriorating around Timothy. Part of the problem appears to be that Timothy was reluctant to confront some people who had gone astray. Paul had to remind him that he had an obligation to do so: *“These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”* (1Tim 4:11-12). It seems that when Timothy mustered the courage to address a problem he sometimes overcompensated for his quiet nature and was unduly harsh in the way he handled the situation.<sup>4</sup> Paul told him: *“Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren”* (1Tim 5:1). The Greek word rendered “rebuke” is a strong word. Thayer defines it as “to strike upon” or “beat upon.”<sup>5</sup> Paul reminded Timothy to be mindful of his tone and approach when offering words of correction.<sup>6</sup> Instead of being overly forceful, Paul told Timothy to “intreat” those in the meeting.

The Greek word rendered “intreat” in 1Tim 5 is used throughout the New Testament for giving an exhortation.<sup>7</sup> Paul’s guidance to Timothy suggests, therefore, that we should strive to use the same tone and approach in offering words of correction in private that we would use in an exhortation. We would not, for example, raise our voice, glare, or point our finger at a person from the podium, so we should not do those things in a private conversation either. Instead, we should make an appeal and reason from the Scriptures when speaking to a person who has strayed, just as we would when speaking from the platform.

## Timothy wanted to do right

Timothy's problems in Ephesus were not with his intentions. He wanted to do right, but he was allowing himself to be hindered by his natural disadvantages. He was conscious of them and tried to compensate for them. He turned to exercise, for example: *"For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come"* (1Tim 4:8). Perhaps he thought exercising would make him healthier, enhance his physical presence, and give him more confidence.

He also might have attempted to curry favor by showing partiality to certain groups in the meeting perhaps to win their support: *"I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality"* (1Tim 5:21).<sup>8</sup>

Timothy was trying to guide the brothers and sisters in Ephesus who had strayed back to the Truth. Paul directed him to use a more spiritual approach than the strategies he had been pursuing. He encouraged Timothy to make himself an example of godliness: *"This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith"* (1Tim 1:18-19, ESV).

Paul sought to re-direct his *"own son in the faith"* (1Tim 1:2). Timothy had been given the role that he had because of his faith and conduct, so Paul wanted him to better himself by investing in his spiritual development. He wrote: *"But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness"* (1Tim 4:7). The Greek word rendered *"exercise"* is used for vigorous training, like the preparations of an athlete for a contest.<sup>9</sup> Developing godliness was not to be a haphazard activity for Timothy. Paul wanted Timothy to push himself and to bear through the difficulties, and the pain, so that he would become spiritually stronger.

We should all give careful heed to Paul's advice to Timothy because it runs so contrary to our natural inclinations. As the Bible makes clear time and again, God does not value the same characteristics people instinctively do. He does not care about our personal appeal or our natural abilities. His interest is in our commitment to Him. It was through his personal spiritual development that Timothy could help his entire ecclesia. That is where our focus should be and where we should concentrate our efforts to improve ourselves.

Paul did not really provide Timothy with explicit guidance on how to argue against the false teachings emerging in the ecclesia in the Epistle. Instead, Paul encouraged Timothy to focus on positive instruction and to cultivate godliness in his life so that he would be an example to the ecclesia. He wrote: *"be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine"* (1Tim 4:12-13). Paul wanted Timothy to help guide the ecclesia through his godly example — both in the formal activities of the meeting, as well as in the ordinary, daily activities of life.

The guidance Paul gave to Timothy has broad application to us. It can help change

and improve our lives, and the lives of others, even if we are not in a formal leadership position in an ecclesia (as he was) or even if we are not leading anyone other than ourselves. Regardless of our position, we should focus on our spiritual development. To the extent that we do lead — through service on the Arranging Board, as Sunday school teachers, as parents or grandparents, or in any of a variety of other roles — we should seek to do so through positive instruction and by setting a godly example. That is what Paul advised Timothy to do.

The effect of Timothy's conduct on the Ephesians' embrace of the Gospel was of the highest importance. That is why Paul emphasized it again and again in his Epistle: "*These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth*" (1Tim 3:14-15, NKJV).

Paul expected Timothy to continue to grow spiritually: "*Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress*" (1Tim 4:15, ESV). Notice the word "progress." Timothy was not to remain stagnant. The same is true for us. The status quo is not an option. Like us, Timothy's continued spiritual development was critical. It would not only help him; but it would also help his brothers and sisters in the ecclesia as well: "*Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers*" (1Tim 4:16, ESV).

Timothy continued to grow spiritually even as the work he was called on to do became more challenging. We will consider his continued service in Ephesus and through the rest of the Third Missionary Journey in the next article in the series.

Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

#### Notes:

1. R. Mutter. 2013. *The Ecclesia at Ephesus: A Holy Temple in the Lord*. pages 45-46.
2. The Weymouth New Testament and the Darby Bible Translation render the word as "begged." The NIV, ESV, and NASB render the word as "urged."
3. Titus 1:14 refers to "the fables" as Jewish fables.
4. T. Benson. "A Study in the Life of Timothy (6) In Charge at Ephesus." *The Testimony*, 1970, page 60.
5. The Greek word is *epiplesso*. It is Strong's Number G1969. The definition is from J.H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. See A. Nicholls. 1991. *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, page 144.
6. The ecclesia at Ephesus may have had some explosive personalities in it. There are multiple warnings against anger and wrath in the ecclesia. See, for example, "*without wrath*" in 1Tim 2:8 and "*Be ye angry, and sin not*" in Eph 4:26. A. Nicholls. 1991. *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, page 68.
7. The Greek word is *parakaleo*. It is Strong's Number G3870. See, for example, its use in Luke 3:18, Acts 2:40; 11:23; 14:22; 15:32; 20:2, Romans 12:8, 1 Thessalonians 2:11; 4:1; and 5:14. See A. Nicholls. 1991. *Letters to Timothy and Titus*. page 146.
8. See T. Benson. "A Study in the Life of Timothy (6) In Charge at Ephesus." *The Testimony*, 1970, page 60. It is also possible that Timothy entertained spurious accusations by some in the ecclesia against other members, perhaps to try and gain their approval or support: Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses (1Tim 5:19).
9. It is Strong's Number G1128. The definition is from J.H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. e-Sword 9.9.0. See D. Smith. "Be Thou an Example of the Believers." *The Testimony*, 1991, page 315.

# History

## Reasons for embracing the Ancient Gospel, contained in a Narrative of the Conversion of an OPPONENT

### Introduction by the Editor

This article appeared in the November 5, 1832 issue of a magazine edited by Walter Scott, called “The Evangelist”, and is the first article written by John Thomas after his arrival in the USA earlier in 1832. It recounts the story of his baptism, and the account differs somewhat from that recorded by Robert Roberts in his “Dr Thomas — his Life and Works”, which was in turn based upon the verbal account of John Thomas in 1862, some thirty years later. I have added subtitles, corrected some minor errors, and added a few illustrations, but not in any way altered what John Thomas wrote, some 32 years before he decided on the name “Christadelphian”.

### The Letter by John Thomas

When I arrived at New-York from England, I was introduced to a respectable Baptist Minister of that city. Having informed him of my intention to travel west, he observed, “Well, Sir, you will find the people of the Western country intelligent, kind, hospitable, and attentive to strangers; but it is a fact much to be lamented, that society there, is very much infected with reformation; it is a heresy that strikes at the root of all vital religion, and is making sad havoc among the churches.”

I had never heard of Mr. Campbell in my own country, except in connection with his able defense of Christianity, against the attacks of Robert Owen; and hence — I supposed that instead of his principles being dangerous, they were such as ought to meet with the encouragement and support of the Christian World. My surprise, therefore, was not a little excited, when I was so carefully warned against their evil tendency. My views of sects and parties did not permit me to seek further information on the subject, as I had made up my mind to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ and him crucified. I thought I saw so much evil resulting to real religion from the division and splitting of professors into separate and adverse communities, each contending that it alone was the truly orthodox, and had the influence of the Holy Spirit, that I determined to belong to none of them, but simply to take the word of God as contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the only authority in matters of religion; to follow the Truth wherever it led; to shape my course through life according to the precepts of the Gospel; and to trust for my eternal salvation to the blood of Christ which was shed on Calvary for the remission of sins. I had strong objections against being called after the name of any man. Whether he be Calvin, Arminius, Luther, Wesley, or Campbell; for in the word of God I find no such names written, though I doubt not they may be found in the Lamb’s Book of Life; — I desired only to be a Christian in name and deed.

## On to Cincinnati

With these views I arrived in Cincinnati. Here I was thrown into the Society of Friends whose opinions differed. I resided with a Wesleyan, received many kind attentions from Calvinistic Baptists, and cultivated the *proffered* friendship of those, who have been invidiously designated by the name of Mr. Campbell. Discussion naturally arose upon topics of a religious character, and among other things mooted, was the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins. Hitherto I had viewed baptism as non-essential, and a mere question of party; and I had said I would never be immersed, since I considered the act as a mere initiation or admission within the pale of a particular sect. The Millennial Harbinger, and the Evangelist were lent me, but I read them not; and subsequently a sermon on the Holy Spirit was put into my hands. It was composed by Mr. Walter Scott; I perused it, and upon reflection, saw no proposition to which I could not yield assent. I still felt no inclination to pursue the subject, being quite unconcerned about Baptism, Operations of the Spirit, or any other similar topic, all of which I classed under the head of non-essentials.

But the anxiety of some of my friends, who considered me in an unenlightened condition, would not allow them to let me alone. When I visited them, no other subject of conversation seemed to interest them, than those to which I have already referred. I began to perceive that there was nothing non-essential in matters of religion, which is **commanded** by the word of God; — that our Heavenly Father requires nothing of us which we are not able to *perform*; that he never works without means, and that these are always adapted to some specific ends; that, as in the ordinary affairs of life, so also in our spiritual concerns, we are required to exercise the faculties God has given us, or we cannot expect the promised blessings; for “the hand of the diligent maketh rich,” and by believing, by repenting, and by being baptized, we receive the remission of our sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. I saw, instead of waiting till I experienced some special primary influence of the Spirit to induce me to a saving faith, and to assure me of pardon that the word of truth was nigh me, even in my mouth, and that I was quite as competent to embrace the Gospel, as I am to receive or reject any other testimony whatever. I felt I was a sinner, not by any miraculous impartation, but because the word of God told me so; — “that I was born in sin,” and that therefore I was “exceeding sinful,” and that my only escape from “the wrath to come,” was by “laying hold of the hope set before me in the Gospel.” Till now, I thought I had done this; but I found my belief in Christ was without obedience to his commands, and that I was in the predicament of one who knew his Lord’s will but did not fulfil it, and that I might certainly expect to be beaten with many stripes, if I persisted in-refusing to yield to my convictions of the truth.

## Conversion

I began now to perceive the cloud of darkness in which my mind was involved. I had heard Christians date their conversion from some sudden, arresting, and supernatural influence, independent of the testimony of Scripture, which compelled them to faith in Christ, I had been the subject of no such operation. I

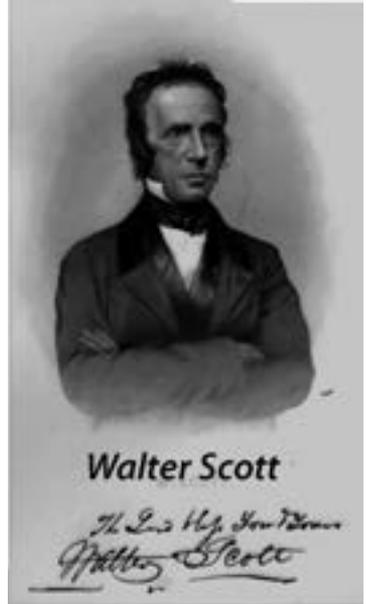
therefore attributed the morality of my life, and my faith, to educational causes; and, though I had examined the evidences of Christianity, had devoted much time to the study of prophesy, and had watched the progress of events in the history of human affairs, as corroborative of the Book of God, all of which left me no doubt of the infallibility of the scriptures, and their supremacy in all matters of conscience, faith, and practice; still, although my convictions had often drawn tears in secret, I was told I was in the gall of bitterness and in bondage. I feel now that I was in bondage; not in the bondage of Satan so much as in the bondage of orthodox opinions as they are called. When I was crossing the Atlantic, I acted in the Capacity both of chaplain and physician; not because I felt myself competent to the cure of spiritual diseases, but I thought in the absence of more efficient aid, I might warn my companion voyagers to flee from the wrath to come. I felt great difficulty in doing this, because I could not see the use of exhorting them to believe and repent, if it were true that no one had the power of doing so unless compelled by supernatural influences. They seemed to be in the situation of a man, who was told to do a thing and with the same breath was assured he could not possibly do it, and yet if he did not do it, he should be punished. Impressed with the idea that this was the decree of God, and to have harbored such a sentiment I confess was the result of a superficial, or rather no examination of the question at all, my mind has long been the subject of doubts, and fears, and misgivings, which are generally referred to conflicts with Satan, instead of the error in doctrine, which to me appears so flagrant, of the Holy Spirit compelling us to do that, which we are quite capable of effecting by the exercise of those faculties God has graciously bestowed upon us. The conversation adverted to led me to see that the blood of Christ was indeed shed for the remission of our sins, but that we could not expect to receive the blessings of the Holy Spirit, which are joy and peace in believing, unless we complied with the command of our Savior to be baptized. "Those who believe and are baptized shall be saved," and again, "except ye repent ye shall likewise perish," are the words, of Christ; and the declaration of Peter on the day of Pentecost, in reply to the inquiry of the convicted multitude, "men and brethren what shall we do?" exhibits the plain and simple way, and natural order in which we shall obtain the forgiveness of our past sins, and "a right and title to eternal life." "Repent," Says he, "and be baptized every one of you, .in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost." I learned from the Record that their consciences were smitten with the conviction that they had indeed crucified the Messiah of God; for it declares "they were pricked in their heart." They saw their fearful condition, and determined to accept any terms that the Apostle should offer, by which they could be pardoned for the wickedness they had done; — they repented of their evil deeds (as we may all do if we will) and resolved that instead of persecuting his disciples, they would themselves become his followers and obey his commands, being assured that in doing so they would be freely pardoned, and that their past sins would never again be quoted against them. They were baptized; this was a test of their sincerity; for by acting thus they became identified with a people under the proscription of the Law, and exposed to all the vindictiveness of its administration. They were baptized for the remission of their sins; the sins which they had committed, I apprehend were remitted

or pardoned, not on account of the meritoriousness of the act, but in obeying the command by which the purifying efficacy of the blood of Christ was applied to their souls; for baptism I consider as an outward and visible *sign* of an inward and spiritual regeneration, and unless the ordinance has been complied with, the sinner has not accepted *the terms* of pardon proposed, and has certainly no right to expect the blessing consequent on his compliance, which is the gift of the Holy Ghost. By “searching the scriptures,” which we are commanded to do, “for in them we think we have eternal life,” I perceived there was no warranty for the opinion that the Holy Ghost was given to men, prior to faith, to induce them to believe, though I found instances in which it was bestowed anterior to baptism. But these cases are exceptions to the ordinary rule of the Spirit’s operation, and therefore they establish the proposition that the gift of the Spirit is consequent and not anterior to faith and baptism, that it never precedes belief and that the order of faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, is never inverted, except when miraculous and special results are designed. Thus we find that its descent upon the Apostles, on the day of Pentecost, was attended with signs and extraordinary appearances, which resulted in the miraculous faculty of speaking with “*OTHER tongues*”. Again we are informed that Peter and John were sent to Samaria, that they might pray for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For we are told in the 16th v. of the 8th of Acts, “as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only (or notwithstanding) they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost.” In this case an act was performed, the Apostles laid hands upon them, and the effects were so astonishing that Simon wished to purchase the power they possessed for gold. This was not an ordinary gift of the Holy Ghost, and so far from its being anterior to faith, so as to make them believe, they had even been baptized, and had not then received it until Peter and John conferred it upon them by virtue of power received from God. Shall we say then that Christians of our own day, who simply believe and have not been baptized for the remission of their sins, have received the gift of the Holy Ghost? Is the position they maintain founded upon and supported by the word of God? They may appeal to their feelings and experiences, but I humbly conceive the scriptures do not give birth to this article of their creed.

### **Paul and Cornelius**

Again, in the case of Paul;— his conversion was miraculous, and it is a remarkable fact that even he did *not* receive the Holy Ghost till *after* he had believed. “Three days” elapsed between his conversion and receiving his sight, and during this time, though he had believed in him whom he had persecuted, the Holy Ghost had not been bestowed upon him; for the scriptures tell us that Ananias “put his hands on him” and he declared to Paul that the Lord, even Jesus, had commanded him to do so, that he might not only receive his sight, but “be filled with the Holy Ghost.” And if there were any case in which baptism might be considered as non-essential it was Paul’s; but we are told that even he was baptized. All the circumstances of this case were miraculous and special; not ordinary and general.

Again, the case of Cornelius, and his household is analogous to that of the Apostle's, for as the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them was a demonstration that salvation had come to the Jews, so its descent upon the Centurion and his household, became a Pentecost to the Gentiles, on whom in like manner "also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." The results were similar, for they spoke "with tongues." And again, Paul found at Ephesus certain disciples, and he inquired of them "have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" But they declared they did not even know there was such a thing as the Holy Ghost; which very much surprised Paul, for he seemed astonished that men who had been baptized should not have received the Holy Ghost. "Unto what, then," said he were you baptized?" But they explained the mystery by saying, "we were baptized unto the baptism of John;" and when they heard Paul's declaration that John baptized with the baptism of repentance, teaching that they should believe on him, who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus, they were baptized again "in the name of the Lord Jesus." Here they had believed in John's testimony and in Paul's, yet they had not the Holy Ghost until God conferred it upon them through Paul, who is recorded to have "laid his hands upon them," after which the Holy Ghost came on them, and as the communication thereof had been special and extraordinary, the results were miraculous; for "they spake with tongues and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve." Hence we see that where special purposes were designed, visible means were employed, showing that God works by means, whether it be to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, impart the faculty of speaking



with tongues and performing miracles, or to induce a belief in the divinity of his Son. In respect of the latter, I believe a man may have faith, if he will only exercise those faculties which God has given him, and that it is as much in his power to give ear to the things which belong to his everlasting peace, as it is to those which relate to his interest and happiness in common life. Hence, all are left without excuse, and it can no more be urged that we are irresponsible for our unbelief, on the plea that we cannot have faith unless it is imparted to us by the Spirit.

## Baptism

These topics are some of those which formed the burden of the conversations I had with Major D. Gano and Mr. Walter Scott. The light of the Gospel did not burst suddenly upon my mind, but one truth after another seemed to develop themselves in succession. I had endeavored to comprehend the doctrines of the Gospel by an effort of my understanding, but I could not; I had been told religion consisted not in head knowledge, but in the experience of the heart; but I now see God requires us to believe nothing in relation to salvation we cannot comprehend. I saw that the command to be baptized, was imperative. "Why then did I hesitate to obey," was a question put to me by Mr. Scott. I felt I could give no valid reason, still I did not like what I supposed would be an ostentatious display and desired to defer compliance. I was assured there would be none, and perceived that an immediate and unceremonious performance of the ordinance was scriptural and therefore justifiable. I complied, and in the presence of a few friends, I was baptized in the Miami Canal, on Sunday evening, Oct. 14, at 19½ o'clock.



It has been put to me since this occurred, whether I had received the Holy Spirit, and if I had, how I knew it? In answer to this I can only say that, whereas before I was blind, now I think I see, and that the doctrines of scripture, instead of being unintelligible and obscure, now appear to be entirely comprehensible and clear; and, as we are elsewhere informed, so plain and simple, that a wayfaring man, though unlearned, cannot err therein. One thing only I regret, that is, that my immersion was not more public, as it might have operated as an example and inducement to others. This I can say, that all fear of death is removed, and I feel firmly assured that the doctrines I have embraced are the pure doctrines of the Gospel, and abundantly efficacious in the practice they enjoin to procure me a safe and certain introduction to Everlasting Life.

*John Thomas*

# The Joy of Sunday Schooling

## Media Literacy

I recently gave an evening talk at one of our Bible schools on the subject of “Media Literacy — Discerning between Good and Evil.” Based on comments received afterward, the topic struck a responsive chord. Parents, children, and ecclesias are struggling to cope with the messages of mass media and their remarkable ability to intrude on our daily lives.

Although turning off our media delivery devices (i.e., smartphones, televisions, computers, etc.) is often a helpful choice, it fails to take into consideration the vast scope of media and the fact that many of these devices have positive uses. It has become essential, therefore, that we teach ourselves and our children how to think critically about what we are being bombarded with on a daily basis. Media literacy equips us to deconstruct media with the purpose of discerning between good and evil.

The wide impact of mass media and the importance of media literacy are considered in a document called *Literacy for the 21st Century*:

“When one considers videogames, television, pop music, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, the internet — even T-shirts! — we are exposed to more mediated messages in one day than our great-grandparents were exposed to in a year. Media literacy teaches the skills we need to navigate safely through this sea of images and messages — for all our lives.”<sup>1</sup>

With this in mind, I would like to discuss some of the ways that Sunday schools and CYCs can counteract the ungodly messages that our children face on a daily basis.

### Starting point

Because every parent will have a separate policy regarding media exposure and usage in their home, a good place to start with children of all ages is to have a look into their world. This should be done with a desire to find out how best to help them, not out of a spirit of judging others.

Check into your students’ world by asking them questions like these:

- If I (the SS/CYC teacher) was thinking of buying a video game or app for my kids, what would you suggest?
- If I have time for a little TV tonight, is there anything good on?
- What are some of the popular musical groups these days? What do you think of their music?
- What are some of the things that are ‘going viral’ right now? Do you ever get involved in them?
- What’s going on at your school that’s cool or uncool, fascinating, unfair, outrageous or worrisome?

Once you've got a list, keep your eyes and ears open for examples from their world that you can use to illustrate concepts when you are ready to teach media literacy.

It is also important to get an idea of your students' knowledge and perspectives of media. Again, here are some useful questions to ask them:

- What is included in the given media?
- In general, how does it make you feel?
- Has the information you received from the media ever made you feel angry or good?
- Do you think the media has an influence in your life, your choices, and your attitude?
- What are some of the values that are promoted by the media?
- How does the media portray smoking, violence, and personal relationships?
- Have you ever considered how God views our use of media?

Asking questions like these will give you an idea where to start with the young people.

### **Four principle messages of media**

There are many messages that are promoted by mass media. I have identified four that I feel are particularly insidious and need to be addressed both in our homes and in our ecclesias. The media will often try to do the following:

- 1) Sexualize everything.
- 2) Promote materialism.
- 3) Elevate and promote immoral and risky behaviors.
- 4) Make violence entertaining.

It is extremely important for our children to begin recognizing the crafty ways that media present these messages and that turning away from them can be a matter of salvation. It is also imperative that parents, aunts, and uncles, take the lead in these matters. If our kids don't see and hear us condemning violent, immoral, materialistic messages, they won't comprehend why they are bad for them.

### **Five key concepts**

There are five key concepts to have in mind when analyzing media. The more our young people become familiar with these concepts, the better able they will be to focus their examination of media; and the better able they will be to understand the stated and implied meanings that are embedded in the messages they are analyzing.

- 1) All media messages are 'constructed.' It is important for children to know that media presentations don't just happen. Commercials, songs, movies, newscasts, television shows, etc., are always created for very specific purposes.
- 2) Media messages are constructed using a creative language that has its own rules. When a media message is created, it is done using tested and proven language and techniques that are designed to persuade you to do something.
- 3) Different people experience the same media message differently. When media messages are created they often target a specific audience. It is beneficial to

try to view the message from another person's perspective in order to gain a greater understanding of the message.

- 4) Media have embedded values and points of view. Quite often these values are in the subtext of the message. It is important to consider what types of behaviors or lifestyles are being promoted or sold.
- 5) Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power. It is important to understand that no media is concerned with our spiritual well-being. Its primary purposes are to make money and gain power.

Combining the five key concepts with the four principal messages of media equips a Sunday school or CYC class with many tools to begin deconstructing and interpreting media. It will be important for teachers to select media examples that are appropriate for their age group to analyze. There are many, many examples that would never be appropriate, yet it is quite easy to find examples that will enable you to teach good media literacy skills. Keep your eyes open for ads, movie posters, magazine covers, songs, video games, T-shirts, billboards, etc., that carry corrupting messages and can be appropriately analyzed in class.

## Activities

**Deconstruction.** Select a media sample and analyse it using the key concepts. The goal is to get to the truth of the message. Asking the right questions is crucial when deconstructing a media sample. For example: Who created this message and why? Who is their target audience? What creative or persuasive techniques have they used to catch my attention? How close is it to reality? What values or morals are being promoted or ignored?

**Finish the Story.** This is a particularly good strategy to use with advertisements, but it also works with other media trends and messages. It is always beneficial to have students follow things through to their logical ending. Have them imagine that they have purchased a certain product and started using it. They “finish the story” by discussing, writing, acting out, or drawing a picture that represents the truth about their life after using the product. Ultimately this should demonstrate the many false claims that ads make and the consequences of risky behaviors.

**Create an Infographic.** Infographics display a lot of information in a simple, attractive way.<sup>2</sup> Show your students some examples and have them create an infographic to educate their peers about the dangers of a specific media topic. Students can create infographics online by going to sites like [piktochart.com/](http://piktochart.com/) and [www.easel.ly](http://www.easel.ly). In the process, they can make media serve them, not the other way around.

**Prepare a PowerPoint (or Prezi) Presentation.** Have individuals or groups of students create a PowerPoint presentation for their Sunday school or CYC class that promotes positive media use, the dangers of media, online safety, effective strategies for curbing the overuse of media, etc. I also mention Prezi because it can be used to create a presentation online. The presentation can be stored and then accessed anywhere. Go to [prezi.com/](http://prezi.com/) to get started.

**Create a Commercial.** Have students use the techniques they have learned to create a commercial that promotes Godly behaviors and characteristics. You'll

be amazed at what young people can do using their media knowledge and tools.

**Be an Ad/Media Detective.** Have students bring in an ad or media message that is trying to sell them something. Have them identify the strategies that the ad/media uses and have them explain the real message that is being communicated.

**Bible examples of “Sales Jobs”.** Find examples in the Bible of people or groups that used creative techniques to sell a message (Jeroboam, Absalom, Rabshakeh, etc.). Use media literacy skills to analyze their messages.

**Create a Counter Ad.** Start with a specific ad. Using the format of the ad itself, have the students recreate it, cutting through the deception and providing truthful statements that can be glued over the original ad.

### **Of great importance**

The most important thing you can do for your Sunday school or CYC class members is to gradually transfer the responsibility of discernment to them. It is essential that they begin to monitor their own habits, and that they begin to think critically about what the world is trying to feed them. It is essential that they become able to independently analyze and interpret the bombardment of messages they receive and not let media control them. It is vital that they understand that all the things promoted by the world are temporary; they are all going to pass away. Spending our time and energy on eternal things is of much greater value.

The most important tool we have at our disposal is the word of God. We must continue to make our Heavenly Father’s way of thinking our way of thinking. Most of what we see and hear being promoted these days is utterly opposed to our God. We need to have verses imprinted on the tablets of our hearts so that when temptations arise, the verses will shout out to us to reject the evil and choose what is good. Throughout all the activities discussed, verses need to be at hand and committed to memory. Below are a few that can be used as starting points.

- Sexual Immorality: Psa 103:3; Job 31:1; Matt 5:28; 1Cor 6:18.
- Materialism: Psa 37:16; Matt 13:22; 1Tim 6:10; Luke 12:15.
- Immoral living: Rom 13:13; Gal 5:21; 1Thess 5:5-7.
- Violence: Gen 6:11 and Matt 24:37; Psa 11:5.

Much more could be said, but this article provides a way for families and ecclesias to get started in media literacy. It has never been more important to do so. Historically, we have done a very good job of teaching our children the essential message of the Bible and how to defend ourselves against false doctrine. In the meantime, the world has been devising more and more ingenious and subtle ways to divert our hearts away from our Heavenly Father. It is time to start teaching our children how to stand up against this insidious onslaught and why it is essential.

*John Perks (Ottawa, ON)*

#### **Notes:**

1. Elizabeth Thoman, *Literacy for the 21st Century, An Overview & Orientation Guide to Media Literacy Education*, Center for Media Literacy, 2003, p.9. This document is available online at [http://www.medialit.org/sites/default/files/mlk/01\\_MLKOriention.pdf](http://www.medialit.org/sites/default/files/mlk/01_MLKOriention.pdf).
2. Charts, diagrams and graphs are common examples of infographics.

## Youth Speaks

### Jonathan the Faithful Prince (17) Jonathan's Misjudgment

The situation at Ramah had left David quite disturbed. He had thought that he would be safe with Samuel: he had likely calculated that Saul wouldn't even think to capture him while he was with the old prophet, at least out of respect for Samuel. However, the sudden appearance of Saul's messengers had probably made him feel quite uneasy. Though the messengers were stopped from their evil deed by the spirit of God, it would seem as though David still didn't entirely feel very good about their presence. His discomfort would have increased dramatically when he saw the murderous king at Samuel's house. Saul too, like the messengers, was stayed from his intentions, but David could no longer feel safe with Samuel. The prophet's presence had not kept the king from attempting to capture him, but how long would the spirit of God keep these men prophesying?

#### What was he to do?

In a desperate attempt to find some form of safety, being driven from his home and his wife, being driven from Samuel, David went to his best friend, the one who had before pleaded on his behalf:

*“And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?” (1Sam 20:1).*

One of the most unsettling things about this entire experience for David was that he didn't know what to do to make the problem go away: he had no idea what he had done to bring about this hatred of his father-in-law! Whatever Saul had asked, he had done:

- When the eyes of Israel were looking to Saul to kill Goliath, David filled the void and fought the giant, so that Saul didn't have to!
- Whenever the Philistines attacked, David fought against them and won. When Saul told him that he wanted a dowry of one hundred Philistine foreskins, David had brought two hundred.

All throughout his time with the king, David had experienced Saul's love and had seen Saul's favor bestowed upon him. Suddenly, Saul's feelings towards him had drastically changed and he couldn't understand it! Did Jonathan have some sort of insight into his father's feelings? David knew that Jonathan and Saul shared a close relationship — perhaps Jonathan could tell him what he was doing wrong.

But Jonathan's answer would have exasperated David even further.

*“And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so” (1Sam 20:2).*

Though the situation was dire, Jonathan didn't feel nearly as distressed about it as David: clearly, he thought that nothing was wrong. When David wanted to know what he had done to provoke Saul's anger, Jonathan essentially told David that he didn't need to worry, Saul wasn't planning on doing anything to him anyway. If he were, surely, Jonathan said, he would know.

Somehow, Jonathan had missed the events of the last few days. Knowing nothing about Saul throwing the javelin at David, putting a guard around David's house in order to kill him in the morning, and chasing him all the way to Samuel's house, Jonathan felt fairly relaxed about the entire situation. He knew that his father had made an oath, and Saul, he thought, didn't break his oaths.

How this answer must have been a massive emotional letdown for David! He didn't know if he would ever see his wife again, Samuel the prophet was not able to help him (at least, so he thought), and now his only other friend thought that he was being too dramatic and worrying too much! Thus, in an attempt to show Jonathan how serious he was, he too, just as Saul had done, made an oath:

*"And David swore moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death" (1Sam 20:3).*

With these words, Jonathan would have known that the situation was somehow different than he thought it was. This wasn't the David that Jonathan remembered. "There is but a step between me and death" were the words of a David who was struggling to believe (or had perhaps forgotten for the moment?) that God had anointed him to be king, and would eventually exalt him. They were the words of a man who was struggling to walk in faith.

### **David's struggling faith**

Truly, this was a time of desperation for David, and his faith would appear to be faltering. Just consider some of the signs that show what a struggle this was for David:

- 1) In the past few hours, he had just been *miraculously* preserved from *three* of Saul's bands of men, and from Saul himself. God had saved his life in a way that could only be attributed to divine intervention. The Spirit of God had come on the men and it was impossible for them to harm the LORD's anointed. Nevertheless, he chose to leave the house of the prophet, presumably because he didn't feel safe there. Even with that demonstration of power, David still couldn't see past the moment of trial.
- 2) David had just expressed, in quite dramatic terms, that he believed that he was very close to death. Though God had anointed him and promised him the throne of Israel, David *seriously* thought that he might not survive the next twenty four hours. While David's breakdown is entirely *reasonable*, considering the sudden and dangerous shift that had just taken place in his life, viewing death as a possibility seems like a lapse of faith. He was the LORD's anointed. As long as he stayed true to his God, he would rule over Israel. God

had made a promise, and He wasn't going to break it (as evidenced by his miraculous deliverance just hours prior!).

- 3) Throughout the years in which David fled for his life from Saul, there were many times in which David was able to remember that God would deliver him from all evil. As with any of us, he didn't feel this way all of the time, but there were certainly moments of great faith during David's fugitive years. In Psalm 59, the psalm which was written after David left his wife and fled from his own house through the window (see the psalm's title), David expressed his confidence in God's power and willingness to save:

*“Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men. For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD” (Psa 59:1-3).*

Thus, right in the beginning of the psalm, David laid out his petition. Even as his enemies watched his own house and he had to quickly create plans to escape, David turned to God for deliverance. Even more so, towards the end of the psalm he not only *turned* to God for salvation from Saul, but he *fervently believed* that this salvation would come:

*“But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: forp thou hast been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble. Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defense, and the God of my mercy” (Psa 59:16-17).*

When reading these verses, it's important to remember that David probably wrote these words, “when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.” They were not written after he had successfully escaped from his house. They were written in the very moment of trial, the very moment when David didn't actually know what was going to happen! Nevertheless, when he wrote the last two verses of the psalm, David wrote *as though the conflict had already finished*. When he escaped from Saul, it was night time, and Saul's men were going to take him when the morning came (1Sam 19:11). But despite this, even though David knew when they planned to take him, he confidently wrote, *“I will sing aloud of thy mercy **in the morning.**”* David earnestly believed that he would survive to see the morning light and that in the morning, he would be free from Saul, because *“thou hast been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble.”* Thus, with all of his heart, he would sing to God. This same attitude appeared in David's mind all throughout Saul's pursuit of his life. Just a few days later, while he was still running from Saul, David wrote another psalm, this time about Doeg (again, see the psalm's title), whom David had seen when he was at the tabernacle in Nob (1Sam 21:7). In that psalm, David expressed his confidence in God's deliverance once again:

*“Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually. Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah... But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. I will praise thee for*

*ever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints” (Psa 52:1-3, 8-9).*

While Doeg was out working iniquity and bringing words of David’s presence in the tabernacle to Saul, David wrote that he would continue to trust in God “*for ever and ever.*” God would be his source of strength. He would remain faithful. He would do whatever he could to bring praise to his God.

### **David’s trust in God**

Finally, in another example of a psalm that was written just a few days later, David once more showed that same solid trust in the God of Israel. After fleeing from Doeg and the tabernacle, David thought that he could find solace in the territory of the Philistines (1Sam 21:10). Once he had arrived, he realized that his assumption was desperately wrong, as the Philistines immediately recognized him as Israel’s great warrior who had slain “ten thousands.” Fearful of what the king of the Philistines might do to him, David feigned himself to be mad before the king, who was a man named Achish (also known as Abimelech). Upon seeing David’s apparently “poor” mental state, Achish cast him out of his courts, declaring, “*Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me?*” After escaping from the courts of Achish, David wrote another psalm (see title) — and once again, this psalm reaffirmed his trust in his God:

*“This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them... The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles... Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all” (Psa 34:6-7, 17, 19).*

Just as with the other two psalms, David was filled with confidence and trust in his God. He knew that Yahweh had the power to save him, and he believed that He would, probably because David remembered that he had been promised a throne and he had been anointed to be king over God’s people.

Just as the Lord Jesus Christ, who could say that “*Are there not were twelve hours in the day*”: it was not yet time for the light of the world to set. So David often had the same attitude. He recognized that God’s angels encamped around him and that God had a plan for him which was not yet fulfilled. Thus, he had a fervent trust that God would be his defense. Unlike Jonathan and his armor bearer, who essentially said that they knew that God had the ability to save them, but He might choose to not do so (1Sam 14:8-10), David had reason to earnestly believe that God would be his deliverance. Often he believed it: he had this confidence in the incident just *before* this meeting with Jonathan and in the incidents just *after*. But in the interim, as he approached Israel’s prince, that confident and trusting attitude was nowhere to be found. Instead, the declaration came forth, “*truly, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death*” (1Sam 20:3).

Indeed, this was a dark day for the man whose thoughts were so often in line with his Creator’s.

*Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)*



## Bible Mission News

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### Guyana News 2014

The six ecclesias in Guyana have been busily engaged in ecclesial ministrations both in care for one another and in preaching. Here are some of the highlights of this year now nearing its close.

In January, after suffering a major stroke our beloved Sis. Enid D'Anjou was removed from Guyana to the US where her daughter could attend to her care. She reluctantly bid good-bye to her dear Georgetown ecclesia.

In March, Eccles decided to move their Gospel Proclamation across the river where they run a satellite Sunday school of about 25 children started a few years ago by Sis. Candace. The hope is that the parents of the children attending Sunday School will hear the Gospel that their children are being taught in Sunday school.



**Bible School at Georgetown Hall**

In April, Georgetown hosted the annual Guyana Bible School. Brethren Don Luff, of CBMC, and Rafeek Soolaman, formerly from Kilcoy ecclesia, were the two speakers. Bro. Don especially enjoyed his first visit to Guyana.

In May, brothers and sisters gathered for the now annual brother's seminar and sister's seminar; it was

the ever-enthusiastic sisters that began this tradition a few years back.

In July, the ecclesias welcomed the expanded Truth Corps team in Guyana for a second year. As anticipated, the team was well-received and found many different avenues of services. The team leaders were Bro. Duncan Kenzie and Sis. Myra Lucke both from Canada and both visiting Guyana for the second time. Guyana has that kind of draw. The brothers and sisters are warm-hearted and welcoming and the avenues of service are varied and never lacking.

New Amsterdam remains in critical need of a missionary couple. There are significant needs for someone to guide and build the ecclesia as well as instruct the large group of teens and young adults. This group is at a crossroads in their lives and desperately need direction and encouragement.

In August, Sharon Arjune, daughter of Rayman and Kamla, was baptized having completed nearly a year of instruction classes with our resident “field worker” David Andrews. Just a week after her baptism, she left for China on a scholarship to study medicine. She is the second young person from New Amsterdam to leave the country to get the education needed to obtain employment. Bro. Robin Rupenarine is in his final year studying in Cuba. When families do not have funds to pay for university studies, the children can sometimes qualify for scholarships overseas. These are often difficult programs as the language of instruction is not English, so there are not only cultural hurdles and academic ones, but language issues. Please remember these young people in your prayers.

In September, the oldest son of Derek and Marlyn Babb, Derek Jr., was baptized into Christ in Mocha. A week later Cosmo Brown, friend and now husband of our sister Sade Barrow, was baptized. Sade is a wonderful example of faith and commitment. She waited for her friend to make the decision to be baptized and complete his months of instruction classes before they were married. Now Eccles has not only another brother to join them, but a couple. Two couples, Dacie and Rayon Agard in Eccles and Dilean and Ryan Anamayah in New Amsterdam, welcomed their first baby. Joel and Ronique Tenesse are shortly anticipating the birth of their first child. Unfortunately they will be leaving Plegt Ankar and settling in Black Bush so Joel can complete his teacher-training program. We pray God’s richest blessings on each of these young couples and their little treasure from our Heavenly Father.

In December, God willing, all eight Sunday schools in Guyana will host a year-end Sunday school party for their nearly 200 Sunday school children. The generosity



**Sunday, April afternoon SS presentation — children group singing — little girl in front was a real treat!**

of the Christadelphian Save the Children’s Fund (CSTCF) in cooperation with CBMC and the local brethren make this possible as a very special event each year. CSTCF provides all Sunday school materials including lesson books, supplies, prizes and, even for some, clothing to wear to Sunday school. We very much appreciate their labors.

We are deeply thankful

for the generosity of so many brethren worldwide who give donations to CBMC and CSTCF, who give their time to visit Guyana teaching classes and encouraging the brethren there and who remember our brethren in prayer. The amazing energy and dedication of our Guyanese brethren sends a sweet smelling savor to our Father and attests to the power of the love of the brethren as we seek to keep that new commandment our Lord Jesus gave us; we forge on despite discouragement and hardship. Praise be to God.

*Ted and Dolores Sleeper, CBMC links to Guyana*

## **Panama — Santa Clara after 40 years!**

Once again during July and August of 2014 the two Panama Ecclesias planned a number of preaching and fraternal activities. Brother, sisters and young people from New York and Ontario were there to support special Bible Classes, campaign activities and a Bible Camp — they were a big boost to all events! Most of the talks were given in English and Spanish. The speakers for the week's program were brothers Clive Drepaul (New York) and Don Luff (Ontario).

On Saturday, July 26th, the Panama City Ecclesia held two advertised lectures on the following topics at their meeting place — *“How to use our money and time as children of God”* and *“The zeal for the Word of God”*. Approximately 30 adults, teens and children attended — this included several interested friends. On Sunday, a remembrance service was held at the hall, followed by a nice hot meal served by the sisters, and then a Bible Class was given on the subject: *“God — Father and Creator”*.

During the week home visits took place, as well as two public lectures in Colon at a banquet hall on Wednesday, July 30th on the subjects — *“The Things concerning the Kingdom of God”* and *“The Things concerning the Name of Jesus Christ”*. There was good attendance by members of both ecclesias, as well as six visitors — about 30 in total. Two of the visitors were women, who had participated in ecclesial activities in Colon for over two years — they had been preparing themselves for baptism. Both ladies had successful interviews for baptism during the week, and baptismal arrangements were made for the upcoming weekend.

**Large class room at the Bible camp.**





**The younger class at Bible camp**

Friday, August 1st to Sunday, August 3rd was the big event — the Bible Camp! Members, their families, and friends travelled to a campground about two hours from Panama City in an area called Santa Clara. It is believed that the last time such a weekend Bible School took place was about 40 years ago, and at the same location! What an experience! All the activities were well-planned, and the spiritual and natural food were both ample. The two themes presented at the Camp were on different aspects

of the Christian Life and preparing ourselves for the Kingdom of God. One of the many encouraging observations was the fact that about 20 teens and children were present of the 47 in total at the Camp. This has sparked the need to increase the activities for the young in both ecclesias. It has been many years since there has been a CYC in either ecclesia. On a related matter, the Colon Ecclesia has since acquired the room adjacent to their current meeting room (in the same building). This will be used for the growing Sunday School and other activities. However, the highlight of the Bible Camp took place Saturday morning August 2nd — we all walk down the road from the campgrounds to a beach on the coast of the Pacific Ocean to witness two baptisms — Loretta and Malva took on the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Both were extended the right hand of fellowship during the Breaking of Bread Service the next day — the last activity of the weekend. The emotion displayed by the two new sisters, and the warmth and fellowship expressed to them during and after the service was an enjoyable and uplifting culmination to the week and the weekend together. Preliminary plans have already been discussed for July/August 2015, God willing. We pray for the ongoing growth in Panama, but especially for God's blessing on the youth in the two ecclesias, at this time.

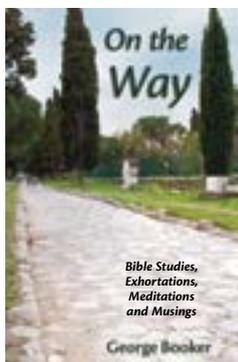
*Bro. Don Luff, CBMA representative  
Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau,  
CBMA/C Publicity*

**Confession of faith on beach prior to baptism of Malva (on left) and Loretta.**



## **Books from The Tidings**

### **On the Way: Bible Studies, Exhortations, Meditations and Musings, by George Booker**



*“The Way” is a path to salvation, a manner of living day by day, a journey through life with all its ups and downs. This book offers insights, encouragement and food for thought, to encourage all those “on the Way”, whether young in the Truth or baptized for many years. The 71 chapters vary in length from short reflections to in-depth studies. Each focuses on a different topic, from the serious to the lighthearted: practical issues of life in the Truth, difficult passages, exhortation from hymns and songs, personal memories, and observations about the modern world. Published: 2014 – soft cover, 309 pages, color and B&W photos \$9.00 USD (plus S&H)*

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## News and 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.)

### **GRANITE STATE, NH**

It is with great sadness that we share news of the falling asleep of our Sis. Eileen Corbeille. She fell asleep suddenly on October 2, 2014, following surgery.

Sis. Eileen was baptized in the Toronto, ON Ecclesia in 1983 and following her marriage to Bro. Bob Corbeille, became a beloved, active, and supportive member of the Granite State Ecclesia, then known as the Merrimack, NH Ecclesia. She served the Lord with her brothers and sisters in many ways through the years, and most lovingly as a Sunday school teacher for the young ones. She will be greatly missed, especially by her brothers and sisters in this ecclesia and also by many throughout the New England area. We pray that Yahweh's grace and love will provide comfort to our Bro. Bob, and his two daughters, Rachel and Nicole.

Our earnest hope is for the soon return of our Lord Jesus Christ when those who sleep in his Name will hear his voice and rise to meet their Lord at last. With that hope in our hearts we can endure the loss of our loved ones and overcome our sorrow, being assured that they will live again, and through God's great mercy and grace may live forever in His kingdom.

*Steve Smith*

### **HONESDALE, PA.**

We welcomed Bro. Dave Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ) to our chapel on October 26, 2014, to exhort and were very edified by his words. Afterwards we enjoyed the luncheon that the sisters prepared.

*Stephen J. DeMarco*

### **SARASOTA, FL**

The Sarasota Ecclesia is pleased to announce that after a satisfactory interview, Sis. Carol Whitham has become the newest member of this ecclesia. She was a member of another fellowship.

We would also like to thank Bre. Rick Hackett (Austin Leander, TX) and Jim Cowie (Moreton Bay, Aust.) for their encouraging words of exhortation. We would also like to thank Bro. Jim for his recent study day at the Largo, FL Ecclesia, as well as his "Super Sunday School" at the Sarasota Ecclesia.

*James Wilkinson*

### **SUSSEX, NB**

We thank Bro. Jim Sullivan for his studies on, "The Sons of Zeruah" at our Thanksgiving gathering in October. We were also pleased to have other brothers and sisters attending from the Boston, MA area, Meriden, CT, North Battleford, SK, as well as the UK.

Our next study weekend is April 25-26, 2015, and Bro. Tom Wilson (Cambridge, ON) will be the speaker.

On Thanksgiving, October 10-11, 2014, the speaker will be Bro. Bruce Waite (Meriden, CT).

We apologize to Bro. and Sis. Paul Harrison in reporting they were from the Daventry, UK Ecclesia when in fact they are from Dudley Queens Cross, UK Ecclesia.

*Cliff Baines*

## **VICTORIA, BC**

We continue to be blessed with numerous visitors, coming from near and far, including: Surrey, Maple Ridge, New Westminster, Vernon, Okanagan, Comox, Saanich, Shelbourne, Nanaimo, Cumberland, Toronto East, Prince George, Mississauga West, and Maple Ridge in Canada; Seattle, Verdugo Hills, and Pittsburgh in the US; as well as S. Aust. and Sri Lanka. The list is, happily, too long to accurately record. We welcome them all to meet with us.

We were saddened by the recent loss of our Sis. Marjorie MacIvor on September 15, 2014. Sis. Marjorie was the mother of our Sis. Joan Bennett, and the daughter of Bro. Ernest Bird. We mourn her falling asleep in Christ but not as others without our precious hope.

We rejoiced in gaining two new members by baptism. JONAH KNORR was baptized on September 14, 2014. Bro. Jonah is the son of our Sis. Denise and the late Bro. Jerome Knorr. ALEX STARCHER was baptized on October 26, 2014. Bro. Al comes to us from the Learn to Read the Bible Effectively Seminar held in 2001.

Our Sis. Becki Brown was transferred, with our love, to the Okanagan, BC Ecclesia on September 21, 2014. This past summer, our Bro. Dan Ferrie and Sis. Danielle Henley of the Sacramento, CA Ecclesia were married and are now residing in Sacramento, CA.

On July 27, 2014, we hosted the Seattle Ecclesia on the occasion of the baptism of JOSEPHINE and ANTHONY HOWE. Bro. and Sis. Howe have roots on Vancouver Island and had been attending for many years before relocating to Seattle for employment. It was a joyous occasion for both ecclesias.

Our third Bible Mission Fundraiser is scheduled for January 24, 2015. We anticipate another exciting evening on behalf of the CBMC.

God willing, our Spring Study Weekend is scheduled for March 15, 2015. Bro. Jim Harper will be speaking on the theme, "Things Eternal: A Look at Some Wonderful New Testament Words and Phrases".

The Pacific Northwest Annual CYC Conference is to be held again at Camp Pringle on Shawnigan Lake, on April 2-5, 2015. Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD) will be speaking. His theme will be, "As it was in the Days of Noah". For further information please contact our CYC leader, Bro. Mike McStravick at: mtmcstravick@gmail.com.

For further information please contact the undersigned at: victoria@csll.ca.

*Clyde Snobelen*

## **WASHINGTON DC**

The Washington DC Ecclesia has enjoyed the visits of many brothers and sisters since our last intelligence and wish to thank the following brothers for their words of exhortation: Allen Laben, John Gischel and Denis Bevans (Baltimore, MD); David Fertig and Lee Huff (Northern Virginia, VA); Ron McPhee (Richmond Petersburg, VA); Mike Livermore (Milford Road, MI); Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA);

David Leigh (Erdington, UK); Victor Perfitt (Bournemouth Winton, UK); and Luke Mansfield (Enfield, Adelaide, Aust.).

In April, we enjoyed fellowship with the members of the Baltimore Ecclesia and many visitors to our Semi-annual Baltimore/Washington Gathering Weekend. We would like to thank Bro. Ron Kidd (London, ON) who gave classes for the weekend on the subject, “God’s Timetable for Redemption”.

We would also like to thank Bro. Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD) who along with Bro. Roberto Lara, has been leading our Learn to Read the Bible Seminar since May. We are pleased to say that after five months we still have five contacts in regular attendance.

In June, we hosted our CYC camping and canoe trip with families from a number of ecclesias attending. We wish to thank Bro. Craig and Sis. Diane McInturff (Shenandoah Valley, VA) for all their help in making it a success.

On June 12, 2014, we rejoiced with Bro. David and Sis. Elizabeth Perry on the birth of their daughter, Shaye Abigail Perry.

On September 20, 2014, Bro. Tom Brittle presided over the wedding of Sis. Keena Charles and Bro. James Cupertino at our chapel. We pray God will bless their union, and help them strengthen one another in the days ahead while awaiting the return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

On October 28, 2014, we were saddened by the falling asleep of our Sis. Margot Cuppett. Sis. Margot transferred to the Washington DC Ecclesia from Michigan in 2007, where she had been a member of the Novi, MI and then the Grand Rapids, MI Ecclesias. She took on the saving name of Jesus Christ on February 4, 1990, and now sleeps in the Lord awaiting his return and the resurrection of the dead.

*Bob Kling*

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## ***The Relatives of John Thomas in Washington***

*Brother Thomas’ two brothers, Robert and Alfred, and his sister, Jane, all lived in the city. Robert and Alfred, both doctors and much younger than John Thomas, both had been baptized at some point not now known, and met with the brothers and sisters of the Washington ecclesia on occasion. Jane, one year Brother Thomas’ junior, was employed as a school teacher. While baptized at some unknown stage, she was a member of the ecclesia, but inactive. Dr. Thomas’ father, also John, died in Washington in 1864, apparently quite suddenly. Brother Thomas, in a letter in October 1864, notes that his father had died in Washington earlier in the year “without the least sickness”.*

*(Condensed from History of the Washington Ecclesia by Bro. Ron Hicks)*

**Letters to the editor can be sent to [letters@tidings.org](mailto:letters@tidings.org).**

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

**Submissions under 300 words are encouraged —**

**the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity.**

## Minute Meditation

### She Did What She Could

When Mary, the sister of Martha, poured a box of very precious ointment of spikenard upon the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair, we read that Judas Iscariot complained about the waste. Jesus' reply was, "Let her alone... She hath done what she could."

Our Lord does not ask any of us to do more than we can, but he also does expect us to do what we can. We are all different people and we all have different kinds of talents, but each of us can do something. At the judgment seat the Lord will ask us about things we did or did not do during our lifetime — whether we did what we could. What will we say?

Someone may ask, what about those who have physical disabilities? There is always one thing each of us is able to do every day regardless of our age or physical condition. We can pray. Prayer is a wonderful gift God has given us, the opportunity to talk directly to our Creator and address Him as "our Father," and He wants us to pray to Him.

Paul tells us to pray without ceasing, and James assures us that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous person availeth much. Paul counsels the believers in Philippi, saying, "Don't worry over anything whatever. Tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer, and the peace of God which surpasses human understanding, will keep constant guard over your hearts and minds as they rest in Christ Jesus."

What a wonderful way to live! Not only is prayer something every one of us is able to do, but the peace of God will fill our hearts and we will be able to rest in our Lord. Are we praying regularly?

What else should we be doing in additional to praying? Each of us can do something more to serve our God every day, even though we each have different abilities. The prophet Micah tells us, "and what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

To walk humbly with our God, means we have to get up and get going, moving our feet while asking God to guide us. He cannot guide our feet if we just sit around all day. We need to travel in God's direction, as the wise man Solomon explains, "Trust in the LORD with all your hearts and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths." We need to find a path, a godly path, to serve our God in our daily life. Even if we are bedridden or in a wheelchair, we can figuratively move our feet as we look for ways to serve our God. Most of us can manage cards, letters or phone calls to give encouragement to others who are lonely or stressed or in need. Paul, under house arrest in Rome and not able to move around freely, preached to all he came in contact with, wrote letters to distant ecclesias, and even converted some in Caesar's household.

Brethren and sisters confined to the hospital have preached to their doctors, nurses, roommates and visitors. Surely those of us in better health can do more.

God knows all about us, even to how many hairs we have, which for some of us is not many, but still it is more than we know. He knows what we can do, and He expects each of us to do that. We should not limit ourselves. We need to ask our Heavenly Father to guide us and then get moving, looking for something we can do and then doing what we believe He wants us to do.

Micah also tells us we must be just in all our dealings with others and we must be merciful. We are told that we will be shown as much mercy by the Lord as we have shown to those we deal with. In the Lord's Prayer we ask for our sins to be forgiven as we have forgiven others. Based on these criteria there are some who will receive little or no mercy because that is how they have treated others. Even when we are in the right and others are wrong, those in the wrong are also God's children that we can try to help, knowing that God is not willing that any should perish but that all come to repentance. James tells us: "He who converts a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins."

Another point Micah makes is humility; we are to walk humbly. If God is doing the guiding of our feet, we know we will walk humbly for we cannot take credit for the way God is guiding them. After all, we have asked Him to direct our steps, so how can we be proud of where He is taking us? Paul tells us, "For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" We need to give our best effort to our work for the Lord, but recognize that the outcome is the Lord's, and to God be the glory.

Doing what we can may change over time. Certainly what many of us are able to do now is not the same as it was years before; the years go by, and our strength and capacity for work may seem so much less than what they were 20, 30, 40 or even 50 years ago, but still there is something we can do. After turning our life over to God in prayer and asking Him to direct our steps, we will discover that we will be able to do "what we can" for Him. And it will be something. It cannot be doing nothing, for God will be directing us to do justly and love mercy and walk humbly before Him.

*Robert J. Lloyd*

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**She Hath Done  
What She Could**

# Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

## DECEMBER 2014

**13 Toronto Church St., ON** Study Day at Church Street Ecclesia, 728 Church St., Toronto, ON. Start time: 10am. Speaker: Bro. Brian Luke (AUS) on "The Atonement". Please register for lunch with Bro. Peter Wisniowski peteresa@hotmail.com or 416-695-3939.

**20-26 Ontario Winter Bible School**, The Best Western Highland Inn and Conference Center, Midland (ON). Speakers and subjects: Bro. Brian Luke (Brighton, S. Australia): "The Friends of Jeremiah", young people "The Seven Angels and the Seven Trumpets"; Bro. John Owen (Mumbles, South Wales, UK): Israel "my witnesses"; and Bro. Bryan Styles (Livonia, MI): "The Enigma of Ecclesiastes — who knoweth what is good for man?" Registration information on our web site [www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com](http://www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com).

## JANUARY 2015

**2-4 Cranston, RI** New Years Study weekend with Bro. Garth Maier speaking on "Titus: Ecclesial Order". Contact: Bro. Bruce Haughton by e-mail [aandvoort98@gmail.com](mailto:aandvoort98@gmail.com).

**17 Toronto Church Street, ON** Study day, three part study by Bro. Jim Dillingham (Cranston, RI). Starting time: 1 pm. Dinner 5 pm. Follow up exhortation/lecture Jan. 18. Please register with Bro. Peter Wisniowski peteresa@hotmail.com or call 416 695-3939.

## FEBRUARY 2015

**7 Brantford, ON** Annual Junior CYC and Little Disciples Winter Gathering at Camp Trillium. Workbooks will be posted toward the end of the year on [www.brantfordchristadelphians.com](http://www.brantfordchristadelphians.com). For additional information email Bro. Peter and Sis. Karly Styles at [peterandkarly@juno.com](mailto:peterandkarly@juno.com).

## MARCH 2015

**15 Victoria, BC** Spring study weekend with Bro. Jim Harper. His theme will be "Things Eternal: A Look at Some Wonderful New Testament Words and Phrases". Contact: Bro. Clyde Snobelen at [victoria@csll.ca](mailto:victoria@csll.ca).

## APRIL 2015

**2-5 Pacific Northwest CYC Conference** at Camp Pringle on Shawnigan Lake. Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD) will be speaking. His theme will be, "As it was in the Days of Noah". For further information please contact Bro. Mike McStravick at [mtmcstravick@gmail.com](mailto:mtmcstravick@gmail.com).

**25-26 Sussex, NB** Spring study weekend with Bro. Tom Wilson (Cambridge, ON).

## JULY 2015

**26-Aug 1 Rogue River Bible School** Speakers and subjects: Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch, New Zealand): "The House of Asaph Family of Faith/Masters of Music"; Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto Church St., ON): "A Life of Samson — 'I will Shake Myself'"; Bro. Jim Cowie (Moreton Bay, Brisbane, AUS): "Events Surrounding the Return of Christ". For more information contact Bro. Randy Yoshida at [yoshida@cpros.com](mailto:yoshida@cpros.com). For registration, contact Sis. Pat Posey at [Patlposey@gmail.com](mailto:Patlposey@gmail.com).

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