

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
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of the Kingdom of God

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Editorial — The Basis of Our Faith	55
Exhortation — What’s the Point?, <i>Don Styles</i>	58
First Principles — The Doctrine of the Trinity — Why it Cannot be True, <i>Lee Livermore</i>	62
Hope for Life, <i>Chicago III Ecclesia</i>	68
Bible Study — Life of Timothy, (10) “For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus”, <i>Ryan Mutter</i>	72
The Joy of Sunday Schooling — They Took a Stand, <i>Jim Harper</i>	76
Youth Speaks — The Anointing of David, <i>Brandon Cipriotti</i>	80
Reflections:	
A Message, <i>ASK Newsletter</i>	85
Perseverance, <i>George Booker</i>	87
Bible Mission News — Visiting Ecclesias in South America; Jamaica — Baptisms, Preaching and Fraternal; Jamaica — Heroes Day Fraternal; The Missionary Journeys of Bro. Ruben	88
News and Notices	96
Minute Meditation — Almost is not enough, <i>Robert J. Lloyd</i>	101
Coming Events.....	102

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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Guilt by Association?

Some would say that to allow a decision we feel is wrong, even if it is taken by a distant ecclesial, is to partake of another man's sin (1Tim 5:22; 2John 11). This idea of guilt by association has plagued many discussions about fellowship with members of other groups. Though the word for 'partake' means 'fellowship', the passage in Timothy is actually talking about the appointment of elders and the need to be sure of their credentials. When it is applied as a doctrine of fellowship, however, it has the effect of denying what it claims to uphold. Fellowships who practice what they call "Ecclesial Unity" — requiring universal approval of every fellowship decision — are prone to division.

But fellowship is about unity and reconciliation among brethren, not about schism! Once a split has occurred because of a difference of judgment on a non-fundamental point, or by seeking to define a principle more closely than scripture itself does, there is a tendency for further and more rapid splintering into ever smaller fragments. Each group adds to its statement of faith clauses which confirm the action which has been taken. This effectively restricts their fellowship for all future occasions. The history of minority fellowships sadly proves this process to be true. There is probably not a single group which still exists in an undivided state following its original secession from the Central fellowship.

The Christadelphian, 1992, p64

Editorial

The Basis of Our Faith

Introduction

As we have often stressed, our belief in the Bible principles is encapsulated in the document known as the BASE, (Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith). Many other statements of faith exist and are used but this BASF is the glue that binds our community together, even though we do not meet exclusively on this basis, but on the Bible Principles thereby encapsulated. I once collected a sample of the numerous statements of belief of various Christadelphian ecclesias and organizations from the Internet, and very few actually linked to the BASE.

However, technically this is not the only basis of our faith in North America. Some are aware that in Australia the long standing division between the two groups: “The Shield” and “Central” (the minority) was healed by what is known as “The Unity Book”, which is basically an account of the initiative by Brethren John Carter and Cyril Cooper in 1956, who visited at the request of the Australian Brethren.



Similarly, in September of 1952, Bro. John Carter while on a visit to the USA was invited to attend a joint meeting at the (Berean) Jersey City Hall between ecclesial representatives of some of the Central (Amended) ecclesias and many of the Berean ecclesias. (As in Australia, it appears the Central ecclesias were actually the minority.) The proposed basis was initially a resolution as discussed below.

The statement

At this meeting, a new statement was put to the delegates for consideration as a basis of reunion. The statement consisted of three items to which were appended Clauses 3–12 of the Statement of Faith and Doctrines to be Rejected 4, 5, and 27. The three items are:

- 1) That we agree that the doctrines set forth in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith are a true exposition of the first principles of the oracles of God as set forth in the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and that therefore these doctrines are to be believed and taught by us without reservation; the doctrine of the Scriptures on sin and its effects and God’s salvation from sin and death in Christ Jesus being defined in clauses three to twelve of the Statement of Faith.

- 2) That we recognize as brethren and welcome to our fellowship all who have been immersed by whomsoever after their acceptance of the same doctrines and precepts, and that any brother departing from any element of the One Faith as defined in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith is to be dealt with according to apostolic precept.
- 3) If an ecclesia is known to persist in teaching false doctrines, or to retain in fellowship those who do, other ecclesias can only avoid being involved by disclaiming fellowship.

Subsequently, all Central ecclesias in North America quickly agreed to this resolution, and over the next eighteen months or so many (but not all) of the Berean ecclesias agreed to the resolution.

The resolution (not used)

As a result the two previously divided communities were united after a separation of thirty years. So what appears to be the background to the three statements? A different resolution was passed by the Pomona (Berean) Ecclesia in 1940, and, as I have said, it was on the basis of this resolution that the conference was held in 1952. The resolution is worth repeating, as it encapsulates the major differences that apparently were believed, at least by some, to separate the two communities.

FOUR ERRORS TO BE REJECTED

- 1) That the nature of Christ was not exactly like ours.
- 2) That the offering of Christ was not for himself, and that Christ never made an offering for himself.
- 3) That Christ's offering was for personal sins or moral impurities only. That our sins laid on Christ made him unclean and accursed of God, and that it was from this curse and this uncleanness that Christ needed cleansing.
- 4) That Christ died as a substitute. That is, that he was punished for the transgressions of others, and that he became a bearer of sin by suffering the punishment due for sins.

SIX STATEMENTS OF TRUTH TO BE RECEIVED

- 1) That death came into the world extraneously to the nature bestowed upon Adam in Eden, and was not inherent in him before sentence.
- 2) That the sentence defiled him (Adam) and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity.
- 3) That the word "sin" is used in two principal acceptations in the Scriptures. It signifies in the first place "the transgression of law," and in the next it represents that physical principle of the animal nature which is the cause of all its diseases, death, and resolution to dust.
- 4) That Jesus possessed our nature, which was a defiled, condemned nature.
- 5) That it was therefore necessary that Jesus should offer for himself for the purging of his own nature, first, from the uncleanness of death, that having by his own blood obtained eternal redemption for himself, he might be able afterward to save to the uttermost those that come to God by him.
- 6) That the doctrine of substitution — that is, that a righteous man can, by suf-

fering the penalty due to the sinner, free the sinner from the penalty of his sin — is foreign to Scripture, and is a dogma of heathen mythology.

These statements were not, in fact, made part of the final resolution: and I have heard grumblings about this from many over the years. This is not the place to consider these statements, but it is perhaps partially as a result of their abandonment that there is still a small Berean community in North America. (Whether their inclusion would have generated a split in the Central Community is hard to tell at a distance of 60 years. It is known some ecclesias objected to some of the language.)

Comments on the three statements adopted

The first statement, concerning the importance of the first principles as set forth in the BASF, is of course a sentence all in the Amended Community would agree to.

The second statement, concerning

- The acceptance of all baptized on the above basis, whether (by implication) Bereans or Central, was so that the formerly Berean were not required to be re-baptized on joining the Central community. This acceptance was universal among Central ecclesias. With very rare exceptions, we can see from the intelligence in *The Christadelphian* that those joining from affiliated groups (Unamended, Berean, Dawn, COGAF, etc.) were not and are not normally re-baptized.
- The second part of the statement, “that any brother departing from... the One Faith... is to be dealt with according to apostolic precept” is a phrase used in all subsequent reunions, and basically refers to the procedure laid down: “As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him” (*Titus 3:10 ESV*).

The third statement about “disclaiming fellowship” with an erring ecclesia, is not used by subsequent reunions. I believe this was included due to the view that the Bereans had on ecclesial fellowship. To greatly simplify, the Bereans held that if an ecclesia A had an erring member and did not take action that a different ecclesia B approved of, then not only would ecclesia B withdraw fellowship from ecclesia A, but also from every other ecclesia C that did not take similar action. This practice is sometimes called “daisy chain fellowship”, “block disfellowship”, or “guilt by association”. In contrast, the third statement supports ecclesia B withdrawing from ecclesia A but not from the other ecclesias C.

In this statement I believe Bro. Carter was specifically eliminating the Berean view of fellowship, which as we have observed has led to a successive splintering of the Bereans and similar groups. The Central/Amended view requires adherence to the Biblical Principles of the BASF, but essentially leaves its enforcement to the local ecclesia, and in very rare cases, to local groups of ecclesias. Many times *The Christadelphian* and *The Tidings*, have resisted any attempts to form councils or other such committees, and although some local conferences are known, they all have only a very local remit and have no real powers over individual ecclesias.

Peter Hemingray

Exhortation

What's the Point?

In the familiar words of Paul we're told that:

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

In this passage, the apostle Paul tells us that the target audience of Scripture are people like ourselves. At least we certainly hope that we fall under the category of "the man of God". We realize, of course, that here "man" stands for both men and women.

The apostle also states the objective of Scripture: that we might be acceptable to God, that is:

- by being equipped to all good works,
- by proper understanding of doctrine,
- by being critical of ourselves,
- by being instructed in what God wants in terms of behavior, worship, and attitude.

So let's have a look at the readings for October 26 and see if there are some points, contained with these passages, of doctrine, reproof, correction or instruction which we can apply to ourselves.

2nd Chronicles 23: Saving the line of Messiah

We find here the account of Jehoiada the priest, and his wife, Jehoshabeath, restoring the line of David to the throne. In looking at these events, we readily see some quite instructive exhortations.

To set the context we need to back up to the preceding chapter:

"But when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah. But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not. And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land" (2Chron 22:10-12).

Note particularly what we read about Jehoshabeath in these verses. First we learn she was sister of Ahaziah who has been killed by Jehu. Verse 10 tells us the mother of Ahaziah was the exceedingly wicked Athaliah. Thus Jehoshabeath, the heroine who rescued the line of David, was Athaliah's daughter! She had acted in direct defiance of her powerful and fanatical Queen-mother.

We're also told that Jehoshabeath is wife of the high priest, Jehoiada. It's thus her husband who is the one who organizes the coup to overthrow and kill Athaliah, her mother. Why was it so important to get rid of Athaliah and preserve the Davidic line? Because of God's promise to David that the great savior of Israel, the Messiah, would come from David's seed.

We're reading about an extraordinary woman who firmly believes in the promises of God to David and puts God first in her life.

It's not hard to see three exhortations for ourselves in the events described here:

- 1) Childhood trauma does not have to destroy us: Jehoshabeath's refusal to follow in the wicked path of Athaliah is a dramatic example that we don't have to follow the pattern of our parents or let childhood trauma destroy us. Just imagine the horrible influences of Jehoshabeath's childhood. She was raised by a mother who was a fanatical idolater. She would have been surrounded by the wicked practices of the worship of Astarte — the fertility goddess. She was probably personally subjected to some of this iniquity. But somehow Jehoshabeath was able to break the pattern, reject the example of her parents and keep what she experienced from destroying her life. As we know from our own lives, or from the experiences of others, that's not easy, but Jehoshabeath is a great example that it can be done.
- 2) One person can do a lot: Another "instruction in righteousness" is the example seen from the impact this one couple had on the nation. 2Chron 23 puts significant emphasis on Jehoiada's leadership (which was made possible by his wife's rescue of Joash):
 - a) *2Chron 23:1: And in the seventh year, Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds...*
 - b) *Vs 8: And the Levites and all Judah did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest had commanded..."*
 - c) *Vs 9: Moreover Jehoiada the priest delivered to the captains...*
 - d) *Vs 11: And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him...*
 - e) *Vs 14: Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds...*
 - f) *Vs 16: And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the LORD's people.*
 - e) *Vs 18: Also Jehoiada appointed the offices...*
- 3) We can easily shy away from seeking to accomplish any change because we're just one person or one couple. But look what this one couple accomplished in Judah. Through their actions the line of David was saved and was once again restored to the kingly throne.
- 4) Much can be accomplished in our older years: Jehoiada's actions are seen to be all the more remarkable when we recognize he was a very old man when he took such powerful initiative. 2Chron 24:15 tells us that he was 130 years old when he died. From 2Chron 23:1, we see that Joash reigned 40 years. Since Joash was still on the throne when Jehoiada died, this means Jehoiada had to be at least in his early nineties when he took on the great reformation early in the reign of Joash.

We need to remember that at this point in history a normal life span was considered to be 70 years (Psa 90:10). People were not living to 900 years or even 175 as did Abraham. It's evident the average life time was much like it is today. So Jehoiada was a very old man when he was taking the lead on this great reformation. The exhortation to us is obvious: **We can accomplish great things when we are old.**

Daniel 4: The humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar

This chapter proclaims the great doctrine that God rules in the kingdoms of men and sets up over them whomever He wills. Therefore we can watch with great interest even today as God works out His plan to implement His kingdom.

Nebuchadnezzar's dominion was very great in his day: "...*thou, O king, are grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth*" (Dan 4:22). At the time of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar had more power, authority and influence than any president, prime minister or dictator of our own day. But he was to learn "*that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men*" (Dan 4:17).

This same declaration of God's control over the nations is repeated in vs. 25 and 32. And when Nebuchadnezzar recovers his sanity he proclaims: "*I praised and honored Him... who doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?*" (Dan 4:34-35).

The point of emphasis in the chapter is unmistakable and is a great doctrine for us to remember. For decades, believers have seen signs of our Lord's return happening before our eyes. Yet where is the Lord Jesus? We are to take heart from this chapter. God rules in the kingdom of men. He is overseeing events through our Lord Jesus and the mighty angels. When necessary He is actively controlling what happens. Therefore we are to patiently wait on Him, for the LORD does according to His will among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand.

Acts 2: Major first principles are declared

Here is Peter's great speech given on the day of Pentecost as the Christian, the ecclesial era, is about to begin. In addition to the dramatic events of this day, we see some of our fundamental Christadelphian doctrines clearly confirmed.

What's the point of this chapter? It reassures us we've got it right as a community and should hold fast to our fundamentals.

Peter makes it clear that the Lord Jesus Christ is a human being, not part of a Trinitarian godhead. One would almost think that he is refuting the great heresy which has become so entrenched in the theology of the apostasy.

The great Messiah is "*Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God...*" (Acts 2:22) not a pre-existent part of a triune godhead. It is this man "Him" who was "*crucified and slain*" (vs 23). It is this man "*Whom God hath raised up*" (vs 24). In Psalm 16, David was speaking concerning "him", the man of Nazareth who relied fully upon his God (vs 25). It was "***This Jesus...***" whom God raised up (vs 32). "*Therefore let*

*all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made **that same Jesus**, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (vs 36).*

Peter has plainly stated the great doctrine: it was the man of Nazareth who is the Lord, the Messiah. He is no part of a godhead made incarnate in the womb of Mary. He is a human being, born in due time, approved of God, crucified, raised from the dead and exalted to the Father’s right hand. Right from the start, the apostles make clear a central teaching we are blessed to understand, and which we hold as a pillar of our faith.

A second great fundamental is woven into Peter’s words: we don’t go to heaven when we die. *“For David is not ascended into the heavens” (vs 34).* And the Lord Jesus, even his “soul” did not go to heaven at death but to the grave: *“his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption” (vs 31).* In these words, Peter confirms the singular teaching of Scripture from Genesis onward: *“dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen 3:19).*

There is another first principle here as well. Baptism is essential for the forgiveness of sins. Upon the response of the people: “What shall we do”, the answer is clear: *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (vs. 37-38).* Again we are blessed to have ingrained in our community teaching the necessity of intelligent immersion as a requisite to salvation.

In addition to being good “for doctrine” the chapter is good for exhortation as well setting out the essentials of our lives in Christ. They are summarized in vs 42:

- **Doctrine** — the blessing of understanding the Truth is vital to our lives and our worship.
- **Fellowship** — from greatly varied backgrounds we are drawn together by the bond of our common convictions.
- **Breaking of bread and prayers** — in this fellowship we rejoice together in the memorial remembrance in which we are now participating.

What’s the point? of the Scriptures we have read: instruction, encouragement, and inspiration that we might be equipped unto all good work. It’s a good question to ask ourselves as we read the inspired word. What a blessing that we have it so readily available as we do this day. Amen.

Don Styles (Ann Arbor, MI)

We do not want knowledge to make us wise in the worldly sense, to make us superior to others. We want to know more about His Word, we want to grow to understand it better. We wish to be in the Kingdom that He has prepared for us, and if through our readings we can be helped to train our minds in that direction, then it is a very good thing indeed. We want to read about God, about the scriptures and about life in Christ because those are the things that come first. They form the very bedrock of our lives. One of the best ways to ensure we approach our reading in the right spirit is to pray to God beforehand.

The Christadelphian, 1995 p. 125.

First Principles

The Doctrine of the Trinity — Why it Cannot be True

Introduction:

We are given clear commandments that it is vital to our salvation to know the nature of our Heavenly Father.

“And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24).

We will use this brief series of studies to question the popular view of a Trinitarian God, as is common in today’s Christianity. The only place to turn to for a proper understanding is the Bible, God’s Word. We will find that the clear teaching from the Scriptures is that God is One, and there is no other. The concept of the Trinity is both confusing, and not in agreement with God’s word.

The Catholic creed



The Catholic Church to this day regards the so-called “Athanasian Creed”, composed around the 5th century AD, as the true Christian belief, and this belief is shared by many of the other churches. In part it says (in an English Translation of the original Latin text):

And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son ; and another of the Holy Ghost... Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost... So the Father is God, the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is

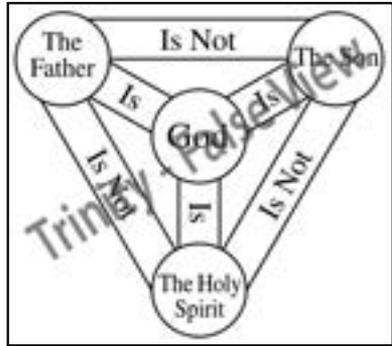
God. And yet they are not three Gods: but one God. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other; none is greater, or less than another... But the whole three Persons are coeternal together: and co-equal.

Perhaps one explanation of the language is that in the Greek theater of the time it was common for an actor to appear as different “persons” simply by using different masks: indeed, this is one of the meanings of the Latin word behind our English “person”. The extent to which the original framers of the creed understood it in the term most believers in the Trinity do today is obscure: but certainly what is understood today is also obscure!

The popular view

In today's Christian world, the Doctrine of the Trinity is held up as the litmus test of a true church. Groups that deny it are labeled heretics and cults. But the doctrine of a Triune Godhead is in disagreement with the Biblical message. The Trinitarian concept of the Godhead conflicts with the way God revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. The Trinity also was not part of the framework of the great Gospel message of the Kingdom of God proclaimed in the New Testament by Jesus and by the Apostles.

We do not find the words "Trinity" or "Triune God" in the Bible. Not once is God referred to in the Bible as consisting of three persons. Not once do we find the terms "God the Son" or "God the Holy Spirit".



The often-repeated Trinitarian notion is that unless Jesus is God, we have no Savior. In contrast, the reality is that unless Jesus is a member of the human family, we have no assurance that human beings can be resurrected to eternal life. Proponents of the Trinity find comfort by saying that God so loved us that he became one of us. But the Bible tells us that: "*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that we might not perish but have eternal life*" (John 3:16). God tested Abraham to see if he was willing to give up his only begotten son Isaac. Likewise, God so loved us that He was willing to offer up His only begotten son Jesus so that we might have life.

By saying that God needed to become one of us to understand us, we are limiting His power, and it is an affront to His Majesty. He made us and He knows our frame. He is Omnipotent. This theory is an affront to His might and power.

Favorite verse

"In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered" (Heb 5:7-8).

Christ's anguish and suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane as he faced the pending horror of the cross, reveals to us a situation incongruous to the idea of a Trinity. How could God the Son be in such anguish if he were the second person of the Godhead? How could one God pray to another, especially with such emotion and anguish? Such was the torment of his soul that his sweat became as great drops of blood falling down upon the ground. He prays in anguish to his Father, to the Father who could save him from death. Even hours before his death, Christ was learning. He was learning to be obedient to his Father.

(Although I am sure the Apostle had the Garden of Gethsemane in mind when he wrote the above verses, we can note that the word "days" is plural. So, this was

not a single stressful incident in Christ's life. Instead the verses tell us of our Lord's lifetime struggle with the flesh. This is a struggle we share with him, and we look to the example he gave us of how to live our lives and deal with temptation and sin.)

The case against the Trinity

It is a New Doctrine, Developed Several Centuries after Christ

It is indisputable, and as admitted by most Trinitarian scholars, that the full development and understanding of this core Christian doctrine did not come to complete fruition until long after the death of Christ. The progressive development of the teachings that now make up the Doctrine of the Trinity can be seen in the decisions of a number of general Church Councils.

And through it all, there was an abundance of blood spilled, a profusion of wars and a scarcity of peace in the centuries of church rule over the kingdoms of men. The doctrine of the Trinity achieved its domination of Christian doctrine by force, often by brutal force. We should also remember the old adage, "The winners write the History books" when we do some of our research. All the folks who did not believe in the Trinity conveniently carried the label of "Heretic".

"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world" (Heb 1:1-2 ESV).

This passage reinforces the Biblical teaching that Christ was begotten, that he came into being. In the Old Testament, God spoke through the prophets. But, after His Son was born, He spoke through him.

Defining the Trinity is problematic. God's word should not be so difficult to understand.

Even ardent defenders of the Trinity often have difficulty explaining it. The complexity of three persons who are separate yet at the same time one being can be perplexing to illustrate, as attempted in the diagram above.

The Apostle Paul had no difficulty explaining the relationship between the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit: it does not have to be a mystery.

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all." (Eph 4:4-6)

"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1Tim 2:5).

The Trinity is in opposition to over 3,000 years of Jewish teaching.

God chose the nation of Israel to make his name known among the nations. He delivered them from Egypt, disciplined them, sent them to Babylon and brought them back, all for His name's sake. As He revealed himself to Israel, the great Shema (or declaration) of the Old Testament was:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deut 6:4)

God re-emphasized this point over and over:

“know therefore this day, and lay it to your heart, that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other” (Deut 4:39).

“And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said: “O LORD the God of Israel, who art enthroned above the cherubim, thou art the God, thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth” (1Kgs 19:15).

“I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God;..... I am the LORD, and there is no other” (Isa 45:5).

“Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me” (Isa 45:21).

“Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us?” (Mal 2:10).

“How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” (John 5:44).

The idea of ONE God is a dominant theme of the message to Israel. Monotheism separated them from the Polytheism of the nations.. God called out His people to be separate, for Israel to get away from the ideas the pagans had of deity. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had two significant differences. He was God alone (no others) and He was ruler over ALL the earth, not just the nation state of Israel.

Theologians can debate all they want about how the Scriptural record in the Old Testament uses Elohim, which is a plural word, but is invariably used in the singular when referring to the one true God¹: or debate the unity implied in the word translated ‘one’ in the quote from Deut 6:4². What they cannot escape is the unquestionable fact that the Jewish understanding of these words has always been that there is only ONE GOD. Hebrew is their language and it is theirs to fully understand its true meaning. Over and over, through much repetition and the usage of many synonyms, the Old Testament record emphasized that there is only ONE God. Instead of confusion we see a host of phrases like ‘God is one’, ‘there is no other’, ‘by Myself’, ‘all alone’, ‘none except Me’, ‘none besides Me’, ‘Hast not one God created us?’, ‘Thou are Lord alone’, ‘you alone are God’, etc. There is no room in the three plus millennia of Jewish teaching for a triune God. None whatsoever. And all Christian groups acknowledge that God chose the Children of Israel to be a special people through whom he made himself known to the world.

Moreover, Jesus endorsed the Jewish understanding of God. When asked by a scribe: *“Which commandment is the first of all?” (Mark 12:28)*, Jesus expounds upon Deut 6:4–5 in his answer. The scribe wholeheartedly agrees and replies to Christ, *“You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that He is one, and there is no other but He; and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding,*

and with all the strength, and to love ones neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices” (Mark 2:32-33). Notice the emphasis of the scribe when he added, *“there is no other but He.”* Jesus saw that he answered wisely and said to the scribe, *“You are not far from the kingdom of God.”* If the Trinity were true, it would be inconceivable that Jesus would let this scribe, who would have considered the Trinity a blasphemous heresy, whom he had just told was not far from the kingdom, to walk away totally in error in his basic understanding of God. The only possible conclusion we can take from these verses is that the Jewish understanding of God is correct. Jesus must have understood and believed whatever Moses believed these words to mean.

Jesus also told the Samaritan woman that the Jews understood who God was when he spoke with her by the well.

“You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:22-24).

The Samaritans had an incorrect understanding of God and of the proper way to worship Him. Unlike the Samaritans, the Jews worshipped what they knew. The Jews did have a proper understanding of God. Salvation was from the Jews. Soon everyone who would seek salvation must worship God in spirit and in truth.

Jesus agreed with the Old Testament proclamation of the only true God.

“How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” (John 5:44).

Jesus also had no quarrel with the teaching of the Law given by Moses.

“Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them” (Matt 5:17).

The New Testament record shows us that the Jews rejected the idea of a Trinity. In John 5 and in John 10 the Jews took up stones to kill Jesus because he had called himself the Son of God. They felt that such a claim was blasphemous and he was making himself equal to God. If the Trinity were true, Jesus should have taken these opportunities to explain to them the oneness of the Godhead. Instead, Christ takes pains both times to show them that he was not very God. He immediately says: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever He does, that the Son does likewise” (John 5:19).* He adds in vs 30 — *“I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of Him who sent me.”* In John 10 Christ refutes the Jewish charge of making himself God by quoting Psa 82:6 to show them they were misunderstanding what he meant when he called God his Father. What is puzzling is that, even though Christ basically tells the Jews they were wrong in their accusations in both John 5 & 10, Trinitarians seize upon the declarations made by the Jews as Truth rather than the corrections Christ gave them.

Another useful section in a similar line of faulty Trinitarian reasoning is the record of Jesus healing the paralytic man who was let down through the roof. Useful, because it ties in with this same error of using the accusation of the Jews as Truth rather than the rebuttal from Christ. In Mark 2, when Jesus heals the man, he tells him that his sins are forgiven. The Jews called this blasphemy because only God can forgive sins! Jesus asked them why they questioned what he did. To show them that the Son of man had authority on earth to forgive sins, he told the paralytic man to get up (which he did!). Trinitarians use the scribes' statement that *"only God can forgive sins"* to show that Christ was indeed God. But, what they missed reading was the parallel passage in Matthew, *"When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men"* (Matt 9:8) Clearly, the authority came from God and the one using it was the MAN Jesus Christ.

Jesus conveyed the authority to forgive sins to his Apostles, yet no one accused them of being God because they could forgive sins.

"And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained' " (John 20:22-23).

In the early church, one of the major problems the Apostles dealt with was the battle with the Judaisers, who wanted to go back to the Law. The Judaisers complained about food offered to idols, circumcision, eating food containing blood, and associating with Gentiles. If these physical matters were considered worthy of hot debate, how much more explosive to the new Jewish converts would be the idea of a three person Godhead? Yet, despite all the problems in the early church, the record is silent about the most explosive doctrinal change possible to the Jewish world, if true. Introducing the idea of the Trinity to a Jewish world would be like lighting a match in a gunpowder factory. The absolute silence of any sort of battle between Jews and Christians over the Trinity speaks volumes.

Lastly, Peter was given a magnificent opportunity to give us his belief in Christ's identity. Jesus asked the disciples: *"But who do you say that I am?"* Simon Peter replied, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Matt 16:15). Christ endorsed that understanding. Peter's confession is simple and clear. Christ was the Son of God, not God the Son.

The point of this section is that Christianity has elevated the belief of the Trinity as an absolute necessity for salvation. Consequently, since the Hebrews have never believed in a Trinity, shouldn't they all be lost? Yet clearly, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Samuel, Samson, Barak, Deborah, Gideon, and a great host of others will be present in God's kingdom.

Lee Livermore, Avon, IN

Notes:

1. In Gen 1:26, *"And God [Elohim] said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"*, the "God" is singular. The normal explanation is that "us" refers to the angels. Other uses of Elohim (god) in the plural refer to pagan gods.
2. This passage *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord"* is one of the four passages the Jews write on their phylacteries: see Mark 2:29 *"The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord"*

Hope for Life

“For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the human spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth?” (Eccl 3:19-21).

Introduction

This is the first on a series of articles on the **True Christian Hope**, which we hope will show how such a simple topic illuminates many of the vital aspects of our faith.

From promises to prophecies, the Bible is eternally hopeful. *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer 29:11).* The Bible gives incredibly detailed descriptions about eternal life beginning with the promises to Abraham and David, to the hopeful visions of Isaiah. It’s a free gift from God and centered on the *“kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12).*

These articles are the result of a unique process. They were not written by one person, but instead, collectively, by one ecclesia. It was determined to write a book to further share our great Bible Hope. It helped promote personal Bible study among the members for each of these studies. This series, and the short book on which it was based, is not intended to provide exhaustive answers to all questions about eternal life in the Bible. Nor does it aim to give rebuttal to the differing opinions about the Bible. You may be surprised how Scripture provides a hope that is different from that which most Christians believe. Our desire is that these words will prompt readers to do additional Bible study about God’s incredible promises. Jesus Christ is coming back to earth as King to set up his long-awaited Kingdom. The good news is that you are invited to participate with other faithful believers and inherit eternal life.

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom 15:4).

Hope makes all the difference.

A wise teacher once asked a promising student a simple question: “What are your plans for life?” The student answered that he planned to work hard in high school to get good grades in order to get into one of the better universities. The teacher commended her student for planning ahead and then said, “And then what.” He told her what he knew about college and how he hoped to earn a four year degree in business in order to get a good job. The teacher gave a positive nod and again said, “And then what.” The student thought for a moment and then said that he would like to get a job in management in the advertising field so he could earn a good living. The teacher predictably followed up again, “And then what.” He was ready this time and said that he would like to get married and have a family, buy a house and get promoted at work. “And then what”, she said. The student now gave thought to areas beyond where he was comfortable. He gradually said that



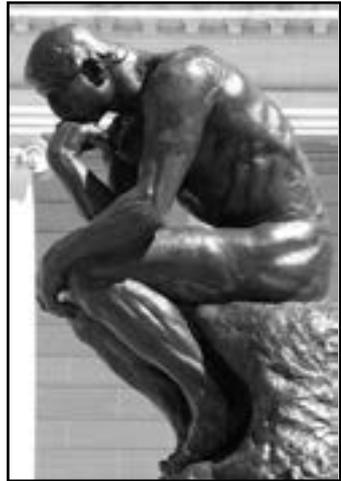
he would like to earn enough money to retire early, travel with his wife and enjoy hobbies like golf. “And then what” came the expected response. The young man said that he would like to age gracefully and in good health, spend plenty of time with his grandchildren and dabble with inventions in his final days. His teacher pushed the envelope again and asked, “And then

what.” The student had no more plans beyond these and so he replied that after all of these things were done, he supposed he would just die. That’s when the wise teacher played her final card by asking, “And then what!”

Do you relate better to the teacher or the student in this story? Does it really matter what you believe? Why should anyone spend time hoping for the future when life today is so good for so many? Knowing that so many religions teach opposite eternal rewards, why invest anything into something so uncertain? Who knows what THE Bible hope is anyway?

Why hope in any afterlife?

About 3,000 years ago, the wisest and richest man in the world was king of Israel. He built an empire with a strong military and key foreign alliances. He wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. He was known for having a kingdom of peace, and he built the greatest temple ever to the LORD God of Israel. The king became great and his wisdom and fame spread to peoples far away. Kings and queens traveled vast distances to see if the amazing news they had heard about him could be true. The king enjoyed life and personally had 1,000 wives and concubines to keep him happy. Whatever he wanted he got, and he didn’t hold back from any pleasure. He also worked hard and built incredible buildings and fortified cities. He designed innovative water systems and planted all kinds of fruit trees and gardens. Indeed, life was very good for the king we know as Solomon.



Yet despite having everything imaginable, Solomon grew old and unsatisfied. He wrote in his latter days: *“Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure...Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and again, all was vanity and a chasing after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun”* (Eccl 2:10-11). Solomon recorded his final thoughts and advice for his subjects in Ecclesiastes. That’s where he reveals how his entire outlook on life, and eternal life, changed when he grew old.

You may not be old in the chronological sense, but everyone can relate to Solomon and learn from his wisdom and unique experiences. He probably didn't have the same kinds of problems that you have, but he did have one big problem we all have in common. Solomon was mortal and knew he would die. Here are some of the wise lessons he left to his people regarding his mortality:

"But whoever is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. The living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing....even the memory of them is lost" (Eccl 9:4-5).

"Just as you do not know how the breath comes to the bones in the mother's womb, so you do not know the work of God, who makes everything" (Eccl 11:5).

"Follow the inclination of your heart and the desire of your eyes, but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment" (Eccl 11:9).

"The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep His commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Eccl 12:13-14).

What if I don't believe in God?

It is said that there are no atheists in foxholes. This was a common saying in WWII when soldiers would turn to God when desperate for help. When their life was on the line, even an atheist would turn to God because they would be desperate and have nothing to lose. Of course, the assumption is that once these same soldiers were safe and out of the foxhole, they would no longer need to believe in a Creator. In fact, it's a sad commentary on our American society that there is a Freedom from Religion Foundation that has erected a monument to "Atheists in Foxholes" because of its opposition to the statement of "no atheists in foxholes!"

While millions of people claim to not know any God, He certainly knows you. The Creator of the universe knew you before you were even born (Jer 1:5). He knows each of us inside and out and He helped piece you together in your mother's womb (Psa 139:13-15). Every hair on your head is numbered and known to God (Matt 10:30). God called you to follow Him, His Son, and His plan of salvation. God doesn't change His mind and He has a purpose for you. God is actually giving you the greatest hope that anyone has ever received (Eph 4:4). You were called to inherit a blessing, in fact, the most wonderful gift ever given (1Pet 3:9). God has a plan for the Earth to be filled with Godly people who want to be with Him. Our Heavenly Father has an incredible future for you, *"plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope" (Jer 29:11).*

There is a story about a science class that had a discussion about God's existence. The teacher presented the following logic: "Has anyone in this class heard God speak?" Nobody answered. "Has anyone in this class touched God?" Again, nobody spoke. "Has anyone in this class seen God?" When nobody spoke for the third time, he simply stated, "Then there must be no God." One young student thought for a second, and then asked for permission to reply. Curious to hear this bold

student's response, the teacher granted it, and the student stood up and asked the following questions of his classmates: "Has anyone in this class heard our teacher's brain?" Silence. "Has anyone in this class touched our teacher's brain?" Absolute silence. "Has anyone in this class seen our teacher's brain?" When nobody in the class dared to speak, the student concluded, "Then, according to our teacher's logic, it must be true that our teacher's brain does not exist!"

We all need hope

Death is not a subject most people enjoy discussing. We make plans for the future in nearly every way possible, except when it comes to our own death. Do you have a will? Have you bought a gravesite plot or a tombstone? How about a casket? Have you even thought about any of these in the past five years? If you're like most people the answer is probably no. And you don't like to think about anything related to dying either, do you? Why would you, it's a negative, scary, unknown thought for many people.



Don't worry about me. Go ahead and enjoy I'll stay here and be miserable.

Yet, this is the reason that every person on earth needs to have hope. Think about someone you know who acts like they have no hope. Are they happy or pessimistic? Are they content, or more like Eeyore in *Winnie the Pooh*? Is each new day vibrant for them, or unsatisfying? Do they enjoy life, or feel anger towards others who act hopeful. Are they thankful, or hurtful? Doesn't it seem that people who live each day without hope act differently than others who have a Biblical hope? It certainly should be obvious because that's what God intended. He gave us hope intertwined with faith to help us avoid despair and learn about His plan for mankind.

Like Solomon, we will all die and then what? Without hope life is not worth living. Hope is one important difference between people and animals. Solomon taught that God gave mankind an eternal perspective unlike all animals (Eccl 3:11). We are able to think rationally, using evidence to draw conclusions that makes eternal hope realistic. Only blind confidence would steer someone to think that their pet could think the same. Unlike animals, we have hope and we have purpose. Without hope, how can we have meaningful purpose? Without hope, life is meaningless. Without hope, life is meaningless, and less. We shall find that true Biblical hope leads us back to the garden in Eden. Back to true earthly bliss. Back to our future.

The Bible says:

- God called you to hope. (Psa 119:49; Eph 4:4)
- Hope works with faith for a reward. (Heb 3:6; Heb 11:1)
- You need hope for life. (Psa 71:14; 2Tim 1:9; 1Pet 1:3)

Chicago, Ill Ecclesia

Bible Study

Life of Timothy

(10) “For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus”

New words

Paul made Ephesus his base of operations for much of the Third Missionary Journey. When he traveled from Ephesus during that time, he left Timothy behind. He wrote 1st Timothy to advise and encourage Timothy while he was away.

A characteristic of 1st Timothy is Paul’s use of Greek words that appear nowhere else in Greek writings up to that point. It is possible that Paul coined the words himself under inspiration. Three apparently New Greek words appear in this passage:

*“If any man **teach otherwise**, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and **strifes of words**, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, **Perverse disputings** of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself” (1Tim 6:3-5).*

The words are “other-teach,” which is rendered “teach otherwise” in vs 3, “word-battle,” which is translated “strifes of words” in vs 4, and “constant friction,” which is rendered “perverse disputing” in vs 5.

Paul’s use of new words in 1st Timothy is a reminder of the uniqueness of the message that he, Timothy, and the other missionaries were proclaiming. Many in the Gentile world had never heard such ideas before. The message was so different from the natural thinking of man, in fact, that it appears the first-century Christians had to coin new words to convey it.

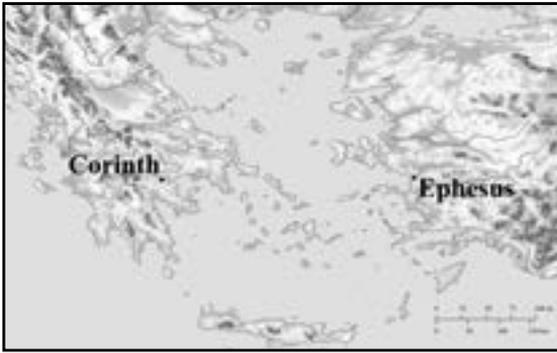
The Greeks were certainly familiar with debates: debating ideas was a hallmark of their culture, and skilled debaters were highly esteemed in Greek society. But Paul and Timothy taught that showy debates among believers on meaningless matters were wrong. To help make that point, it appears they had to introduce new words, such as “word-battle,” that conveyed the negatives associated with such debates, which the Greek believers might otherwise have viewed positively, since that is the way their culture viewed them.

Paul’s use of new words in writing to Timothy is a further reminder of the wonderful privilege we have of knowing the Truth. The Bible teaches us a new way of thinking and living, which is so much more fulfilling than what the world around us offers.

Corinth

Paul returned to Ephesus following his trip to Macedonia, during which he wrote 1st Timothy. He and Timothy were together again in Ephesus. Then Paul started

making plans to visit the ecclesia in Corinth, which was experiencing a myriad of problems that were causing him considerable anguish. The Corinthian ecclesia was beset by factions, serious lifestyle problems, and doctrinal concerns.



Paul decided to send Timothy from Ephesus to Macedonia and then on to Corinth in advance of his visit there. He wanted Timothy to help prepare the way for his arrival: *“After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must*

also see Rome. So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season” (Acts 19:21-22).

Corinth was a hotbed of difficulties. After what he had endured in Ephesus during Paul’s absence, Timothy might have longed for a reprieve from the kind of challenges the Corinthian ecclesia presented. When Paul was in town, Timothy *“ministered unto him” (Acts 19:22)*. Spending time in the Apostle’s company would have been spiritually refreshing. Timothy was probably more comfortable doing his work with Paul around. But at Paul’s request, Timothy left his side and set off for the rigors of Corinth.

While Timothy was on route, several delegations of Corinthians came to see Paul in Ephesus. They provided additional insight into the severity of the problems in Corinth. Paul wrote 1st Corinthians in response to the information they provided and the questions they asked, and he sent the Epistle by the hand of Titus. Paul anticipated that his Epistle would arrive in Corinth before Timothy did, and he mentioned Timothy’s upcoming visit to Corinth several times in 1st Corinthians. What Paul wrote about Timothy in 1st Corinthians provides valuable insight into the nature of his visit to Corinth and the quality of his character.

Timothy was a kind and gentle person, but the environment in the Corinthian ecclesia was very turbulent. Paul warned the Corinthians not to despise or intimidate Timothy. He wrote: *“Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren” (1Cor 16:10-11).*

Some in the Corinthian ecclesia were judgmental of people’s external characteristics. For example, they thought Paul had defects in his style and physical appearance. Paul did not want the Corinthians to look down on Timothy, treat him poorly, and discourage him. Timothy was a great asset. Paul really valued Timothy, and he wanted the Corinthians to learn from him. Some of what the Corinthians

may have viewed as Timothy's weaknesses, such as caring nature, were, in fact, great spiritual strengths and worthy of emulation.

Paul wanted the Corinthians to be more like him. He told them: "*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*" (1Cor 11:1). The Corinthians could learn to be more like Paul by watching Timothy and doing as he did. Paul wrote:

"Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church" (1Cor 4:16-17).

Note the context of Paul's words "*For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus.*" Paul sent Timothy to Corinth so the Corinthians could be more like him, Timothy. That would, in turn, make them more like Paul and, by extension, more like Christ.

Timothy was a living testimony to what Paul taught "*everywhere in every church*" (vs 17). He was Paul's "*beloved son, and faithful in the Lord.*" Timothy would bring them into remembrance of Paul's ways, "*which be in Christ.*" It is hard to imagine a greater compliment could be given to a person than what Paul wrote about Timothy in 1Cor 4:17.

"without were fightings, within were fears"

Giving a valiant effort for a good cause is not a guarantee of immediate success, however, even in spiritual matters. Timothy left Corinth before the situation in the Corinthian ecclesia had dramatically improved.

We know of Timothy's departure and lack of complete success because Timothy's next appearance in the Scriptural record is in the greeting of 2nd Corinthians: "*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia*" (2Cor 1:1). When Paul wrote 2nd Corinthians, he and Timothy were travelling in the direction of Corinth from Ephesus following Timothy's return to Ephesus from Corinth. Paul recorded the anxiety he felt about the Corinthians' spiritual state and the great joy he experienced at hearing of their change of heart following Titus' visit to them:

"Nevertheless he that comforteth the lowly, even God, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but also by the comfort wherewith he was comforted in you, while he told us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced yet more. For though I made you sorry with my epistle, I do not regret it, though I did regret; for I see that that epistle made you sorry, though but for a season" (2Cor 7:6-8, RV).

When Timothy left Corinth, the Corinthians were still in need of repentance. Timothy's appearance in the greeting of 2nd Corinthians (and the content of the Epistle) shows he maintained his interest and involvement in the Corinthians spiritual development, even though his efforts among them had not immediately born fruit. Timothy did not just give up on them.

Perseverance

Perseverance through difficult times was a hallmark of Timothy's character, as other passages in 2nd Corinthians show. Paul wrote 2nd Corinthians in between Timothy's visits to Corinth. They spent some of that time in Ephesus. While they were in Ephesus, the anti-Christian Silversmiths' Riot occurred (Acts 19: 23-41).

Paul referred to the Silversmiths' Riot in 2nd Corinthians. His use of the pronouns "we" and "us" indicate Timothy was with him when the Riot took place:

"For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (2Cor 1:8-9).

Paul and Timothy had to leave Ephesus after the Silversmiths' Riot. It was a very challenging period for them because, in addition to having had their lives recently threatened, they were very worried during that time about the situation in the Corinthian ecclesia, as well as in ecclesias in Galatia and elsewhere. Paul told the Corinthians about the great distress he and Timothy experienced: *"For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears" (2Cor 7:5).*

The way that Paul and Timothy responded to that adversity in their lives is wonderfully instructive for us. The Bible's evidence is that Paul and Timothy dedicated themselves to helping people who were worse off than they were. In their case, it was the poor believers in Jerusalem. Several chapters in 2nd Corinthians are about their efforts to raise money to relieve the Jerusalem poor.

Timothy served as one of the Galatian ecclesias delegates who was charged with carrying the money that they raised to the poor believers in Jerusalem:

"And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thesalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus" (Acts 20:4).

The brethren listed in this verse traveled with Paul and bore their ecclesias' donations.

Acts 20:4 is the final appearance of Timothy's name in the Book of Acts. We will consider his continued service, during the period of time after the Acts record, in the next article in the series.

Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

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

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

Submissions under 300 words are encouraged —

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

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

They Took a Stand

The world tries to make claims on our children. It assumes that it has the right to do so. As a result, they can be called on to make some incredibly mature decisions while still in their teens. Everything they know about the Bible and everything they have learned at home, in Sunday school, in CYC, and in the ecclesia is sometimes put to the test.

Here is a report of the experiences that two Christadelphian young people had while they were in high school. The report was written by one of them shortly after the events took place.¹ Almost any Christadelphian young person who is in a public high school will be able to relate to these experiences and appreciate the decisions that were made.

A Navy rock concert at school



“It was mentioned to me one day at school that the Navy would be performing a rock concert at our school. I wanted to find out more about it before attending, so I decided to speak with the sophomore class advisor. The only information that she could give me was that the school mentors were sponsoring the event. As it turned out, my math teacher was the head of the mentors,

so, one day before math class, I decided to ask her nonchalantly what the concert was about. I got the response, ‘It’s a rock concert, just come and see.’ This teacher had no idea that I am a conscientious objector. Obviously, her response did not help me much.

“I spoke with my mom and brother (who was in the same school) about whether or not we should attend the rock concert because we are conscientious objectors. We talked about what to do in this situation. Naturally, I didn’t want to make myself stand out unnecessarily, but I didn’t want to be where I shouldn’t be, either.

“With a few days left before the concert, my math teacher began making comments to the class like, ‘Now that you know these math equations, you can work on submarines, and you can sign up with the recruiters when they come on Tuesday.’ As recruiters commonly come to our school and set up tables at lunchtime, I wanted to know what recruiters she was talking about. Knowing full well that Tuesday

was the day of the concert, I asked what was happening on Tuesday? The response I got was, ‘You don’t know what Tuesday is? It’s the day of the rock concert.’ She then made additional comments how, on Tuesday, ‘You can sign up for the Navy.’

“When I knew that recruiters would be at the concert, it seemed to me that the intention was to get the teenagers hyped with rock music and then ask them to sign up for the Navy. I wasn’t comfortable with this. My brother agreed with me that he did not want to go to the concert, either. We decided that the best person to speak with about our concerns was the principal.

“Originally, our intention was for my brother and me to speak with the principal ourselves, but then we figured having an adult go for us might get better results. We asked our mom to speak with the principal, and she did. The principal was very understanding. Our mom told the principal that she had taught us her beliefs and that she was a conscientious objector. She said that we, however, would choose ourselves to be (or not to be) Christadelphians, as we got older, by confessing and being baptized. She told the principal that the only reason she was speaking for us was that we had asked her to. She added that we both felt strongly about being conscientious objectors, and for that reason we felt we could not attend military events.

“The principal was fine with this, and said we could go to her office when they called our grade levels for the concert, and she would not draw attention to us. She allowed us to stay in her office and do homework. When we heard everyone leaving at the end of the concert, we just went to our lockers with everyone else and went home. When other teenagers asked me where I had been, my response was, ‘I had something I had to do,’ which was true. I had to do my homework.

“We were fortunate that our principal was so understanding. Let us pray that all people we come into contact with may be as understanding.”

The ASVAB Test

“In March of my junior year, it was brought to my attention that the military would be administering a test to all the juniors in our school. It was the ASVAB Career Test, designed to assess student aptitudes



and then use the results to steer students toward suitable careers.²

“After hearing this information, I went to the vice principal of the school and explained that I was a conscientious objector. I asked to be excused from the testing. He was very respectful of my situation and said that I need not explain my stand any further because he understood. He said that this was a matter we should discuss with the principal. He went with me to the principal’s office and explained the situation. The principal said that he remembered about a student in the school who was a conscientious objector but could not remember who

it was. (The principal remembered this because I had stated my position a year earlier concerning the military concert. He was vice-principal at the time.) The principal excused me from the test and offered to explain my position to anyone who wanted to know why I was not at the test site. I told him that I would be fine explaining the situation myself, but, as it turned out, there was no need to do so.

“I took an important lesson from this conversation. Although the principal could not remember which student was a conscientious objector, he knew there was one in the school. I realized that my behavior and attitude needed to always reflect my position and my beliefs, because my actions would speak louder than my words.”

Awards dinner

“Later the same spring, I attended an awards dinner for the junior class. When I walked into the room, I noticed a military serviceman present. This surprised me, and I began wondering what was going on because, to my knowledge, there was no reason for him to be there. I did not have long to think about it before the principal rushed up to my mother and me. He knew my conscientious objection stand from our previous conversation about the ASVAB Test. He addressed my mother and said that he just wanted us to know that the military man was present only to hand out awards.

“We were seated, and within minutes the vice-principal arrived at our table to explain the situation further. It turned out that the serviceman was there because he had earlier arranged for the military to cover the cost of the award plaques. For this reason it had been agreed that he should hand out the plaques. The administration had also explained to the serviceman that a family might be attending who were conscientious objectors. His response was (paraphrased): ‘If she doesn’t feel comfortable shaking my hand, she doesn’t have to.’ This came as a shock to me. It had never crossed my mind that someone might think a conscientious objector wouldn’t shake a person’s hand because that person was in the military! We explained to the vice-principal that we would not be rude to anyone because we are conscientious objectors, just because they are in the military.

“The vice principal also told us that other military officers had wanted to make the award presentation a military event, but this serviceman had spoken against the idea. He had maintained that this was to be a night for the juniors and not for the military.

“The serviceman handed out the plaques to each student, and when I was called, I shook his hand, just as I would any other person. I hoped that this action would show those involved that Christ did not teach his disciples to be rude or disrespectful to anyone.”

Use as case studies³

There is nothing like a real-life story to get older Sunday school students thinking and talking. By adding a few questions as talking points, the stories told here can be used as case studies in Sunday school or CYC. Here are some suggested questions to use:

- How did the consciences of these young people work in the matter of the Navy rock concert? What steps did their consciences compel them to take?
- Would you have done anything differently?
- How did the decision to take one conscientious stand make it easier to take a similar stand later on? Have you ever had an experience like this?
- Would you have shaken the hand of the military man at the awards dinner? Please explain.
- Identify Bible references that apply to the situations described in these stories.

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)

sundayschool@tidings.org: <http://www.pinterest.com/2harps4u/>

Notes:

1. Written by Michelle Davey of Cranston, RI, now a sister in Christ. Her report is published with permission.
2. ASVAB: Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. This career aptitude test is administered annually to high school students across America.
3. See “God’s Way Works! The Use of Case Studies”, *The Tidings*, Dec 2012, pp.569-571.

This is a mistake, at least, so far as the Christians called the “Nazarinnes” are concerned. Some of us, in the free use of our religious liberty, do not recognize ourselves as citizens in any sense, of any of the Governments of this world, whilst others, in the exercise of the same religious liberty, have hitherto regarded themselves as citizens to the extent in which the Apostle Paul regarded himself as a citizen of Rome, and availed himself of the protection which such a relation voluntarily afforded.

THE “NAZARINES”, as the Christadelphians were often known from 1843.

Special Invitation

For some years, unity discussions have been taking place with Churches of God of the Abrahamic Faith. In the interest of promoting friendship and mutual understanding, we print the following invitation:

*You, your family and friends are invited to the
40th annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 20-26, 2015.*

Main Speakers:

- *Bro. John Mannell: “A Life of Isaac: From Fear to Faith”*
- *Bro. John Linsenmeier: “Behold the Lamb of God, Who Takes Away the Sin of the World”*
- *Bro. Steve Davis: “Moving on to Maturity: A Study in the Letter to the Hebrews”*
- *Bro. John Downer: “Forty Years of Preparation”*

*Contact Bro. Brad Rek (330) 609-6957 or brad.rek@gmail.com.
Visit our website at <http://abrahamicfaithgathering.org/> for more
information and to view talks from last year.*

Youth Speaks

The Anointing of David

Why choose David?

Very little is written about David himself in the context of his anointing in 1st Samuel 16. Besides a brief description of his shepherd duties as well as his physical appearance in vs 12, we don't learn much more about him until chapter 17, in the battle against Goliath. And yet, in this chapter, there are countless types of Christ that can be found in the character of David, a man forgotten and despised by his brethren, but in God's eyes "beloved of the Lord," in whom He was indeed well pleased.

We might ask ourselves, "Why did God choose David to be king of Israel, specifically?" First of all, the character of David and his life portrays a wonderful and quite remarkable representation of that of our Lord Jesus Christ. On another note, we can see many similarities between David and Joseph, Jesus being antitypes of both. Therefore, it is fitting that David would later be promised a seed that would "*proceed out of [his] bowels, and [God] would establish his kingdom... [God] would be his father, and he shall be [God's] son*" (2Sam 7:12-13).

In addition to the necessary ties to Christ, it was by God's will that David was in every way the opposite of Saul the son of Kish. He (David) was certainly not selected for "*his countenance, or on the height of his stature*" (1Sam 16:7),¹ both of which were desirable traits present in the man Saul (9:2); and yet, in God's eyes, he was in every account better than that man:

"And Samuel said unto him (Saul), the LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou" (1Sam 15:28).

The Hebrew word for "better" is *tôb*, meaning in the most literal sense "good," and occurs oftentimes alongside the Hebrew word for "bad,"² thus giving it the general meaning: "the opposite of bad." Unlike Saul, we can see from this verse that David would be a king who would "*love the good and hate the evil*" (Amos 5:15). And this goes hand-in-hand with the next reason for David's candidacy: he was a man after God's own heart. Samuel reproves Saul for his disobedience to God's commandment, after he failed to trust in God (Deut 20:1-4). Samuel's words unto Saul were: "*But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people...*" (1Sam 13:14).

God requires this attitude of all His servants: to be one that loves Him, and seeks to walk in all His ways. As a leader of God's people, Saul was not doing a very good job of setting such an example; and thus, David son of Jesse was selected: "*a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will*" (Acts 13:22). Brother Roberts writes, "We look at the picture (David's anointing) and see nothing in it

obviously divine. It was all apparently natural: yet the boyhood of David was a divinely superintended development — the laying of the foundation of that coming ‘man after God’s own heart,’ with whom the royal covenant of the kingdom was to be established forever” (Ways of Providence pg. 124). The time David spent in God’s Word during all his shepherd days certainly pleased Yahweh in choosing him to be king over His people Israel.

Yet the most important contrast between these two men, however, is found as

“...and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward... but the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from Yahweh troubled him.” (1Sam 16:13-14).

God had taken away his presence and providential blessing from Saul who, as the first king of Israel, had utterly failed to act as a shepherd over Israel, and more importantly had sinned in “*rejecting the word of the LORD,*” having no intention of repentance (1Sam 13:13; 15:12, 23, 26). Clearly, God saw that this was not the case with his servant David, and His choice for a successor to Saul’s throne was indeed righteous and good. David was a man who sought after the word of Yahweh, not just in outward show, but with his whole heart; countless chapters and Psalms lay testament to this.

Brother L.G. Sargent writes in his book Teaching of the Master, “In beautiful contrast to Saul was the forefather of the Lord, whose faith was as true as a sheep’s in its shepherd, and who, in spite of one great sin, remained in his contrition ‘the man after God’s own heart.’ David is the most profoundly God-conscious man in the Old Testament” (pg. 15).

Even as a young shepherd boy, David’s dependence and complete trust in Yahweh can be seen in the Psalms:

“the LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want...yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Psa 23:1,4).

The anointing

It is in fact at this point in his life, David as the young shepherd boy of Bethlehem, where our story takes place. While David was tending to his father’s sheep, Samuel the Seer made his way toward the small town of Bethlehem, a little more than 10 miles south of his residence in Ramah. With a horn of oil in hand and a heifer at his side, he might have appeared to any onlookers as an old man simply come to sacrifice to the LORD (1Sam 16:2). However, when he showed himself to the elders of the town, they trembled with



recognition: *“comest thou peaceably?”* They asked. Everyone in the land of Israel would have known who Samuel was (1Sam 3:20; 25:1), and instantly would have recognized him wearing his famous mantle (1Sam 15:27; 28:14). What dealings could this great man of God possibly have had with the humble town of Bethlehem?

“Peaceably,” was his response. *“I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify ourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.”* According to Bro. Whittaker, it’s possible that Samuel brought with him the ashes of a red heifer by which, over the period of a week (Numb 19:17-19), any who were ritually unclean might be purified. The sacrifice may have referred to a family feast, which Jesse and his sons were invited to, as seen in vs 5. Samuel would use another heifer to offer the sacrifice on behalf of them all, but before this would be done, Samuel desired that all the sons would be brought before him.

We remember the story: seven of Jesse’s eight sons were made to pass before Samuel, starting with Eliab the eldest; for each of them, God’s response was the same: *“the LORD hath not chosen these.”* The divine reason is given in as:

“But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1Sam 16:7).

We know that our God is One who *“tests the minds and hearts”* (Psa 7:9); He knows exactly where our motives lie, even if our outside appearances would show otherwise. As previously seen in the example of Saul, a man of the people was not the same as a man of God, and it was indeed a man of God who would be chosen on that day.

After the seven sons of Jesse passed before Samuel, he was just as confused as they were. He turned to Jesse and asked, *“are here all thy children?”* We can imagine a stifled groan coming from the rest of the sons when their father responded: *“there remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep”* Samuel knew all along that God would not have sent him in vain, and Jesse’s words confirmed this to him. *“Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.”* All waited by the sacrifice for David to arrive before the prophet, some less eagerly than others (1Sam 17:28).

Standing *“in the midst of his brethren,”* he would have come before Samuel in his simple shepherd clothing, obviously unaware of the momentous occasion at hand. In fact, amidst all who were gathered at the sacrifice or “feast,” Samuel was the only one who knew that he was about to anoint someone to be the king of Israel. Another suggestion made by Harry Whittaker is that, as far as Jesse and his sons knew, Samuel may have been selecting a new pupil for his college of *“the sons of the prophets”* (see 1Sam 7:16-17). Whether or not the true purpose of Samuel’s visit was indicated to David at the time, we can be assured that he recognized the occasion to be something very important, and certainly related to God; this was all that he needed to know. He is described as: *“Now he (David) was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to”* (1Sam 16:12).

Strange that the family had not yet begun to appreciate the superlative qualities of the youngest. Yet even at a glance there was something extraordinary about him — fine features, a fascinating pair of eyes, and glorious auburn hair. Good looks ran in the family (1Sam 16:7, 2Sam 15:25; 1Kgs 3:6), but clearly David had come in for more than his share. (See Whittaker, *Samuel, Saul, & David*, pg. 73). His outward appearance was the least of God's concern; in His wisdom, He knew that this son of Jesse had all the aspects of a king that He sought for in an appointed leader (Deut 17:20). And so, Samuel would have been overjoyed to finally hear the words spoken unto him by Yahweh: *"and the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward"* (1Sam 16:12-13).

Surely God had provided himself a king to reign over His people Israel (1Sam 16:1)! And surely this king would not depart from *"all the words of this law and these statutes"* as the former had done, but would *"learn to fear Yahweh his God"* (Deut 17:18-19). This much is evident in God's response to the anointing of David: *"and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward"* (1Sam 16:13). Although David did not know it yet, he was to be a man after God's own heart; and furthermore he, like Abraham, would be father to a great promised Seed (Jesus the Christ)!

This was the first of four anointings for David: three by men, in Bethlehem, Hebron and Jerusalem, and one by God's Spirit here at home at the very threshold of an almost unbelievably full life. Doubtless David became aware of the power which moved him from time to time, a power which issued forth in the psalms and revealed the very heart of the Lord's anointed. David tells us how the Spirit moved him: *"The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue"* (2Sam 23:2). (The Man David, Harry Tennant, pg 22).

The Spirit of God

As mentioned earlier, the bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon David was a defining contrast between him and Saul. Taking a closer look at these words in 1Sam 16:13, we see that the Spirit *"came upon"* David. The ESV translates it as *"the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward."* Young's Literal transliterates it in this way: *"prosper over David doth the Spirit of Yahweh from that day onwards."* Going even further, the Hebrew word is *tsalach* and is translated 52 out of 68 times as "made to prosper," or "prosperous." David was not given the power of the Spirit gifts like the apostles did, neither was he made to prophesy, as Saul did in 1Sam 10:11; he didn't need to! The Spirit of God made him to prosper from that day forward. The reason for us looking at this in such detail is because the conferral of the Holy Spirit upon David was such a defining moment in the commencement of his future reign; it not only signified God's approval upon David, but it was what made him to prosper all his days of being king!

It is also important to realize that, whenever the Spirit of God came upon an individual, it was clear that that servant was divinely appointed to a particular task or occupation, by Yahweh. Such was true of the example of Bezaleel the crafts-

man of Judah. Bezaleel was “filled with the Spirit of God” in Exod 35:31 (note that the Hebrew word for “filled” is different from *tsalach*), because he was divinely appointed to perform and lead all the work for the tabernacle (Exod 31:1-11; 35:30-35; 36:1; 37-38:22). The reason for God “rushing” His Spirit upon those whom He chose, was always to aid them in their service and obedience unto His commandments. Christ’s words to his disciples: “If a man love me, he will keep my words...and the word which he hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me... But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:23-26). The Spirit of God was given always to the furtherance of His plan and purpose in each of His servants, both great and small. Again, this is apparent in the example of Bezaleel, and this was certainly true of David. God did not convey upon him His Spirit simply because of his (David’s) righteousness or faith. The reason was because God had chosen him specifically, a man after His own heart, to lead His children Israel, just as Jesus the Christ will. This indeed was the ultimate blessing of prosperity for a future king, and David surely recognized this later in his life, if not then. Obviously, David was no exception to this; he could not have succeeded as king without God’s blessing, and that blessing was one of prosperity, given to him by the Spirit. We know that Saul too initially received this blessing, but lost it;³ “But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him” (1Sam 16:14).

We saw that each man’s attitude and spiritual countenance unto God was what truly set them apart. Saul forgot that “to obey is better than sacrifice;” David was a man after God’s heart. Only the latter was truly deserving of not only the blessing, but the occupation as well. Our thoughts should go to another man who was divinely appointed to the greatest task of all; who was anointed, or set apart in the waters of baptism; who received that blessing of prosperity by the Spirit of God, in the shape of a dove; and who was given the greatest divine approval of all: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt 17:15).

We need to realize that, God, as He did with David, has called each of us to be kings and priests in His Name, and that He is willing to place His Spirit upon us, to prosper in all our ways. He is willing to do so, so long as we put our trust in Him and His Word.

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psa 1:1-2).

Brandon Cipriotti (Thousand Oaks, CA)

Notes:

1. David was certainly selected for his spiritual attributes, but it is also apparent from the text that certainly in his appearance, and probably in his height, he was nearly a match for Saul.
2. Occurs in the phrase “good or bad” Gen 31:24; Lev 27:10; Numb 24:13; Deut. 1:39; 1Kgs 3:9. The same Hebrew word is used of the creation, which was “good”.
3. See also 2Sam 7:15

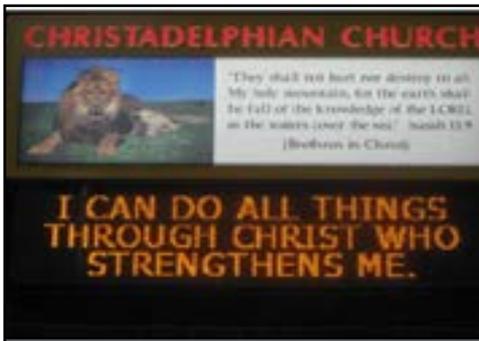
Reflections

A Message

What message would you tell the world if you could use only 50 letters at a time and would be given 30 seconds to deliver it?

Not too long ago, we made a survey of people who were asked the question as to how they most often heard about a particular business, with at least half responding: “on-site signage”.

More than TV, newspaper and radio combined, the overwhelming advertisement which caught their eye was on a building’s sign display. When combined with the adage of real estate agent’s three most important factors in buying a home: “location, location, location”, we believed that it was incumbent upon us to literally let our light shine in downtown Toronto. In this, the fourth largest city in North America, in a building at the very heart of the city, we sought to investigate a more prominent, public display to extend the borders of Israel. Our view was to become to our surrounding community what our duty compels us to be: *“the light of the world, a city that is set on an hill (and) cannot be hid” (Matt 5:14)*: a shining light-stand to all those around us. We have seen far too many ecclesial meeting places close down in the past years in Ontario (and know of at least three Christadelphian signs needing a new home), and we realized that a building exactly as old as the reborn state of Israel needed to remain. So the question was asked, “What do we say on our sign board?”



It seems that in this day and age, the world at large has generally grown ever more Biblically illiterate. However, I still come across sincere church goers with a readiness to discuss their faith, but quite often are ignorant of the most basic Scriptural information. That is why we need to stay away from “esoteric” language when we witness, which, by definition means “understood only by the select few;

intended for an inner circle of disciples”. These apparently private or secret words to a society at large would see “Christadelphian Ecclesia” as foreign and would tend to shy away, not being of that “nationality”. Since most of us can’t speak the

language of the New Testament anyway, we do well to witness in simple language and not assume listeners have any ecclesiastical background. I was recently told by a brother that in pioneer times, the title of our congregation, it was suggested by John Thomas, ought to be “The Royal Association of Believers”¹ to distinguish our community’s place of worship. A unique idea. This would stand apart indeed nowadays and, in actuality, presents the fact that we are a Kingdom of priests in the making. However, I’m sure our interested friends, inclined to pay us a visit, would be extremely intimidated, perceiving that their lowly position was unworthy. And it is just this very humility which is the type of attitude we would want in the people visiting us. Certainly, we couldn’t turn them away with such a lofty banner above our door. Interestingly, the word “chapel” has been used in times past, as well as sometimes in these days, and is a much more accurate title for our assembly halls. This word has always suggested a humble place of Christian worship, synonymous with a country setting, sequestered away; small and intimate. The word often also refers to a smaller venue set aside from the main hall, such as is found in hospitals and other institutions. Surprisingly, one of the dictionary definitions was amazingly appropriate for us: “this British derived word also refers to chapels as a place of worship for non-conformists, and is the word for non-conformist doctrine and practice itself.” Seems these early brethren really got that one right! So, to be ever the more welcoming, it is best to be simply understood, that the place that we meet on a Sunday morning is associated with Biblical Christianity as the world about us would try to understand it. No Christadelphian sign that I know of was ever erected for us, it was put there to reach our neighbors. The sign is in fact one of the best preaching tools we have. Let it therefore be understood by those with whom we wish to share the Gospel. We know who we are, the public does not.

The Barrie Ecclesia has had a sign on the side of a highway for many years and millions of vehicles pass by, exposed to a thought provoking message, mostly on



a regular basis. Certainly, this constant message has been a landmark to the many passersby and has identified us, in their minds, as a Bible-based community. Also, some time ago, on a rural route in the farm country of Shelburne, Ontario, there stood three markers, alone in a field, on the 10th Line at the 25th Side Road. Many years have come and gone since they were first erected, yet they were a landmark proclaiming the Christadelphians and the ASK organization, asking, “Is this a closed book to you?”, referring to the Bible. Today, on a busy downtown Toronto street, there is another landmark now erected to declare that there is a God in heaven Who continues to watch over mankind and will one day soon send His Son,

our Lord, to ensure that, “*They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea*” (Isa 11:9). Even so come Lord Jesus!

Ask Newsletter, Ontario, Winter 2014

Notes:

1. Organized by John Thomas in New York in 1854.

Perseverance

“We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Rom 5:3-4).

“Perseverance” is, quite simply, developing the ability to wait. If I can be sure, when the time finally comes for the Great High Priest to return from the Most Holy Place bringing the final blessing, that I’ll still be here, patiently waiting, rejoicing in the tribulations which I endure, having learned real patience, enough for a lifetime, of broken hearts and broken dreams... if I can be sure of that, then I know — as surely as I know anything — that, for us who are still waiting, *‘We will be saved’* will become, in that instant, *‘We are saved!’*

But before me stretches what is left of a life which I know, just as surely, will continue to have hurt feelings, resentments, disappointments, bitter experiences, ailments and illnesses, and the gradual and insidious decline of all my human powers.

Surely, in what time remains, I will continue to fall short time and again of what I would like to be, but can’t quite be, and to ask forgiveness for the 490th time for the same sins, of forgiving others for the same number of times. Can I bear what lies ahead without throwing up my hands and walking away from the door of the temple, where I wait?

But if I turn and go away, I will be going out into the howling waste of a wilderness filled with subtle snakes and stinging scorpions, where there is no hope and no life and no love: the wilderness where Judas went, and Cain, and Saul, and a million others, those who could not truly believe that the High Priest was coming to bring them the last great blessing.

God give me strength enough to wait, as long as it takes. For I now know that “faith” is not some life-changing mystical insight into eternal things, but a dogged determination to hold on in my spirit to what I know in my mind to be true, no matter how long and how difficult it seems, and no matter how distracting are so many concerns and people around me.

Should I care what that God-given strength is called, whether it be His providence, His care, His Scriptural instruction, or even His Holy Spirit? Should I try to figure out how that strength comes to me, and is assimilated into my spirit? Or should I merely be humbly grateful when it is there, miraculously but inexplicably?

“I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning” (Psa 130:5-6).

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)



Bible Mission News

“That their hearts might be comforted” — **Visiting Ecclesias in South America**

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” It is an incredible blessing to be a part of the family of God and this summer I had the wonderful opportunity of visiting our brothers and sisters who sojourn in Latin America whilst awaiting the coming of Messiah.

Following my incredibly inspirational experience with the Truth Corps in 2013, July saw me again heading for South America but this time my first stop was Bolivia’s capital city, La Paz. La Paz sits in the high Alta Plano of the country and at an altitude of 11,910ft (3,630m), it is the highest administrative capital city in the world. Bolivia is land locked and is equal in size to California and Texas combined. The disciples were told in Matt 28:19 to *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”*. Following this example, so far the fruit of the labor is a small group of called out ones in La Paz. They, like so many of our brothers and sisters in remote parts of the



Brothers and sisters in Bolivia

world, rely heavily on support from the wider brotherhood for help not only to sow the word of God but also for much needed fellowship — *“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ”* (Col 2:2).

The current resident missionary couple for La Paz is Bro. Shimon and Sis. Joanna Spina (from Australia) and I lodged with them and their two young children, Dallas and Zander, for the first three weeks I spent in Bolivia. The tiny Bolivian ecclesia consisting of two brothers and four sisters was doubled in size this July! Also staying in the Spina’s 12th floor apartment was Bro. Shem Spina and his girlfriend Sis. Natalia Van der Meulen (Australia). Sis. Colleen Uiga (USA) was also in La Paz as a part of her time on Spanish Truth Corps and she has also been working on translation projects. As Bro. Freddy and Bro. Shimon had been taking it in turns to perform the

ecclesial duties each week, it was rewarding during my visit to be able to exhort, present a Thursday evening seminar and to participate at the various meetings. To help with this it was reassuring to have a Spanish teacher on hand to check any speaking notes. Exhorting in Spanish was a whole new experience for me and it was especially uplifting to see my talks being received and understood!

As well as some sightseeing in Bolivia and a midweek tour to Machu Picchu, yet another highlight of the trip was being asked to fly out to Chile for my last weekend to meet with the Santiago ecclesia for the breaking of bread service. Bro. Shimon gave a study, I gave the exhortation and after the service we were able to enjoy fellowship over tea and biscuits with yet more of our brethren for whom being able to experience our wider fellowship is often a luxury as much as it is necessary.



Midweek trip to Machu Picchu

I was due to leave Bolivia the Thursday after we got back from Chile. However my flight was delayed so it was an unexpected blessing to be able to meet with the 8–10 seminar contacts again that evening! A last memorable moment of Bolivia was when even later in the evening, Johnny, one the seminar attendees who is also receiving baptismal instruction, arrived at my hotel and before saying Adios, he very kindly presented me with a neck-tie and a Bolivian flute!



View across La Paz

Bolivia and Chile, like so many others scattered around the world, gain much strength and encouragement from such visits, as do the visitors, that we may all *“consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”* (Heb 10:24-25).

*Written by Luke Foley, Coventry West Ecclesia, CBMA Spanish Truth Corps
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/C Publicity*

Jamaica — Baptisms, Preaching and Fraternal

Baptisms

We are pleased to report that 24 year old Monique Grant took on the saving name of Jesus Christ on Sunday, September 7, 2014 in the waters of the Salt River. She



Sis. Monique Grant

grew up in the Truth with her family in the May Pen Ecclesia. As is the custom members and youth of the ecclesia gather by the river (a short drive from the Hall) to listen to a short baptismal talk, sing hymns and ask God's blessing in prayer prior to witnessing the baptism. When Sis. Monique came out of the water, her physical expression in the photo with her arms indicated her joy! Back at the May Pen Hall, she was extended the right hand of fellowship, and at the same time presented with a small green Hymn Book, the Bible Reader's Companion and a new Bible. There have been seven baptisms in the Jamaican Ecclesias in the last two years and some of the teenagers in the May Pen Sunday School in particular, recently expressed a desire to prepare for baptism as well. We pray that God will help the brothers and sisters to continue to guide the youth to the way of salvation.

Preaching

As previously reported, a campaign was held at the Broughton Ecclesia during the month of August 2014, supported not only by members of other island ecclesias, but also by members from New York. Follow-up efforts took place during the month of October, at which time Bro. Joe and Sis. Veronica Badlu, along with Sis. Claudette White, all from the South Ozone Park Ecclesia in New York, were present to help with youth activities and ecclesial meetings. Their support and encouragement was much appreciated! Sis. Claudette has actually spent several months in 2014 assisting the Broughton Ecclesia, and in particular with the Sunday School.

During the month of October, we were pleased to spend a week in Jamaica with members and supporting scheduled events of several ecclesias. First, a Bible class was held at the Kingston Hall on Friday evening, October 3rd for members of the Kingston, White Horses and Spanish Town ecclesias on the subject — *What does the Name of Jesus mean to me?* The next day we attended the quarterly CBMJamaica meeting with representatives and members from nine ecclesias present. This last meeting of the year, is also the planning and budget meeting for the next year's Calendar of Events supported by the CBMCanada. Sunday, October 5th was the start of a campaign organized by the May Pen Ecclesia. A banner which was hung on the front of the Hall about ten days previous, for two talks on the Sunday and one talk the following Wednesday. The ecclesia also passed out flyers to friends in the neighborhood. Several regular and some new visitors attended the talks,

there were about 40 in total, in attendance on the Sunday. Three visitors at the Wednesday evening Bible class were from the UK and visiting family on the Island. We had good discussion with the young man, who had Christadelphian connections during his youth in the UK! He gave us his email address and wanted help to get in touch with Christadelphians in Birmingham. He has been contacted by members of the Acocks Green Ecclesia near to where he lives, and it is our hope that the Lord will open his heart to the things of the Truth.

Following the weekend's activities, we spent the next couple of days with the members of the Port Maria Ecclesia enjoying home visits and supporting advertised lectures to which a few interested friends attended. Sadly, one of the two brothers of this ecclesia, Bro. Harold Campbell, fell asleep in the Lord on Tuesday September 30th. His enthusiasm and desire to serve in the ecclesia is missed. This little ecclesia needs the support of the other Jamaican ecclesias and our prayers. We spent the last two days of our stay in the May Pen area, during which time we were taken by Bro. Melvin and Sis. Gerzel Gordon to visit Sis. Rebecca Smikle, an elderly sister who now finds it difficult to attend meeting. Several other sisters in the area came along, as we did a reading and conversed with Sis. Smikle, whose desire for the Kingdom is very strong indeed!

Fraternals

The CBMJ Annual Calendar of Events contains about 15 activities, of which three are fraternal gatherings on national holidays — February Ash Wednesday, Easter Monday and October Heroes Day. The Monday, October 20, 2014 Heroes Day Fraternal this year was sponsored by the Spanish Town Ecclesia at YMCA with 87 adults, youths and children in attendance — the accompanying photos shows a cross-section from most ecclesias on the Island. The theme for the day was — *Shining like the Sun in a Dark World*. See accompanying article for more information on this event. It should be mentioned that a mosquito-borne virus (Chikungunya) swept across the Caribbean during the last half of 2014 and negatively impacted the attendance at ecclesial functions. We pray for the whole brotherhood worldwide, under the various conditions in these days of our probation, that our faith remains

strong!



*Written by
Don Luff,
CBMC
Linkman
Submitted by
Jan Berneau,
CBMA/C
Publicity*

On the steps of the YMCA where the Spanish Town Ecclesia meets.

Jamaica — Heroes Day Fraternal, October 2014

It was another delightful occasion as 87 brothers, sisters and young people attended the Fraternal Gathering at the Spanish Town Ecclesia. The main purpose of this gathering was to worship God and look at ways in which we can improve our walk towards the kingdom. This year, Heroes Day celebrations fell on October 20th. In God's eyes the greatest heroes of faith are not those who achieve fame, prosperity and power in this life, but those who treat this lifetime as a temporary assignment expecting their reward in eternity. They wait patiently for a heavenly kingdom prepared by God.

We were off to a late start but the program followed through smoothly. It was comprised of three short talks followed by questions and answers. There were group discussions at the end of which, reports were given by a member of each group. The exhortation would prepare our hearts for the Lord's Table.

Theme — “Shining like the Sun in a Dark World”

Talk 1 — Surrounded on Every Side by Unbelievers

After a hearty welcome and prayer by Bro. Marlon Jackson it was time for the first talk done by Bro. Davion Sinclair. He interestingly reminded us that God has called us to work for Him — John 14:12. Lay aside anything in our lives that is preventing us from walking as Christ did. We are accountable to God for our walk. Make responsible choices so our light will shine in darkness. Maybe God's passion in our hearts can make us visit the prison, the homeless, infirmary, and so on. Don't be burdened with worldly gain. Serve God. Make a difference in the life of unbelievers.

Talk 2 — Friendship with the World

Bro. Leecroft Blair ably delivered an effective talk on this important subject. A friend is one who is well loved, one with which you rap. There is mutual affection. This gives a unified feeling. To love God you have to hate the world. Do not associate with the world — Prov 12: 26. The world is constantly changing. God is consistent. If sinners entice thee, consent thou not. Prov 1: 10.

Talk 3 — Evil and Its Influences

Bro. Patrick Johnson aroused our emotions when he mentioned about the Aedes Aegypti mosquito bite which brings on the Chickungunya Virus. For the Aedes Aegypti mosquito to survive, it must have breeding places, for example swamps, water settling in containers for too long or uncleansed drains.

Evil is brought on by sin. The Bible never gives the idea that sin a virus from outside. Instead it is unwillingness to do God's will. Sin is the result of choices we make. James 4:7-8. To change our ways focus on God. Prov 17:13. Don't be overcome with evil. Rewarding evil for good is a sin before God.

The interaction that took place next in all three Discussion groups was vibrant. The contribution made by the young people showed much maturity.

Group 1 Discussion — Prayer

Prayer is communication with God; Core of spiritual life; can be short, “Lord have mercy”; Paul encouraged us, “Pray for one another”. James 5:16; Answer will come — May not be what we expect or according to our timing

Group 2 — Resisting temptation

Temptation comes to us all — 1Cor 10:13; Yielding is sin; Jesus never sinned; Identifying pattern of temptation and stay away from those situations; Call on God for help; Turn off the television; Memorize Bible verses for quick defense

Group 3 — Economic Survival

Many people in Jamaica have to deal with economic survival; Hold on to strength and faith in God; Accept and appreciate God’s providing hand; Share — as all we have is from God; Some workers wait up to five years to get increase; Say, “No to Loto”, “No to Cash Plus”; You may end up losing all.

Exhortation — “The Way”

In his exhortation, Bro. Ray Arthurs, excitedly stated that the word, “way” is found approximately eight hundred times in the Bible, but there are only two ways or rather one way for us — God’s Way.

In Psa 102:25-28 God allowed Moses to look into His plan. He was the humblest man of all. He was obedient to God’s way. Isa 52:3 speaks of the promised Saviour as the way by which man will be redeemed. Stubbornness in our heart causes us to go our own way. God is the author of righteousness.

God is almighty beholding the good and the evil. When God sent His son on earth that was is way of compassion and love. He tests us and wait for us to come His way. Jesus said, “Not my will but thine be done.” God wants willingness in us to walk His way. Hold on to the light. Jesus is the only way. “No man cometh to the Father but by me”.

Parting Time

Thanks to God for a lovely day around His Precious Word. To all the brethren, sisters, friends and young people whose presence made this day so special, “A big thank you”. We were all encouraged by the Word of God. The melodious singing and heartfelt prayers brought joy to our ears. The spirit of new and old acquaintances strengthened us. Happiness turned to sadness when it was time to part.

Soon all buses were leaving for home. Those from the May Pen Ecclesia, totaling 24 people, were left stranded. Their bus did not come back. Bro. Keith Kinlocke, Recording Brother for Spanish Town Ecclesia, quickly arranged transportation for them. The day ended safely and well for everyone.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of need” (Psa 46:1).

*Written by Gerzel Gordon, Jamaica
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/C Publicity*

The Missionary Journeys of Bro. Rubén

Bro. Rubén Barboza lives in Córdoba, Argentina, where there are few Christadelphians and the Word struggles to prosper in the country's rather sceptical European culture. In past years he has visited brethren and sisters in different parts of Brazil and Chile, and in 2014 he was able to revisit these countries and travel to Lima, Perú for the first time.



Along with his wife Roxana, Rubén flew to Lima in July to visit the six members there and do some outreach. He and Roxana were delighted to get to meet the local brethren and sisters for the first time, share some loving fellowship with them and see different parts of the city and country. In the course of their extended

stay there were two memorial services with the members, with Rubén giving the word of exhortation on each occasion. His public talks on the kingdom of God were well received by an enthusiastic group of interested friends.

Rubén travelled again in late September. First he went to the neighbouring country of Brazil to spend a weekend with Bro. Emerson Acosta and his family. Emerson lives in isolation in the southern city of Canoas and was actually baptized by Rubén several years ago, so he always appreciates his visits and the chance to renew fellowship with him around the Word. Fortunately, Emerson speaks Spanish in addition to his native Portuguese and so is able to communicate well with the different brethren who visit him.



Bro. Emerson Acosta and Bro. Ruben

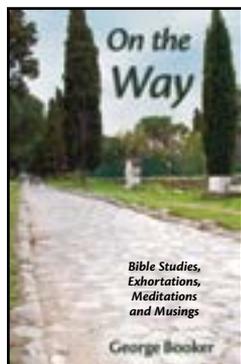
A couple of weeks later Rubén went in the other direction, taking the short hop west over the Andes to Santiago de Chile for a long weekend with the brethren and sisters and friends, delivering a couple of public lectures and encouraging and exhorting the members.

South America is a large continent with widely-scattered members, so that it is a great blessing for everyone down there when one of their own brethren is able to visit, give talks and share his love for the Truth with them.

*Written by Jim and Jean Hunter, Link Couple
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/C Publicity*

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)

The Ecclesia at Ephesus, by Ryan Mutter

Studying the Ecclesia at Ephesus provides powerful lessons in spiritual growth relevant in today's times. \$9.00 US (soft cover, 264 pages, with color maps).

Bible Guidelines for a Happy Marriage, by John C. Bilello

Sound, proactive, Biblical advice on how to build and maintain a happy marriage. \$6.00 US (soft cover, 127 pages).

The Creation Text: Studies in Early Genesis, by David Levin

Forty-nine studies offer fresh insights into early Genesis by examining the text and structure of the first five chapters. \$12.00 US (364 pages).

My Journey in Faith, by Ronald Hicks

A brother shares his life experience in the Truth with Christadelphians around the world, and the joy of mission work. Special price: reduced from \$10.00 to \$5.00 US (372 pages).

Pictures of Redemption, by George Booker

Explores parables, analogies, and figures of speech used in Scripture to illustrate the many facets of redemption. \$6.00 US (soft cover, 192 pages).

The Whole Armor of God, by Ryan Mutter

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

How to Order

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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.**

The ecclesial position primarily in Ontario, and perhaps elsewhere, is at present confused as unity related matters are being resolved. Intelligence is published for information purposes only without endorsement by the Tidings Committee.

BOZEMAN, MT

We have been delighted to witness the baptisms of KEZIA and NAOMI BOTTOMLEY, daughters of Sis. Erin and the undersigned, in recent months. We thank many who have travelled from afar to this somewhat remote light stand during 2014 to encourage us along the way. Our ecclesial ballot produced some changes and Bro. Peter Jones assumes the duties of Recording Brother January 1, 2015. The details can be found in the ALS diary and North American address roll.

Paul Bottomley

BROOKLYN, NY

The Brooklyn Ecclesia ended 2014 in an unexpected sad note. Bro. Amrick Kilburn fell asleep in Christ. He came here just after his sixteenth natural birthday which almost coincided with his baptism in 1988, at the Colon Ecclesia in Panama. His loyal, fervent devotion to the truth was a wonderful encouragement to young and senior members. We knew of his serious illness, but his cheerfulness at meeting so overshadowed this condition that when his death was reported only the day after his lively participation at the Sunday meetings, it was an incredible shock! We take comfort that our brother sleeps in the hope of the resurrection. A depth of gratitude is due to our two sister ecclesias for their uplifting support. For 2015, we look forward to the baptism of a CYC'er who came under the tutelage of Bro. Amrick.

Clive Drepaul

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, IL

We gratefully acknowledge the commendation of our ecclesia, published in this magazine, and we are delighted to share with you what has been happening in our ecclesia since our formation six years ago. Since this is our first report of ecclesial news, some background about the ecclesia may be of interest.

We are a mission ecclesia. That is, we intentionally established a new ecclesia in a community where there was none, in the same way that a mission ecclesia overseas might be started. We were spun off from the Bloomington, IL Ecclesia, which is about an hour away. Ongoing support from both Bloomington and the Chicago Ecclesia has been crucial.

The ecclesia formed in 2008, using a rented room at a hotel on Sundays, and a classroom at the University of Illinois for a midweek class. With the benefit of experience gained in the overseas mission field, primarily in South Africa, we opened a Bible Education Center in August 2009. The location is a storefront in a mall. We offer a limited selection of new and used Bibles, study aids, and gift items in our shop, at no markup. We also give DVDs, books and pamphlets free, and have a lending library. The primary focus,

though, is our classes. During most of the year we offer five classes a week: English as a Second Language (ESL), a noontime round-table women's discussion group, an evening round-table discussion of a book of the Bible, and two instructor-led evening classes on a wide variety of Bible topics. During the holidays and over the summer the schedule is reduced to two or three classes.

Hundreds of people from the community have attended classes. Of these, there is a small core which continues to take classes regularly. Our Sunday services are held in the same location, so it is easy for students to transition to attending on Sunday, and a number do so. To date, we rejoice in reporting that there have been three baptisms: JAMES COPE on July 1, 2010; LIANE MORALES on December 4, 2010; and PAT CAUSEMAN on May 17, 2014. We thank our heavenly Father for the addition of this new brother and two new sisters.

Beyond classes, we have become deeply involved in the lives of many of our students and contacts. We strongly believe in the "touch and teach" approach, and with the Father's blessing, the Center and our members have become an important part of many lives.

We gladly welcome volunteers to help in this work, for any period of time. We are very grateful to those who have come for a weekend, a week, or a month. We also thank several speakers who have provided classes from remote locations via the internet.

More information about our current classes, and the SNUGGLES program launched by our Sis. Jennifer Millay, can be found on our web site: BibleEducationCenter.org. Those interested in more information about getting a BEC started, or exploring volunteering with us, please contact the undersigned by email at: paul.zilmer@gmail.com; or by phone at: 309-750-9738.

Paul Zilmer

CRANSTON, RI

This past year the Cranston Ecclesia has experienced both sorrow and joy. We were saddened by the loss of two wonderful sisters. Sis. Margi Sano fell asleep in June. She was a faithful servant of this ecclesia for many years. She was baptized May 28, 1978. Sis. Fran Cooper fell asleep in September. Many of us have wonderful memories of Sis. Fran serving in the Lord's vineyard with great enthusiasm spanning many years. They both will be missed while we look forward to that great day when the Lord Jesus returns and by God's grace restores them and all those with like faith to life.

In May, Bro. Michael and Sis. Sarah Davey transferred membership to the Norfolk, VA Ecclesia. We will miss them greatly. In July, Sis. Janel Tucker was welcomed back into fellowship.

With great joy we had three baptisms the third week of December. They were NATHANIEL SOUCY, son of Bro. Gerald and Jayne Soucy; MITCHELL HAUGHTON, son of Bro. Bruce and Sis. Debra Haughton; and MICHAEL TUCKER, son of Sis. Mary Tucker.

The first weekend of 2015, Bro. Garth Maier (Tulsa/Joplin, OK) delivered a study titled "Titus: Ecclesial Order". We thank Bro. Garth for his excellent ministrations. We had a large number of visitors including the Abington Ecclesia for Sunday memorial service. DVD video and audio recordings of this weekend can be ordered by contacting Bro. Bruce Haughton by email at: zandvoort98@gmail.com.

Jeff Wallace

GUELPH, ON

We are thankful for the commendation reported in the January 2015 issue, as a major step forward in recognizing the unity of God's family, for which we have been working many years.

It is with great joy that we report two recent baptisms into the saving name of Jesus Christ: NICOLE TYLER (Gray) on November 9, 2014; and BRADEN MOYNIHAN on December 6, 2014.

The Guelph, ON Ecclesia hosted a successful Women's Weekend November 28-30, 2014, attended by sisters and friends from many Ontario ecclesias. Our annual Youth Weekend will be held in February 2015, God willing. Our website: www.guelphchristadelphians.ca provides current information on ecclesial activities. In recent months, a choral group involving brothers and sisters of Guelph and nearby ecclesias has been performing in area seniors homes, proclaiming the gospel and spreading joy through song.

Daryl Finlay

KOUTS, IN

We are deeply saddened to report the sudden falling asleep of our Sister Patti Bobis this past October. It was very sudden and unexpected. Sister Patti was a faithful attendee at the memorial service and at our midweek Bible class. She was a diligent worker for our ecclesia in several capacities and her efforts in regards to our study days will especially be missed. She now sleeps in the sure hope of the resurrection at our Lord's return. She is greatly missed.

We wish to thank Bro. Jeff Gelineau for his classes at this year's fall study day in November. His classes on forgiveness were very uplifting and very well received. We thank him and Sister Kelly for their efforts on behalf of our ecclesia.

We are very happy to receive by transfer Bro. Jerry and Sis. Dorothy Asbury from the Troy, IL Ecclesia. They will be a great asset to our ecclesia. We also are happy to announce that after a good confession of his faith MATTHEW BRYAN was baptized on December 21. Our new brother is the son of Bro. Pat and Sis. Debbie Bryan and we rejoice with them in the commitment of our new brother to serve our Lord and Savior.

The undersigned is now acting as the recording Brother of the Kouts Ecclesia. e-mail: paulandmaryw@comcast.net.

Paul Wilson

LARGO, FL

We are saddened to report that our beloved Sis. Annette Haltom fell asleep in September after a long illness. Our thoughts and prayers are with her husband, Bro. Troy Haltom, and daughter, Sis. Leslie Davis, and family. We grieve with her family but rejoice that we will see her in God's kingdom to come.

In March we welcomed Bro. Gerardo and Sis. Gwen Castellano to the Largo Ecclesia. They took an interesting path to the truth. Bro. Gerardo began reading the Bible and other religious literature at the age of five in his home land of Honduras. In his continued search for truth he met and married Sis. Gwen. They discovered some Christadelphian materials on the internet and eventually baptized themselves in the Gulf of Mexico after professing their belief in God and Jesus and the Kingdom to come based on our teachings. After giving a good confession of the faith before the

Largo Arranging Board they were both welcomed around the table of our Lord with all Christadelphians of like faith.

We welcome back Sis. Helen Gibson who has returned to the Largo meeting from her many and long travels to assist other brethren and sisters nationwide. We also welcome Bro. Chad and Sis. Martha Monahan from Beaufort, SC. We would like to thank our many visiting brothers and sisters who helped to swell our ranks and provide much good fellowship and service. The good Lord has blessed our little ecclesia once again and we thank Him.

Our dear Bro. Martin Walker suffered a stroke in August which has robbed him of his ability to remember family and more importantly, the truth. He resides in a nursing home close to his family. If any brothers or sisters wish to write or visit, please contact the undersigned for particulars.

In October we held an impromptu study day with the Orlando and Sarasota ecclesias after being contacted by Bro. Jim Cowie (Morton Bay, Queensland, Aust.). He presented a study on, "Events Surrounding the Return of Christ". It was well attended by members from the area ecclesias. We also held our annual study weekend in November with Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA). His subject, "Led by the Spirit," was not only very spiritually uplifting but gave us much food for thought and improvement.

Largo will host a study weekend in April 2015, the date to be announced, with Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA). He will lead us in a study of, "Marriage from the Mind of God". Please contact the undersigned for particulars.

Walt Dodrill

VIENNA, ON

We are saddened to report that Sis. Joyce Lucas, a life long member of the Vienna Ecclesia, fell asleep in the Lord on Saturday, December 27, 2014, at the age of eighty nine years. Sis. Joyce was baptized well over fifty five years ago and was a faithful member of the Vienna Ecclesia since that time. Her sojourn in this life is over and she now rests in hope of resurrection when our Lord returns.

We take this opportunity to thank the brothers and sisters from the Brant County, Hamilton MacNab, and London Ecclesias for their continued support during 2014 and the brethren for their ministrations at the breaking of bread services here. It is truly appreciated.

Alice Miller

WESTERLY, RI

We report the removal from fellowship in the Central ecclesias of Sam Taylor of the Westerly, RI Ecclesia.

Jim Burns

WICHITA FALLS, TX

Since last reporting, we have welcomed around the table of our absent Lord the following brothers and sisters: Stan Newton (Pomona, CA); Ed Newton (Verdugo Hills, CA); Linda Jones (Los Angeles, CA); Becky Goodwin (East Texas); Ron and Kristen Hefner, and David Phillips (North Houston, TX); and Peter Trotter, Antonio and Marcia Howell, Jacob Matthew, and Michelle Massip (Dallas, TX). We thank Bre. A. Howell, P. Trotter, D. Phillips and S. Newton for their words of comfort and exhortation.

In November we were pleased to welcome Bro. Jim Cowie (Brisbane, Aust.). We thank Bro. Jim for his very enlightening classes and exhortation on, “The Transfiguration of Christ”. He also gave a lecture entitled “The Bible Writes Tomorrow’s Headlines: Russia will Solve the Isis Threat,” alerting all to the nearness of Christ’s return.

We are very pleased to announce the birth of Emma Danielle to Bro. Ben and Sis. Sarah Beutel on December 5, 2014. All are doing well and we thank our heavenly Father for this wonderful blessing. Plans are underway for our annual Spring Gathering over the weekend of April 3-5, 2015, God willing . Bro. Kent Beeson (Seattle, WA) has consented to be our class leader and we invite as many as possible to join us in a weekend around God’s Word.

John A. Clubb

REPORT ON 2014 CHRISTADELPHIAN SISTERS’ RETREAT

The Annual Christadelphian Sisters Retreat sponsored by the New York Metropolitan Sisters’ Committee was held June 20-22, 2014, at the Homewood Suites, Allentown, PA. The theme for the Retreat was “**Practical Topics to Daily Living in the Truth**” and the sessions were facilitated by Sister Cynthia Pavia of Guadalajara, Mexico and attended by 40 sisters.

The classes were great reminders for our preparation of the coming Kingdom and our ultimate role as sisters in our ecclesias. First we looked at “***I want to be in the kingdom***”: ***An introduction and personal evaluation of ten aspects in my life***. We looked at our attitudes and thoughts. I am what I think, the joy and willingness, confidence in my hope, strong in the Lord and peace in mind.

The next session looked at “***My Private life, my attitude and actions***”: ***I do what I want to do and how I choose life***. We also looked at my relationship with God, how we need to improve our Prayers and Meditation by making our prayers real and always recognize to whom we are talking. We need to always be thankful to God for all things; obstacles, forgiveness, guidance and strength. In our prayers we were also reminded that we must not be selfish but always remember to pray for others and the kingdom to come. In meditation on God’s word, we need for God to listen to us as we reciprocate the same action by listening to Almighty God’s direction to us and by that course of action we would have answers to our various problems and at the same time build our faith.

In another session we looked at ***our participation in the Body of Christ: how well were we producing fruit, connecting, growing, blossoming, feeding, healing and serving***. Finally we looked at the “***Light of the World***”: how much are we preaching to others in order to encourage as many people to get to know the Lord Jesus and accept him as their personal savior.

In all the sessions we looked at the obstacles that would prevent us from serving and what corrective measures we could use to improve our lives in the service of God. The level of participation by all sisters was commendable and it demonstrated how important it is for us to set aside time for retreats whereby we could come together not only for the interaction with each other, or to enhance good relationships, but also to promote good spiritual well-being among each other whereby we could be better helpmeets to our serving brethren and ultimately to the ecclesia. We therefore would like to encourage more sisters from other ecclesias to get involved in our next retreat which will be held in June 12-14, 2015, God willing.

Submitted by New York Metropolitan Sisters’ Retreat Committee.

Minute Meditation

Almost is not enough

When Paul was on trial before King Agrippa, Paul preached to him about the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul then looked at him and asked him, “King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets?” Before the king had time to respond, Paul answered for him and said, “I know that you do!” King Agrippa admitted, “Almost you persuade me to be a Christian.” Paul was thankful that he had touched the King’s heart and said, “I would to God, that not only you, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”

No doubt the room was filled with “almosts.” We don’t know if any of those hearing Paul that day responded to the power of Paul’s words and took further action. However, we do know from history that King Agrippa did not, and that despite being “almost persuaded,” he perished as an unbeliever. Almost is not enough.

All of us have known someone who almost believed. Years ago in a little Bible class at work, one of our co-workers was interested in what the Bible teaches, but said, “Everyone has the right to interpret the Bible for themselves as they see fit.” Lots of people feel this way. Yet the Bible is clear that no prophecy of Scripture can be interpreted any way we like. The apostle Peter tells us, “First of all, you must understand this: No prophecy in Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever originated through a human decision. Instead, men spoke from God.”

One way to make the point clear is to direct the discussion toward an often ignored Bible principle that demonstrates that we are not free to interpret the Bible as we wish. Consider what Jesus and James have to say about taking an oath. Jesus tells us, “I say unto you, swear not at all.” James is very clear, saying, “Above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay be nay: lest ye fall into condemnation.”

The logical question is, “When is it okay to take an oath?” Both Jesus and James said not to do it at all. One member of our class at work had just been elected mayor of his city and he told us, “I did not know it was wrong to swear, and now I know it is wrong — but I still do it.” He was going to take the oath of office anyway. In our little class it was now clear that here is a teaching in the Bible which is not subject to interpretation, and which many of those in the class were not prepared to obey.

Those who put their left hand on the Bible when they raise their right hand to recite an oath in court or at a public swearing-in ceremony show that they have no idea that the Bible they are putting their hand on says, “Do not swear.” Ironically the very book, God’s book, that they rest their hand on, says that they should not be swearing. The Bible is not so much misinterpreted as it is ignored.

Jesus says, “If you love me, keep my commandments.” Notice he did not say to keep some of them. Also, just as God did not give the children of Israel the ten

suggestions, God and Jesus do not give us suggestions; they want us to obey their commandments. Many people think they know what pleases God, and often will do many things they think God would like. However, they don't make the effort to find out exactly what God wants and are not careful to obey all that God commands, which is why so many of those that the Lord has called will not be chosen.

Sadly, our little Bible class consisted of good living Christians who did not wish to follow all the principles of the Bible. They could "almost" believe the gospel, but not quite. They never chose to pursue the Truth. Almost is not enough.

We are not at liberty to pick and choose what we will obey and what we can ignore. God wants total dedication to His commandments. The Lord Jesus gave his all, even his life, for us, and he has asked us to take up our cross and follow him. We must do our part, just as the apostle Paul did, explaining, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." We will face challenges and endure hardships, and we are assured that we will be tried, but not beyond that which we are able to bear. Our trials are to refine our character, as Paul also explains, "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience"

We cannot almost be Christians. We cannot almost obey the commandments. We cannot look over the teachings in the Bible and make our own decision as to which we will follow and which we won't, which we will believe and which we won't. We cannot interpret the Scriptures any way we want. Instead, we must be committed to learning what the gospel is and finding out exactly what the Lord requires of us. And then we must do it.

Let us not almost follow our Lord, but let us commit ourselves to dedicating our life to serving him, taking up our cross and obeying his commandments. Jesus tells us, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." May we be among those that are blessed with eternal life. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life."

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

FEBRUARY 2015

6-8 Ladore CYC Camp Christadelphian young people ages 13 and over. Bro. Jesse Adair on the topic of Ruth. Register at www.cyccamp.com or contact Bro. Ryan Mutter at championvegetable@hotmail.com.

7 Brantford, ON Annual Junior CYC and Little Disciples Winter Gathering at Camp Trillium. Workbooks will be posted on www.brantfordchristadelphians.com. For additional information email Bro. Peter and Sis. Karly Styles at peterandkarly@juno.com.

22-27 Palm Springs Bible School. The speakers will be: Bro. Arne Roberts (Wales); and Bro. Dennis Bevans (Baltimore, MD). The school offers a wonderful environment for

the mature adult to study God's word and enjoy the fellowship of other brethren and sisters. To register, contact Jeff Gelineau at Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org.

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.

APRIL 2015

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

3-5 Wichita Falls, TX Spring Gathering at the T4C camp, Freestone, TX. Speaker will be Bro Kent Beeson (Seattle, WA). Topic: "Let your light shine before men in such a way". Contact Bro. Larry Beutel at lbeutel@alsco.com.

4 New Westminster, BC Fraternal Gathering. Theme: "Jesus Teacher and Healer." Our speaker is Bro Roger Long (UK). Contact: Bro. James Prasad prasadsj@telus.net or 604-525-4056.

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

MAY 2015

2-3 Pittsburgh, PA Study weekend. Bro. Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ) will speak on "Lessons of Past and Future Kings". Travelers' lunch provided at noon. Classes begin at 1:00pm. Contact Bro. Len Budney atpghecclesia@gmail.com or (412)983-1970.

8-9 Vancouver Island Sisters' Weekend in Victoria, BC. Studies led by Sis. Sandy McLeod (Simi Hills, CA). Contact rosabailay@shaw.ca for information and registration forms.

JUNE 2015

12-14 New York Metropolitan Sisters' Retreat at The Host Resort/Hotel, Lancaster, PA. The speaker will be Sis. Mary Styles (Shelbourne, ON). Her topic is "Abigail — A woman of Good Understanding and a Beautiful Countenance". Contact: Sis. Averil Ferguson at 718-881-8705 email: averilpsm23@juno.com.

27-July 5 Mid-Atlantic Bible School at Shippensburg University in Shippensburg, PA. The theme is "The Lord My Light and My Salvation" Psalm 27. The Youth Program theme will be "God's 7000 Year Plan". Bro. Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA): "Hezekiah: Faith in Desperate Times" and "Seeking the Lost" (teens); Bro. Steve Hornhardt (Salisbury, Adelaide, South Australia): "Come and See — Witnessing for Christ" and "Unlocking Revelation" (teens); and Bro. Garth Maier (Tulsa-Joplin, OK/MO): "Esther" and "Sacrifices of Yahweh" (teens). Website www.MidAtlanticBibleSchool.com.

28-July 3 Vancouver Island Bible Camp at Lake Shawnigan on Vancouver Island, CA. Speakers are Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD) and Bro. Clyde Snobelen (Victoria, BC). For details see www.vibiblecamp.com and www.facebook.com/vancouverislandbiblecamp.

JULY 2015

5-11 Southwest Bible School, Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. Speakers are Bro. Stephen Hornhardt: "Come and See — Witnessing for Christ" and "Unlocking

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Revelation" (teens); Bro. Philip Lawrence: "Have you been converted?" and "The Lord is my Shepherd" (teens); and Bro. Dev Ramcharan: "The Law of Kindness is on her Tongue — Women in the Faith" and "Life skills for young people" (teens). Registration forms on website: www.swcbs.com.

18-26 Midwest Bible School will be held at Triune University, Angola, IN. Speakers and their topics are Bro. Roger Lewis, NZ: "The Four Faces of Christ in the Gospels"; Bro. Mark Vincent, UK: "Exploring the Psalms"; and Bro. Andrew Bramhill, UK: "Isaac, The Overlooked Patriarch". Contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 44943 Yorkshire Drive, Novi, MI 48375; 248-462-5740; mike.live@gmail.com or visit www.midwestbibleschool.com.

19-25 Idyllwild Bible School will be held at the Idyllwild Pines Camp in Idyllwild, CA. The speakers for this year are Bro. Barry McClure, Bro. Darren Guy and Bro. Jim Styles. To Register, contact Jeff Gelineau at Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org.

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. For registration, contact Sis. Pat Posey at RogueRiverBibleSchool@gmail.com.

26-Aug 1 Western Bible School at Menucha Conference Center, Corbett, Oregon. The teachers are Bro. Simon Dean (UK): "Read Mark and Learn", Bro. John Launchbury (Beaverton, OR): "The Spirit is Willing but the Flesh is Weak"; and Bro. Shawn Moynihan (Guelph, ON): "Learning From the Twelve: Scenes of Discipleship". Details on the website, www.menuchabibleschool.org or contact registrar Jane Szabo, szabojj@peak.org or 541-563-4726.

AUGUST 2015

17-22 Lakefield Bible School at Lakefield College. The school is located east of Toronto near Peterborough ON, Canada on a beautiful lakeside campus. For information contact Bruce and Barbara Abel: bnb69abel@hotmail.ca or call 519-925-5297. www.lakefieldbibleschool.com.

OCTOBER 2015

9-11 Atlanta, GA Fraternal Gathering. Speaker Bro. Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA): "Hezekiah: Faith in Desperate Times" Contact Info: Sis. Carolyn Carter 770-833-8915.

NOVEMBER 2015

7-8 Sarasota, FL Fall study weekend with Bro. Richard Morgan speaking on "Prophecy, Predestination and the purpose of God." Contact Bro. James Wilkinson at jameswilkinson@hotmail.com or 941-412-7988.