

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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Kim Davis

When working for Caesar, as Ms. Davis does, she is obligated to render unto Caesar. As a citizen, and as believer Ms. Davis could have made an even stronger case by stepping down from her role as clerk and then, as a private citizen, expressing her disagreement. Or express her disagreement while still rendering to Caesar. In this case, issuing the marriage license while stating her personal disagreement.

God does not need a defense attorney. Ms. Davis may feel like she's standing up for her faith by obstructing what she has sworn to uphold, but is it really?

This is really a distortion of the message where Jesus asks us to accept what civil government throws at us, or even offends us with, since there's a higher goal at stake. Many people of faith refer to a verse in the Apostle Peter's first Epistle that tells us to always have a "defense for our faith" (1Pet 3:15). More accurately, he wasn't talking about "defending" our faith but about knowing how to explain our faith. It's absurd to think that God needs defending, but it makes some believers feel that they can find more favor with God that way.

Our role is not to change culture but to pronounce the Gospel and let it change culture. When we try to change culture, it gets confrontational. When the Gospel changes culture, it's transformational.

From The Christian Post (Adapted)

Editorial

Kim Davis

Who is Kim Davis?



Probably, by the time this editorial is read, few will remember Kim Davis. She is (or was) the elected clerk of Rowan County in northeastern Kentucky, along the edge of the Appalachian Mountains. She is a Democrat who was first elected in 2014 with 3,909 votes, or 53% of the vote. The county has 23,655 residents. Though on the job only since January 2015, Davis is hardly new to its demands. Her mother was the county clerk for 37 years, and Davis

worked 27 years for her. Davis, 49, has spent her entire life in Rowan County. Davis refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples, defying the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in June 2015 that legalized same-sex marriage. “It is not a light issue for me. It is a heaven or hell decision,” Davis said in a statement, citing her religion, which is Apostolic Pentecostalism. For this refusal, she was briefly thrown into jail for contempt of court, but released when her deputy clerks (including her son) agreed to issue marriage licenses for same sex couples. (There was some early confusion about the denomination she belonged to, as it was initially described as “Christian Apostolic.”) Her notoriety was further enhanced when it was revealed she had met privately with the Pope during his visit to the USA.

So what do Apostolic Pentecostals believe?

- Pentecostalism is a Christian movement that emphasizes a personal experience of God, including the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. The movement grew out of the 1906 Azusa Street Revival in California and takes its name from Pentecost, when early Christians first received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as the ability to heal and prophesy.
- Apostolic Pentecostals then split from the rest of the movement in 1916 over a disagreement about the nature of the Trinity.
- Apostolic Pentecostals believe “Father,” “Son” and “Holy Spirit” aren’t three distinct persons, but three different titles for one person: Jesus.
- The group also believes you must speak in tongues to be saved, a practice known as glossolalia, which involves uttering a foreign language previously unknown to the speaker.

What does this have to do with Christadelphians?

The position of Christadelphians on same sex marriage, and homosexuality in all its forms, is quite clear: it is against the clear teachings of the Bible, and as such not to be countenanced among us. For example:

“God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen 1:27).

“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him... And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen 2:18,23).

“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh” (Eph 5:30-31).

Of course, this is not the first time Christadelphians have been faced with the legal or legislative system recognizing same sex marriage.

Same sex marriage elsewhere

The first legal same-sex marriages were performed in Ontario on January 14, 2001. The legality of the marriages was questioned and they were not registered until after June 10, 2003, when the Court of Appeal for Ontario upheld a lower court ruling which declared that defining marriage in heterosexual-only terms violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Thus Ontario became the third jurisdiction in the world (after the Netherlands and Belgium) as well as the first jurisdiction in the Americas to legalize same-sex marriage. On July 20, 2005, Canada became the fourth country in the world, and the first country outside Europe, to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide with the enactment of the Civil Marriage Act which provided a gender-neutral marriage definition.

In 2013, the British Parliament passed legislation to the effect that the law regarding “marriage” of same-sex couples will come into effect when the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill and the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill have passed through their respective Parliaments in England and Scotland and received the Royal Assent, which happened early in 2014. (It is worth noting that in both Canada and the USA it was the legal system that recognized same sex marriage, not the legislature.) However, the legislation did provide protection for those churches which opposed same sex marriage

The British Government proposed what it calls a “quadruple lock” of protective measures to “put this position utterly beyond doubt”, as follows:

- 1) Ensuring that the legislation states explicitly that no religious organization, or individual minister, can be compelled to marry same sex couples, or to permit this to happen on their premises.
- 2) Providing an “opt-in” system for religious organizations who wish to conduct marriages for same-sex couples.
- 3) Amending the Equality Acts 2010 to reflect that no discrimination claims can be brought against religious organizations or individual ministers for refusing to marry a same-sex couple or allowing their premises to be used for this purpose.
- 4) Ensuring that the legislation will not affect the Canon Law of the Church of England or the Church in Wales.

It should be noted that in both the USA and Canada, there is no such explicit protection for the views and beliefs of such churches as ourselves, who find homosexual conduct abhorrent and the very idea of same sex marriage against the explicit commandments of the Bible.

Lessons for us

So why did I start with Kim Davis? Much as you might recognize the strength of her convictions (although it is interesting she has been married four times), the very fact she is an elected official was what put her in the position to have to choose between the law of the land and the commandments of the Bible. In addition, she chose to make such a public stand, when she could simply have resigned her post. I believe this contrasts with our stand on conscientious objection, which says we are not to: “serve in the army, or as police constables, (or) take part in politics”. Not only that, the whole basis of this belief is primarily that we do not serve or bear allegiance to our government, but our allegiance is to our Heavenly Father and His Son.

We should not willingly put ourselves in a position, such as Kim Davis did, where we have to choose between the commandments of Christ and that of men. We are commanded:

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1Tim 2:1-2).

Our goal is to live at peace, not to call unnecessary attention to ourselves, but to ensure that we can help the purpose of our Lord “*Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (1Tim 2:4). The way to live in peace is not to seek employment in areas we know are likely to call us to decide between serving our God or those who are in authority. Thus we do not willingly swear allegiance to any temporal authority: for example, the legal profession is not a common profession itself among our community (although there are exceptions, and potential within that profession to avoid problems.)

I have considered the topic of suitable occupations for Christadelphians before, at some length (See *The Tidings*, July 2013). However, I believe the lesson for us in the example of Kim Davis is to ensure we can live in peace in our present society, recognizing that the very recognition by society of such an immoral state as same sex marriage is a sign of the end. Indeed the decrease in God-fearing people and the willingness of our society to tolerate such evil was foreseen by Jesus:

“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matt 24:12-13 NIV).

Peter Hemingray

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.

Exhortation

Escape from Egypt

The Exodus

As slaves, Israel suffered under the oppressive power of their Egyptian rulers who made their lives bitter with hard bondage (Exod 1:14). We read that God saw their afflictions and heard their cries (Exod 3:7), and we see that His hand continued to bless them (Exod 1:12, 20, 21). God set in motion a plan to save His people from slavery when Moses was born. When the time came for Israel's redemption to occur, an angel appeared to Moses in a burning bush to reveal that plan. God spoke to Moses about a reversal in Israel's fortune that would soon come to pass:

“And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed. Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians” (Exod 3:21 NIV).

When we read the account of Israel leaving the land of Egypt we are told that they did just that. They left with not only their own flocks and herds, but also anything else that they asked of the Egyptians:

“The LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians” (Exod 12: 36 NIV).

God blessed Israel with the wealth of Egypt. They left with articles of gold and silver (jewelry, plates, coinage etc.) as well as Egyptian clothing. What a sign that would be to the children of Israel that their God was prepared to protect and care for them on the road ahead. How unfortunate it is to read later on that the children of Israel were using the blessings which the Lord their God had given them to serve another god:

“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (Exod 32: 1-4).

We see that while Moses was away the people reverted to serving false gods which they could see and touch and control. They formed the golden calf out of the

jewelry they had plundered from the Egyptians — the very blessings God had provided them through His out-stretched hand.

Back to Egypt

They had physically left Egypt but they had not left it in their minds and hearts. They longed to go back to Egypt, even if it meant going back to slavery. As such, when the road they walked was hard they complained. For example, we read:

“And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes” (Numb 11:4-6).

It is because they had not fully let go of Egypt that they decided to use the jewelry that God had given them to behave like they had in Egypt, going after false gods and behaving badly. Israel’s reluctance to let go of Egypt was also demonstrated by their fondness for Egyptian ornaments with which they would decorate themselves regularly. We read shortly after Moses had destroyed the golden calf that God said:

“...for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way. And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments. For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb” (Exod 33:3-6).

Like so often was the case, Israel responded to threats, rather than being motivated to good works by the hope set before them. The LORD threatened to consume them, and so they fell into line and stripped off their ornaments.

Up to that point Israel had not been wisely using the gifts God had given them. We know that they used the Egyptian jewelry they were wearing to build a golden calf, and we know that they were quite happy to adorn themselves with their ornaments. Some had fine Egyptian robes and we can imagine them being quite content to put them on and enjoy Egyptian luxury.

They had likely established in their minds that the wealth plundered from the Egyptians was meant to be used for their own enrichment and benefit. They may have thought to themselves “What else are we supposed to do with the silver, gold and fine linen that God has given us while we are in the middle of a wilderness?”

In like manner, sometimes we don’t know how best to use the gifts that God gives us. He has blessed us all in different ways and with different abilities. However, as we journey through the spiritual wilderness that is this world, perhaps we choose to use God’s blessings to serve our own selves — not knowing if there is some better use for them.

Wealth in the wilderness

That is an issue that Israel faced as they left Egypt: how were they to use their fine linen, gold and jewels in the middle of a wilderness? The answer to that question became clear shortly thereafter. God told Israel:

“Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass, And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats’ hair, And rams’ skins dyed red, and badgers’ skins, and shittim wood, And oil for the light, and spices for anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, And onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breastplate. And every wise hearted among you shall come, and make all that the LORD hath commanded... And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD’s offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments. And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered offered an offering of gold unto the LORD. And every man, with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats’ hair, and red skins of rams, and badgers’ skins, brought them. Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the LORD’s offering: and every man, with whom was found shittim wood for any work of the service, brought it” (Exod 35:5-10, 21-24).

And so we are told that God’s tabernacle, including the utensils and the fine priest’s clothing, were made from the gold, silver, copper, wood and fine linen donated by those Israelites who were of a willing heart.

At first it would not have been clear how God wanted Israel to use some of these gifts He had given them, but at the right time He made it known to them; the fine linen, silver, gold and jewels could be used in the work of building a tabernacle for the worship of The LORD. So the people who were wise took off their Egyptian jewels and ornaments, of which they had become so fond, and they threw them into a furnace to be melted down into gold, silver and copper for God’s service. These metals would be used to build such things as the altars, the candlestick, the lavers, the utensils, the bases for the posts and even the ark of the testimony itself.

Similarly, the wise in heart gave up their fine linen Egyptian robes and cloth to be destroyed and taken apart for the blue, purple, and scarlet thread used in the tabernacle cloth and priest’s garments. So the tabernacle was built from wealth that came from the land of Egypt. However, though it was clear that God’s hand had directly provided that wealth, any decision by the people to give it back for the tabernacle was strictly voluntary. Those who chose to retain their Egyptian wealth could do so. On the other hand, those who chose to completely forsake it were also free to do so.

A family which had some silver Egyptian plates, gold coinage and fine linen robes was free to keep those Egyptian goods if they valued them. They would also have to deal with any burden which may have come from carrying them along as they

wandered in a wilderness where many of those things would have had little use. On the other hand, the same family was also free to unburden themselves of those Egyptian memories and put them to meaningful use in God's tabernacle. They would suffer no ill effects due to lightening the load from unnecessary things and trusting in God who would provide for their needs such as food (Exod 16:35) and clothing (Deut 29:5).

And so, the tabernacle and the articles of service were built with these voluntary gifts from people of a willing heart. The children of Israel may not have understood at first the purpose of their Egyptian wealth, but God revealed His higher purpose to them at the proper time. Those who chose to give saw their gifts melted down and taken apart, into a state in which they were no longer recognizable as Egyptian, and then refashioned into something fit for use in the worship of God. They witnessed a wonderful transformation from something worldly into something that was spiritual and good.

Our blessings

We can consider these examples in the light of our current lives. Like the Israelites, God has given us worldly blessings to varying degrees. Some of us may have exceptional abilities or skills, others may have intelligence or strength and yet others, material goods such as land or business wealth. The lesson from Israel's exodus is that just as they were not supposed to use their livestock, their fine linen, their gold and their jewels merely for their own pleasure, neither are we supposed to be using our blessings simply to serve ourselves.

We should consider how our blessings are being employed and whether or not we could do better, both for our families and for ourselves, by 'lightening the burden' caused by 'carrying around' worldly excess and other things we don't really need. There are many good spiritual goals to which we can devote our resources. We may not always know exactly what God's plan is for our lives, or how God wants us to use the abilities and gifts He gives us, but God certainly does have a purpose for each of us if we are willing to be patient and put our trust in Him.

God was able to take the gold of Egypt and melt it into lavers, tables and furniture for worship in His tabernacle. God was able to take the flocks and herds which had fattened and multiplied in Egypt and put them to use in tabernacle sacrifices. God was able to take the fine colored linen of Egypt and to pull it apart, re-forming it into cloth for the tabernacle's curtains and garments for the priests. In like manner He can work with each of us and put our blessings to use in His service, if we have a heart that is willing.

Over time we ourselves can be transformed from people of the world into children of God who are fit for His service. We are all works in progress whereby the old worldly person must be transformed into a new creation in Jesus Christ — just as the gold had to be melted and re-formed into a new object, and the linen pulled apart and woven into new cloth. Hopefully as the transformation takes place something new and spiritual emerges while the appearance of the former world fades and vanishes.

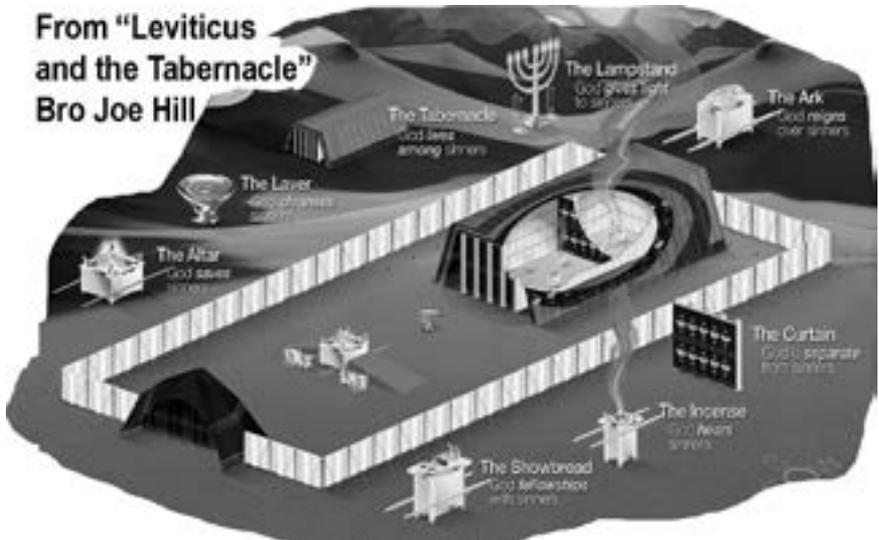
In a figurative sense God is re-forming a temple in Christ Jesus. We are called to leave slavery to sin and to be baptized into Christ Jesus. After baptism, if we are not careful, there is the risk of looking back to our old worldly ways, and sin when life is hard and temptation is strong. However, it is important for us instead to look ahead, driven and sustained by faith and hope towards the Promised Land, making the choice to work at building a temple of worship to God that brings us closer to Him.

God is calling us to re-form ourselves into part of His new temple built on Jesus Christ, as the apostle Paul wrote:

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph 2:19-21).

With this exhortation in mind, let us contend diligently to keep our faith and hope strong and to transform ourselves, after the example of Jesus, into new creations fit for use in God’s living temple.

Dan Archibald (Toronto East, ON)



First Principles

Hope — (8) Hope in Jesus

“This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

Return of Jesus to the Earth

Hope is void without Jesus’ return.

Some people will not realize what happened. Others will notice that people are missing. Some people will watch as people disappear. Cars will crash amid great chaos, as drivers are not found. People on airplanes will suddenly evaporate, leaving only their clothes and jewelry. Everyone in the world will seek for answers while blaming someone, or something. The media will have more questions than answers.

This is the opening scene presented in the popular “Left Behind” series, as their interpretation for what will happen when Jesus returns to the earth. While this book (and movie) gives an entertaining view of what is called the Rapture, the Bible provides instead an accurate description of Jesus’ second coming. The Bible answers some basic questions such as:

- Why will Jesus return to the earth?
- When will he return? What will happen when he returns?
- What signs can we expect before he returns?
- Where will he return? How will he return?
- How does this fulfill our Bible hope?

Why will Jesus return to the Earth?



Some people may think that it doesn’t matter if Jesus returns to the earth as long as they are safe in heaven. In an earlier article (May 2015) — “What’s in it for me?” — we learned that the true Christian hope is eternal life on earth (Matt 5:5). The Bible teaches that no man is in heaven today (John 3:13), but instead faithful disciples wait for the day of resurrection and judgment. So, why will Jesus return to the earth?

He will return primarily as king to set up his promised kingdom, which will never be destroyed (Dan 2:44). His return will restore the kingdom to Israel, only this time as a perfect theocracy based in

Jerusalem (Isa 2:2-4). Jesus will fulfill the promises to Abraham and David, as the savior of the world. He will come to put an end to this dysfunctional world and introduce peace and righteousness.

Jesus will also return to grant immortality to his 'good and faithful' servants (Matt 25:21). Jesus himself said, *"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done"* (Rev 22:12). He will judge the living and the resurrected dead at one time, as appointed by God (1Pet 4:5; 2Tim 4:1; Acts 10:42). The Bible gives repeated direction that faithful believers will receive their reward when Jesus returns and not before (1Pet 5:4; Dan 12:2; John 5:25-29). The "day of judgment" is frequently described as a time of both reward and punishment (2Pet 2:9; 3:7; 1John 4:17; Matt 10:15).

When will Jesus return?

Some Bible believers, since the time of Christ, have tried to use the Bible as a riddle to solve for the date of Jesus' return. In the Old Testament, Daniel was able to use his wisdom and the previous inspired prophecies to determine the year that the Jews would return to Jerusalem from their Babylonian captivity (Dan 9:2). He studied Jeremiah's prophecy and was rewarded with a visit from the angel Gabriel. The Bible also gives many prophetic numbers, and signs, for "times and seasons" (Dan 9:24-26; Dan 12:11-12; Rev 11:2; Rev 13:5). Jesus taught: *"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father"* (Matt 24:36). Read that again. During his ministry, even Jesus didn't know the date of his return! But, despite this, many have spent their time attempting to determine the date of Jesus' return,

Jesus told his disciples that not only wouldn't they know the date of his return, but that he *"will come at an hour when you do not expect him"* (Matt 24:44). Jesus wants his followers to be ready for his return every day, and any day. He warned his followers against attempting to determine the exact date. He gave parables about being spiritually awake and alert, but not about dates or times (Luke 12:35-40; Acts 1:7; 1Thess 5:2-5).

What signs can we expect before Jesus' return?

Human beings are naturally curious, particularly about the future. Some are concerned about tomorrow's weather, while others think about the futures markets. Jesus' followers asked him what signs to expect at the time of his return and he gave a reply in a passage called the Olivet Prophecy, because they were on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem (Matt 24:3). Jesus gave many signs about the "last days" prior to his return including:

- Many false Christs will come and pretend to be Jesus (Matt 24:5, 23-24).
- There will be many wars, famines and earthquakes (Matt 24:6-7).
- There will be a time of tribulation for all people, including believers (Matt 24:8-10, 21, 29).
- Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies (Luke 21:20). This echoes many passages from Old Testament prophets such as Zech 12:1-3; Zech 14:1-4; Joel 3:11-17.

- There will be literal (or perhaps spiritual) signs in the sun, moon and stars (Matt 24:29).
- Morality will be like the days of Noah, when evil and violence reigned (Luke 17:26-30).
- The Jewish people must say, *“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”* (Matt 23:39). God’s chosen people must cry out for Messiah and his salvation.

Disciples of Christ are wise to watch for signs in the nation of Israel. Prophecies such as Psalm 83 identify an invasion of Israel by the surrounding nations in the last days. Also, the ancient proclamation, *“I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you”* (Gen 12:3) still applies today regarding Israel and other nations. But to attempt to use these signs to determine the exact date is pointless and futile.

Where will Jesus return?

The Bible gives one clear answer to what location Jesus will return to on earth: Jerusalem. When Jesus ascended to heaven, an angel specifically told his followers, *“This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven”* (Acts 1:11). He ascended from a special point on the Mount of Olives in



Jerusalem, and other scriptures confirm that this is the location of his return. Zechariah gives an incredibly detailed description regarding Jesus’ return: *“On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south”* (Zech 14:4). This is no surprise, since God called Jerusalem His eternal capital, and scripture is filled with passages emphasizing this chosen city of peace (Isa 24:3; 62:6; Zeph 3:16-20; Zech 8:3; 14:11; Psa 135:21).

How will Jesus return?

Jesus will descend from heaven in the same way that he went to heaven (Acts 1:11). How did he ascend? After his resurrection, human dimensions of time and space have no longer limited Jesus. He entered rooms without going through doors (John 20:19). He could disappear in front of people (Luke 24:31). His appearance seemed to change (Luke 24:31; John 21:4, 12). We have additional descriptions in Mark and Luke that Jesus was visibly elevated from the earth when he ascended to heaven. His followers actually watched him ascend to heaven! This is the same way that the angel told Jesus’ followers how he would return (Acts 1:11). His return to the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem will be a visible event to all peoples.

Jesus compared his return to lightening, which is visible from one end of the sky to another (Matt 24:27). He wanted his disciples to know how obvious his return would be, so that they would not be fooled or deceived. *“So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it”* (Matt 24:26). Jesus has not returned invisibly and he hasn’t returned secretly as another person. He is seated at his Father’s side until the time is right, by God’s providence, to return to earth and set up his promised kingdom (Matt 26:64; 2Thess 1:7, 10; Rev 1:7).

How does this fulfill our Bible hope?

The Bible hope involves immortality, promises, love, peace, kindness, joy and so much more. But the foundation for our hope lies on the foundation of Jesus Christ. If Jesus had not been resurrected, then there would be no Christian hope today. *“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”* (1Cor 15:17-19). If Jesus doesn’t return from heaven in the future, as he promised, then Christians have an empty faith. The Bible hope cannot be complete until Jesus returns, because all faithful believers will receive their reward at the same time, together. Even great men of faith such as Abraham, Joseph, Moses and David are dead (asleep) today, waiting for their resurrection and reward. *“These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect”* (Heb 11:39-40).

Jesus’ return to set up his kingdom fulfills the promises given to Abraham, David and the prophets. He must return to earth in order to set up his kingdom in Jerusalem. He will return in great glory, with all the angels (Matt 25:31). He will return to fulfill many Bible prophecies and resurrect his deceased faithful followers. Jesus will return because God will send His Son to conclude His ultimate plan to fill with His glory the entire earth: *“But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD”* (Numb 14:21).

“Dream as if you’ll live forever...live as if you’ll die today.” James Dean

“When Jesus comes, the shadows depart.” Author unknown

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (1Thess 4:16).

The Bible says:

- Jesus will return to the earth, visibly in Jerusalem. (Acts 1:6, 10-11; 1Thess 4:13-17; Matt 24:27-31)
- Jesus gave many signs that will occur before he returns. (Matt 24:30; Matt 24:5-24; Luke 17:22-30).
- Jesus must return in order for anyone to receive the reward of immortality. (Heb 11:39-40; 1Cor 15:51-57; John 5:28-29).

Chicago, Ill Ecclesia

Doctrines to be Rejected

(5) The Trinity

That God is three persons

This is an example of a doctrine not really dealt with in the “Truth to be received”, but which is a doctrine that fundamentally separates us most of the Christian Churches around us. John Thomas appears to have discarded the orthodox doctrine of The Trinity early in his studies of the Truth, perhaps influenced by Elias Smith, who preceded him in the Disciples Church in Philadelphia. However, his full mature view of God was not developed until around 1847, when, as a result the views of Dr. Lara, a Jew, John Thomas wrote a series of articles later reprinted as *Phanerosis*. Some of this is represented in the first section of the “Truth to be received”. However, the doctrine of the Trinity is not specifically rejected in it, but that erroneous belief is, and always has been, specifically rejected by all Christadelphians. The form of words has changed, as below, but the idea has remained.

- 1) Current Doctrine to be Rejected # 1: “That God is three persons”
- 2) Synopsis of the One Faith by John Thomas 1867: (As Perverted By The Apostasy): “A triply-compounded God, without body and parts, defined as “Father Son and Holy Ghost.”
- 3) Fables to be Refused (Robert Roberts), 1870 till 1883: “The Trinity.—That God is not three, but One, out of whom are all things—even the Spirit and the Son”. This has the following references:
 - a) “*But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him*” (1Cor 8: 6).
 - b) “*One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*” (Eph 4:6).

It can be restated, perhaps, in a positive way: “The doctrine of the Trinity being false, it remains that God is a Being of Spirit; the Lord Jesus Christ is His Son, born of the Virgin Mary; the Holy Spirit is His power.”

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

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

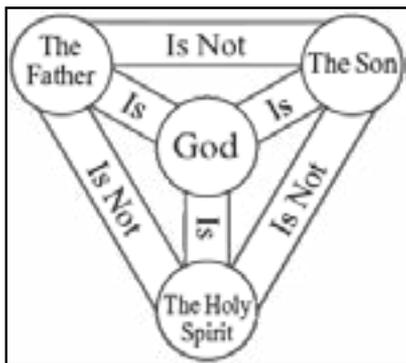
And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).

The Trinity

We need to be careful in discussing the Trinity, because we often attack the Trinity on the basis of the Nicene Creed, which says Christ is “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father”.

Rather, we ought to discuss it in terms of modern day beliefs, which say:

- The Trinity is One. We do not speak of three Gods but of one God. Each of the Persons is fully God. They are a Unity of Persons in one divine nature.
- The divine Persons are distinct from each other. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three appearances or modes of God, but three identifiable persons, each fully God in a way distinct from the others.
- The divine Persons are in relation to each other. The distinction of each is understood only in reference to the others¹.



rief history of the doctrine of the Trinity

According to almost all Biblical scholars, Scripture does not contain a formulated doctrine of the Trinity. Although there is much debate as to whether the beliefs of the Apostles were merely articulated and explained in the Trinitarian Creeds, or were corrupted and replaced with new beliefs, all scholars recognize that the Creeds themselves were created in reaction to disagreements over the nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These controversies, however, were great and many, and took some centuries to be resolved. Of these controversies, the most significant developments were articulated in the first four centuries by the Church Fathers in reaction to Adoptionism, Sabellianism, and Arianism.

Adoptionism was the belief that Jesus was an ordinary man, born of Joseph and Mary, who became the Christ and Son of God at his baptism (c. AD 269).

Sabellianism taught that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are essentially one and the same, the difference being simply verbal, describing different aspects or roles of a single being (c. AD 220).

In the fourth century, **Arianism**, as traditionally understood, taught that the Father existed prior to the Son who was not, by nature, God, but rather a changeable creature who was granted the dignity of becoming “Son of God”.

In AD 325, the Council of Nicaea adopted the **Nicene Creed** that described Christ as “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father”, as mentioned above.

Discussing the Trinity²

What do theologians mean when they affirm that the one who so lived and so died was “very God,” co-equal with the Father from all eternity? To one who has not been cradled in Trinitarian belief such propositions seem self-destructive. Surely, if God required us to believe in the Trinity, He would teach the doctrine in plain language.

Even the fact of the Creator's existence is taught plainly and reiterated in the Bible. *"I am the LORD."* *"I am God and there is none beside me"* (Isa 44:21). Such expressions are frequent in Scripture. The greatness, power, and knowledge of God are all emphasized in language that cannot be mistaken. If we are to believe that God, supremely great, wise and powerful, in some way became a human baby and was born of a woman, we may surely expect that the doctrine be taught in plain language. We may not reasonably expect to understand the details, but where is a plain affirmation of the fact?

All Bible students are aware that the Bible does not contain any such affirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity. There is no language used in any way comparable to that of the Athanasian Creed, or the creeds of modern Catholicism. When a supporter of the Trinity is challenged to defend his belief from Scripture, he quotes passages from which inferences may be drawn in harmony with his creed, but which, certainly, played no part in forming it. The favorite passages for such a purpose are those in which a form of language is used agreeable with the idea that Christ existed as a person, previous to his birth. The same form of language is often employed, however, where no such doctrine is involved. When we read in the book of Genesis: *"Kings shall come out of thy loins,"* everyone understands the sense in which the words are used. When, however, the Lord Jesus expresses the truth of his divine origin in similar language, *"I came forth from God,"* it is regarded as proof that he came as a personality before being born as a baby. There is nothing to favor such a construction except the natural prejudice of opinions in which people have been nurtured.

Most of the passages quoted by Trinitarians are of this character. Often there is a companion passage that might have been designed to correct misconceptions and show the true meaning.

Thus, the Lord Jesus said: *"I and my Father are one,"* (John 17:11), but he also prayed that the disciples might be one, even as he was one with the Father. He spoke of *"Glory I had with thee before the world was,"* (John 17:5), but the Apostle Paul also used the same language regarding the brethren, (Rom 8:30) showing that it was in the foreknowledge of God that Christ and all his disciples lived before the foundation of the world. The Apostle Peter so speaks regarding Christ: *"Who, verily, was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world but was manifest in these last times"* (1Pet 1:20).

Jesus said: *"I have power to lay down my life and I have power to take it again,"* (John 10:18) but he also added, *"This commandment have I received of my Father"* (also John 10:18). He said: *"I am from above,"* but he immediately added, *"ye are from beneath."* Their life and character was from beneath, so that they were entirely earthly; his life and character were direct from God, so that he was the Lord from Heaven. Jesus said that the Father had sent him into the world, but he added *"even so, have I sent you into the world."* In neither case are we to suppose the existence of the personality previous to birth.

Reading the Bible

Try, for a little while, to imagine the case of a man who has no prejudices studying the Bible to find the truth revealed regarding God and Jesus Christ. Surely he would study the law given to Israel as the first step towards finding the true God. He would read the records of the birth of Christ to find exactly who Christ was.

This is only common sense. If we have a reliable biography of a man, we can soon ascertain who his parents were if we will consult the chapter dealing with his birth. We must not bring a theory from outside and then try to find odd passages in the book that can be made to harmonize. Consult the first proclamation of a law to find the authority of the law-giver. Go to the account of a man's birth to find a plain statement of his ancestry.

If we adopt such a method with the Bible we are left in no doubt as to the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. God made proclamation to Israel: "*Hear, O Israel, the LORD your God is one LORD*" (Deut 6:4). This doctrine was supported by all the prophets. There were many angels, who, being sent by God, could speak the words of God, but it is always made clear, that, above them all, was one supreme God and Creator. The Jews recognized no Trinity.

If we turn to the record of Christ's birth, the account of his ancestry is as explicit as anything that has ever been written. "*The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee,*" said the angel to Mary. "*The Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God*" (Luke 1:35). Even a man who holds the doctrine of the Trinity may well pause at these words. Why should the third person of the Trinity come upon Mary so that the second person of the Trinity should be born of her? And why is that word "therefore" there? Try, however, to put yourself in the place of a man with no pre-conceived opinions to defend, searching the Scriptures in the pursuit of truth. In the Old Testament it is made clear that God is One. By the power of His Spirit He knows all and can perform all according to His will. In Psalm 139 there is a wonderful description of the Spirit filling the universe, and in its penetrating powers being equal to the actual presence of God. This Spirit came upon prophets to make them speak divine truth. It is constantly referred to as the "Word of the LORD." But, although God's word was spoken, men all sinned, and no one was found to carry out God's will perfectly. The word became articulate, the word became writing, but in Old Testament times it was never made flesh.

The student passes on to the New Testament Scriptures to read of the Savior provided by God. He learns there, that the Holy Spirit came upon a chosen virgin of the house of Israel, not merely to make her speak the words of God, but to make her conceive a son without ever having known man. The child born was, therefore, to be called the Son of God. He was born as a babe, nourished according to nature, and as he grew he increased in wisdom and in favor. Early he showed his superiority to other children. He grew to manhood and constantly proclaimed his dependence on the Father who had sent him.

"The words that I speak, I speak not of myself. The Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works" (John 14:10).

“My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28).

“Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32).

Even after his resurrection from the dead, when the days of fleshly weakness were over, he speaks of ascending *“to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”* Even after the ascension, the book of Revelation is described as *“the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him.”* In that book we still have the expression, *“My God.”* (Rev 4:12)

If the student pursues the matter further, studying the writings of the apostles, he will find the plainest of re-affirmations of the truth. *“There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.”* (1Cor 11:6).

These statements are in harmony with Christ's own presentation of the matter. He addressed the Father as *“the only true God.”* In claiming power over all flesh, he made it clear that this authority was given him by the Father. In harmony with this, the Apostle Paul, in writing of the time of the end when death shall be finally vanquished, states that God will put all things under Christ. He points out a truth that should be manifest, that God, being the giver of this subjecting power, is obviously excepted from the “all things” that are to be subjected. When all the works of creation are finally subdued by Christ, then, the Son shall be subject to the one who put all things under him, that *“God may be all in all.”* (1Cor 15:28). Study these words of the Apostle. They cannot be harmonized with the Trinitarian view, but they blend perfectly with the true doctrine of the Bible.

Summary

A man who could study the Word of God entirely without prejudice would assuredly find no difficulty in grasping its teaching. One God with supreme power and understanding. One spirit or emanating power of God, carrying the searching knowledge of the Eternal to the desert, to the grave, or to the uttermost part of the sea, filling even the darkness with a divine light of knowledge and power as if the very presence of the Creator were there (Psa 139).

By His Holy Spirit, God made chosen servants speak His Word. By the same Holy Spirit He made a chosen virgin give birth to a Son who was, therefore, called the Son of God. By the in-dwelling power of His Spirit, He gave the Son wisdom and strength, so that he became a perfect manifestation of the divine character, the Word of God in the form of a man. By the same power He will put all things under the feet of this perfect mediator until the time when the last enemy shall be destroyed.

When we recognize the truth that Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit of God as taught in the Gospel narrative of his birth, all that is written regarding him becomes intelligible. He was the living Word, as the Bible is the written Word. He was the perfect expression of the will of God in the form of a man. He was “God with us,” — a manifestation of the character (Luke 1:80), of the Father in a living conscious being, who really grew in knowledge and increased in wisdom, (Luke 2:52), who really suffered and overcame, really died and was raised to life again.

Beware of any doctrine that shall, in effect, deny that the Father is the only true God, and that Jesus is the Son who can reveal the Creator to us. Remember that the Lord Jesus, in praying to the Father, said, *“This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent”*.

Conclusion

The Lord God of heaven and earth stands behind all the teaching that has been revealed to us, from the creation of the world and of mankind, to the final phase of the Kingdom of God. For the faithful He has been the source of all light in their native darkness. The thought of Him has been their consolation and faith in Him has been their strength in times of trial. The knowledge of Him, made clearer to them in the Person of His Beloved Son, has been a guide and an inspiration in their life of service.

Sources

Pamphlets (Some available on the Internet)

- Jesus, son of God or God the son (Fred Pearce) (Christadelphian Office)
- Doctrine of the Trinity (EJ Newman) (Old Pamphlet series)
- One God or a Trinity? (James and Deb Flint) (Printland Publishers)

Books (available from most Christadelphian book Suppliers)

- Trinity, The Doctrine Of (P E White) 226 pgs.
- Trinity, True or False? (Broughton/Southgate) 407 pgs.

*Peter Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI) and
Peter Hemingray (Detroit Royal Oak, MI)*

Notes:

1. U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults.
2. Some of this section is based upon an old pamphlet by Bro. Islip Collyer, “The God we Worship”.

Generations of devout men and women have sung the words of Bishop Heber’s hymn:

*“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea.
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.”*

Often the singing has been with more devotion than understanding, for the doctrine of the trinity is commonly acknowledged to be difficult to comprehend and is frequently taken on trust. This difficulty of comprehension has been a stumbling block also to critics of the doctrine who have often revealed their own lack of understanding by the shallowness of their criticisms.

Opening to “Doctrine of the Trinity”, EJ Newman

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

A Hundred Years Ago

For many years, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Christadelphian Office published *The Christadelphian Children's Magazine*.¹ It was full of all kinds of Bible stories and activities that our grandparents and great grandparents took delight in when they were young. Perhaps your Sunday school children would like to try their hand at a couple of the same activities.

The Bible from A to Z²

Children can work alone or in groups to solve this challenging puzzle. How many can they get right? Can they find Bible references to support their answers?

A — was a man who was youthful and fair, but he hung in an oak by his long curly hair.

B — was a prophet who rode on a mule. He tried to curse Jacob, and died like a fool.

C — was a river of Old Testament story, where once a prophet had visions of glory.

D — was a woman who served for the poor, they mourned her when dead, but long life was in store.

E — was a preacher, though short was his name, he built a high pulpit, and preached from the same.

F — was a governor, pompous and grand, but preaching on judgment he never could stand.

G — Was a young general, who, early one morn, did rout a great army with pitcher and horn.

H — was a man who brought shame to his mother. He hanged on the gallows he built for another.

I — was a boy who was vulgar and rough, whose impudent mocking brought him trouble enough.

J — Was a brave wife, who, with a nail and a hammer, slew Israel's foe without army or banner.

K — had a son, a very tall boy; they made him a king, and then shouted for joy.

L — married two wives and murdered a man. In the days before Noah these evils began.

M — was a woman both loving and kind, but careful and troubled and fretful in mind.

N — was a captain with servants and gold, but his leprosy filled him with horrors untold.

O — was a land that was far, far away, where the ships went for gold in King Solomon's day.

P — was a preacher of wonderful fame, who in all the wide world did the Gospel proclaim.

Q — stands for one whom Paul calls a brother, and in all the Bible it's the name of no other.

R — was a maiden, and strange 'tis to tell, she first met her lover beside an old well.

S — stands for a man who a lion could tear, and yet he was bound by a woman so fair.

T — was a twin who continued to doubt, till the Lord gave a sign which put fears all to rout.

U — was a land from which nature recoils, where once an old patriarch suffered from boils.

V — was a beautiful Queen in the East, who refused to be seen at a grand royal feast.

W — is that which is better than gold. Who'll seek it and find it? Its price is untold.

X — was a king who another name bears: Ahasuerus, the Bible declares.

Y — is what Jesus invites us to wear, that we may find rest in his loving care.

Z — was a priest who an angel did see; a mighty forerunner his great son would be.

Answer Key:

A = Absalom (2Sam 18:9-10); B = Balaam (Numb 22:21-30; Numb 31:8); C = Chebar (Ezek 1:1; Ezek 3:23); D = Dorcas (Acts 9:36-41); E = Ezra (Neh 8:1-4); F = Felix (Acts 24:25); G = Gideon (Jdgs 7:16-22); H = Haman (Esth 5:14; Esth 7:9-10); I = Ishmael (Gen 21:9-10; cp. Gen 16:15); J = Jael (Jdgs 4:17-22); K = Kish (1Sam 9:1-2); L = Lamech (Gen 4:19-24); M = Martha (Luke 10:38-42); N = Naaman (2Kgs 5:1-5); O = Ophir (1Kgs 9:28; 2Chron 8:18); P = Paul (Acts 9:15; 13:46-47; 22:21; 26:16-18, etc.); Q = Quartus (Rom 16:23); R = Rachel (Gen 29:1-12); S = Samson (Jdgs 14:5-6; Jdgs 16:4-21); T = Thomas (John 11:16; John 20:24-29); U = Uz (Job 1:1; Job 2:7); V = Vashti (Esth 1:9-12); W = Wisdom (Prov 2:1-7; Prov 3:13-14); X = Xerxes (Esth 1:1, see Bible dictionary); Y = Yoke (Matt 11:28-30); Z = Zacharias, Zechariah (Luke 1:5-17)

A Bible Acrostic³

Can the children identify these Bible names? The first initials name a man on whom the greatest of miracles was performed. In what chapter of the Bible is his story found?

- 1) One of the twelve tribes of Israel on whom a special honor was conferred.
- 2) A very wicked king of Israel. He was killed in battle.
- 3) A rich man who gave half of his goods to the poor.
- 4) A famous city in Greece where Paul preached the Gospel.
- 5) The wife of a patriarch and the mother of his favorite sons.
- 6) A country from which Abraham came when he went into Canaan.
- 7) A woman who in the time of the Apostles was guilty of a great sin for which she was suddenly and fearfully punished.

Many more creative and engaging Bible puzzles appeared in *The Christadelphian Children's Magazine*. Take a look at it online. You may well find others that your children would like to try.

Jim Harper:
sundayschool@tidings.org:www.pinterest.com/2harps4u/ (Meriden, CT)

Notes:

1. Copies of (*The Christadelphian Children's Magazine*) can be downloaded from <http://www.christadelphianvault.net/>.
2. Published in (*The Christadelphian Children's Magazine*, May, 1902.
3. Published in (*The Christadelphian Children's Magazine*, February, 1903. The puzzle was submitted by 12-year old John Carter of Halifax. Thirty-four years later, this spiritually minded young man became the third editor of *The Christadelphian Magazine*.

John Carter was born on December 12, 1889, at Catherine Slack, a little village about two miles out of Halifax. Like many men who have done great things, he owed much to his mother, a woman of character of whom he often spoke with love and admiration. His early days on the Yorkshire moors may have helped to build up the tough constitution abounding with energy which so marked him in adult life. John Carter was baptized into Christ in 1906. During the First World War he became dissatisfied with some conditions then existing among ecclesias with which he was associated, and in December, 1915, he joined the Central Fellowship.

The Christadelphian, 1962, p 289.

Halifax — We have pleasure in reporting the obedience to the Truth of three of our young men, viz., Fred. Chambers, Frank Wilson (son of our Sis. Wilson), and John Carter (son of our Bro. and Sis. Carter). They are all in the senior class of our Sunday school. After a very intelligent confession of the one Faith, they were immersed into the saving name on March 21st. It is very encouraging when our young people decide on serving the Master. It is evidence that the efforts of the Sunday school, the M.I.S., and the public lectures are not in vain. Our hope and prayer is that they may be useful servants in the Master's vineyard, and at the coming of the Lord receive the crown of life that fadeth not away. T. Lumb

Fraternal Visitor, March 1906 p 89

(Note: The Children's Magazine cited above was published by The Fraternal Visitor Magazine: it is not on the internet)

Youth Speaks

About God — (2) The God of the Bible is Fact

God has shown himself to be real through multiple means, the strongest of which being shown through the prophetic word as we discussed in the first article (October 2015). In addition:

- The Jewish history, both prophetically and not prophetically, can be used to show that the God of the Bible does exist.
- A study of Jewish Medicine as revealed in the Bible shows how much it was ahead of its time, under the direction of God and His prophets.
- The big bang theory as well as the theory of evolution will be examined, all leading to the conclusion that our God is indeed real.

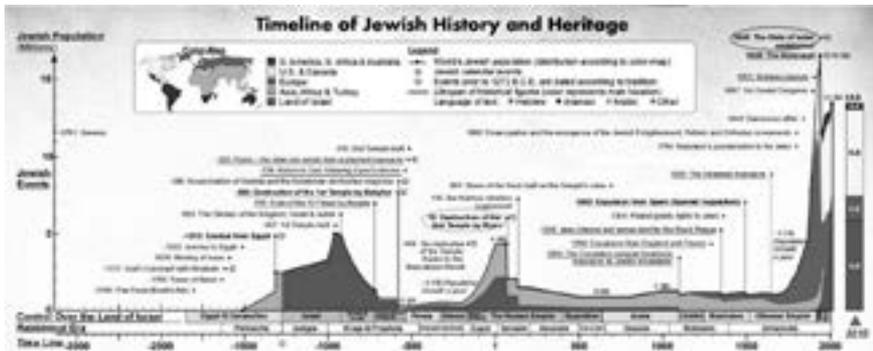
The return of the Jews to the land

The Jewish people stand out in history as an abnormality. All the religions that came about the same time of the Jewish religion have seemed to die out. The Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and many others surrounding the time of the Jewish religion rising are all gone, whereas the Jewish religion is still alive today. Not only so, but the Jewish people are the focus of the Middle Eastern world right now. The Jewish people have survived this long, yet have been extremely small in population. By all the other examples in history they should have died out like the other religions that came into history around their time. The following chart



Announcement of State of Israel in 1948

goes through the Jewish heritage and history as well as their population. As one can see, the max population of the Jews was around 16.6 million people. According to “records that the Romans kept about 2,000 years ago, there were between 8-10 million Jews living in the world” (Packouz) at the time of Christ. That means over 2,000 years the Jewish population has about doubled. The Chinese people, on the other hand, went from 30 million people to about one billion people in the same amount of time (Packouz). There should be many more Jews then there are today, and unsurprisingly the Bible predicted their small population. The Bible states, “*And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you*” (Deut 4:27). Throughout the 2,000 years of the Jews being a smaller people they have consistently remained a distinct people, and played a major role in history (Packouz).



Probably one of the most sad but true facts about Jews that the Bible predicts is the massive amounts of persecution they would face. The Bible states, “*And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life*” (Deut 28:65-66). Specifically focusing on the section stating, “*Neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest*” (Deut 28:65), the Jews truly have never had a place to rest until Israel’s reestablishment. In fact, from 250 A.D. to 1945 A.D. the Jews have been expelled from various countries a total of 82 times (Packouz). In some cases it was for silly reasons such as being “blood drinkers,” even though their law prohibits them from even eating meat with blood in it. In the same time period, there have been over 105 either miniature or major genocides against the Jews ranging from the burning of Rabbi’s to the Holocaust. One of the scariest facts would be that, “In almost every generation there is an attempted Jewish genocide somewhere in the world on a macrocosmic or microcosmic scale” (Packouz). The irrational persecution of the Jewish people was definitively predicted in the Bible and could not be guessed or fulfilled through pure chance.

Jewish medical practices

Not only do the Bible's prophecies show that the Bible is inspired and therefore God exists, but it also gave the Jews medical practices well ahead of their time. The most apparent example of this would be in the handling of dead bodies. "Prior to the twentieth century surgeons used to handle the dead and the dying and then, without washing their hands, go into the operating theatre. Because of this many patients lost their life through infection" ("Reasons to Believe — Reason 7"). In modern day medicine, a surgeon doing something along those lines would cause an uproar and would likely be subject to a malpractice law suit. The Jews on the other hand knew that they must wash after handling the dead for thousands of years prior to modern medicine. The Bible states, "*He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days*" (Numb 11:11), which then would require a cleansing process. An unclean person, "*shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean*" (Numb 11:12). When a person was unclean in the Jewish law, they were not allowed to interact with society, and any person they touched would become unclean as well. The purifying process was a full cleaning of the person and their clothing. The Bible states, "*And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even*" (Numb 11:19). This means that in contrast to a surgeon going from handling the dead straight into surgery, a Jew would have to separate himself from society for seven days and have a clean person thoroughly wash both him and his clothing. This is just one of multiple examples of the Jewish law being thousands of years ahead of its time, and adds to the idea that a supernatural, all-knowing being actually created these laws.

When brought up to an atheist, or someone who does not believe in a God, the typical response is that someone had to figure out these things first. In other words, there would have to be a first group to figure out that handling the dead without cleaning after is unhygienic and the Jews happened to be that group. Although this is plausible in some aspects, it fails to be a fulfilling explanation of the Jews being so far advanced medically. Today, if the United States were to develop a cure to cancer, within a few weeks multiple nations would have the same cure. Although this is by and large because of modern technology, it is very unlikely it would take two to four thousand years for people to come to the same conclusions the Jews did when these laws were created, if the Jews had discovered these medical laws through science and reasoning.

Probability

One of the largest oppositions to the belief in God, and specifically in the inspiration of the Bible, is through science. In the creation account in Genesis, the Bible claims human kind and all animals were made within a two day process. Scientists disagree, claiming that evolution is the explanation for how human beings came into being. Statistically speaking, the theory of evolution is highly improbable. William Lane Craig, an avid evangelist with a PhD in philosophy, states that "The probability of the evolution of the human genome is between four

raised to the negative 180th power, raised to the 110,00th power, and four raised to the 360th power, raised to the 110,000th power” (Craig). He also states that in the time for one tenth of the evolutionary process to occur purely by chance, the sun should have expanded and destroyed the Earth (Craig). This shows that when one takes away the existence of God and leans on the theory that chance is what brought us into being, they are going entirely against statistical probabilities.

The Big Bang



Another common theory used to explain the creation of everything is the big bang theory. One form of this theory claims that all matter and time came into existence at one moment on its own. The issue with this theory is that this means nothing caused nothing to become something. On contrast, the

Genesis account of creation has an almighty being causing nothing to become something. A common question asked to a Christian is the question of, “If the universe could not exist without a creator, then using the same logic, the creator must have a creator. So who created God?” This directly goes against a believer of the Bible’s claim though. The Bible claims, “*The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms*” (Deut 33:27). Since Christians claim that God is eternal, there is no need for a creator of Him. To further explain, God has no beginning, and therefore does not need to be created. The universe is almost universally accepted to have a beginning, and therefore must have a creator (Craig).

Belief in God does require an amount of faith, and cannot be absolutely proven through reasoning, but that does not take away that there is plenty of evidence that leads to the conclusion of there being a God. Through prophecy that has predicted improbable events, Jewish people standing out in history, and clearing up a few scientific oppositions, it is evident that the God of the Bible must be true. The question of, “Does God exist?” is an extremely popular question, and is personal to people both of faith and without it. When approaching the question through a statistical scope, it seems extremely improbable for the Bible to have been written, say the things it does, and then be correct without some form of inspiration through a higher being, thus showing that the God of the Bible indeed real.

Sources

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Matthew Tuckson (Norfolk, VA)

Bible Study

The New Testament Church (5) Elections and Doctrine

Elections

In the previous article (*The Tidings*, Sept 2015) we considered the office of Deacons, among others. Here we firstly look at the mode of elections. In the first Century after Christ, there was not a rigid hierarchy, as in the apostate church that superseded it and that has continued in that way through the ages, in which the “clergy” and “laity” were separated, and the latter had no say in anything. It was not like that at all. There was plenty of flexibility in the way the offices were operated, and as we have already seen, there were men like Stephen and Philip and the Apostle Paul himself, who exercised more than one of these functions.

Paul could say, *“I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue” (1Cor 14:18-19)*. So Paul had the gift of tongues, but was careful in its use.

Another point which emerges is that the election of serving brethren is not only a sensible arrangement but a scriptural one. I used to think, and I was brought up to believe, that the apostles more or less dictated everything, but I think we can see sufficiently in the Acts of the Apostles to know that the church itself, the body of believers, was a responsible body, and not just dumb, driven sheep. They were expected to exercise their judgment, and they were expected to be able to appoint the right men for the right job.

The recording brother, as I have suggested, would generally have the oversight and care of the local ecclesia, and answer to the New Testament “bishop”, who was probably in charge of all the house churches of the city, which together formed the “ecclesia”, as in the “ecclesia at Rome”. The arranging brethren would answer to the eldership, jointly responsible at local level, with a collective responsibility for leading the ecclesia in God’s ways. The deacons, for which we have no special office in our present day organization, remind us of the importance of this kind of work, the “serving” jobs in the ecclesias; and also suggest the possibility that we might open our doors a little wider to the services of our sisters who perhaps are not being used enough. (In our organizations, probably not as much as they were in New Testament times). The prophets would correspond in some way to the speaking brethren, though they are not now specially endowed with a gift of prophecy. At the present time, through the word of God, and perhaps with the help of His Spirit, men are still able to expound to us the word of God, and we should be thankful for that.

Evangelists? Who would they be today? Preachers going from place to place. Inter-ecclesial bringers of the message. Unattached, as they seem to have been in

New Testament times, to any particular ecclesia. Perhaps we could think of our Bible Mission workers, out there far away, taking the word of God from place to place; or those who give their time to Bible campaign work. This is more the kind of work, as I see it, that the evangelists would do.

The whole church

And finally, and most importantly, I want to come to the office of the whole church, on whom and for whom the work was carried out. Paul says: *“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1Cor 3:9-11).

I want you to notice especially that Paul is not saying that all the church were the *“labourers together with God.”* They were not all to be evangelists; they were not all to be prophets; certainly not all to be apostles. They were *“the field.”* They were *“the building.”* He is not saying you are all laborers together with God. He is saying we, the Apostles, and the workers appointed by the church, are the laborers together with God, and you — the Church — are *“God’s building.”* You are the people being worked on. You are God’s field, tilled by our Apostles. So he said, in paraphrase, *“Let every man be careful how he carried on this work, because on the day of judgment his work will be seen for what it is worth, by what it has produced,”* in those for whom it has been carried on.

The beauty and grandeur of the church is to be seen not in the men in the limelight, who are doing the prominent work. The real test, the Apostle says, is what is happening in the body of the ecclesia. That is where *“the gold and silver and the precious stones”* are to be seen. That is also where *“the wood, hay and stubble”* will become visible in the Day of Judgment. I am suggesting therefore, that we should not try to be *“all chiefs and no Indians.”* That was not the way it was organized in New Testament times. There were those who had responsibility. There were those, and many of them, having different kinds of functions to perform in the church. But for the body of the believers, their function was to be good Christians; to allow the work of the Apostles and prophets, and evangelists, and teachers and pastors; the influence and power of the word of God; to so work in them that they would be faithful men and women, who could hold up their heads in the day of judgment, and the Apostles could take delight in them.

Finally consider the words of Paul after he had reviewed the various offices and gifts in the Church: *“Covet earnestly the best gifts”* (1Cor 12:31). So there is nothing wrong with aspiring to have some ecclesial office. There is nothing wrong with wanting to have a part in the more active forms of the work. *“If any man desireth the office of a bishop, he desireth a good thing”* (1Tim 3:1). But remember that *“a bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, well reported of for good deeds”* and so on. Let him always remember the qualifications that go with the office to which he aspires; but the most important thing is what follows.

“Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth... For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1Cor 12:31 – 13:13 NIV).

These are not offices in the ecclesia. They are fruits of God’s work in our lives. So we don’t want to become a community of office holders, and least of all of office seekers. What we want to become is a group of men and women holding the most important office of all, that of being true disciples of Jesus, and examples of the believers, in word and conversation and godliness.

The doctrine of the church: what it taught and what it emphasized

I think the first thing we ought to say in beginning this study is that we do sometimes, and frequently, in fact, attach to the word doctrine a meaning that is not necessarily there in the New Testament. We have given the word a “technical” meaning, and it has come to be synonymous with “dogma.” We accept doctrine as the basic facts of our religion, the dogmatic statements on which our Christadelphian faith is founded, whereas, in fact, the word “doctrine” in New Testament language really means “teaching” — any kind of formulated teaching; and it includes, and indeed more frequently refers to, moral teaching, as well as “dogmatic” doctrine. So that Paul writing both to Timothy and Titus uses the word in the context of his ethical teaching. *“Speak thou the things which become sound doctrine, that the aged men be sober, grave” (Titus 2:1-2)*, and goes on to describe the kind of people, the kind of characters, that they should be. And it is more often in this sense that the word doctrine is used in the New Testament.

However, for our present purpose in studying the doctrine of the church, we are thinking more particularly of its dogma; of those things which were axiomatic to the faith of the first century ecclesia. We notice first of all that Jesus preached everywhere in Galilee and Judea “the gospel of the kingdom of God.” Mark tells us in the opening of his gospel that *“in those days Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom and saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand” (Matt 3:1-2)*. The political background of the phrase “the kingdom of God” is not very clearly evident in the teaching of Jesus.

Although it is the background, and although the Messianic hope, and the Messianic promises, and the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures are the roots out of which his message grew, yet Jesus' teaching, as recorded by the gospel writers, the preaching of the Lord Jesus as we have it on record, was much more concerned with the way into the Kingdom, than with the Kingdom itself. Men's behavior and attitudes were the things that Jesus talked most about, as any cursory reading of the gospels will make clear. He preached the "sovereignty" of God, which is a phrase used by many of the new versions for the phrase "the kingdom of God." That is to say, the kingdom of God in the sense in which we see it in the gospels, is the sovereignty of God in men's lives now, as a preparation for an inheritance in the sovereignty of God when it shall be manifested in the earth in the Kingdom age.

There are, of course, references to the political aspect of the kingdom in some of the parables; and there are quite clear warnings of its sudden advent, when he is talking privately to his disciples, warning them to be ready for his coming, and for the advent of the Kingdom, when it is to be manifested in the earth; but always the teaching of Jesus revolves round the present duty of service, faithfulness and love as a preparation for an inheritance in the kingdom. The nearest we get in the gospels to any clear definition of what we might call "dogmatic faith" is in the famous declaration of Peter when Jesus said: "*Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?*" (Matt 16.15), and Peter steps forward and says, "*You are the Christ, the son of the living God.*" Jesus saw this as such an important declaration that he said: "*Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto you, Peter, but my Father that is in heaven has made known this wonderful truth to you.*"

Basis of church doctrine

Now here is the basis of the doctrine of the church. It would be difficult to find a simpler affirmation of what the Christian dogma is than this declaration of Peter's: "*Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.*" There are three important truths contained in this statement. **First**, that the God that Jesus represented in his ministry on earth, the God that Christians have come to believe in, is the Living God revealed in the Scriptures to the Jewish people in Old Testament times. Thou art the Christ, the son of "the living God." That God exists is the fundamental of Christian faith. That Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, is also clearly stated in this affirmation of faith. "*Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.*" So that the **second** declaration of faith is that Jesus is the Son of God. And the **third** is, (and this was the remarkable revelation to which Jesus, I think, particularly referred, when he said that "flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven") that he was the Messiah and the Savior: "*Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God*" — the Messiah, as predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures. The Messiah, or Christ, for whom the Jewish people were taught to look by the study of these prophecies. "*Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*" (Matt 16:18).

So here are three basic Christian doctrines

- That God exists (and by inference that He is the God revealed to the nation of Israel, that He is "the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob," the God of the

Old Testament, the living God);

- That Jesus is His Son;
- That this Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, is the Messiah, with all the implications contained in that phrase, the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy.

Now when we come over to Acts we get more development of doctrine than those three simple statements contained in Peter's declaration in the Gospels. But still the doctrinal content in the preaching of the church, as it is revealed to us here, is very simple. I have done a fairly close study of the preaching of the Apostles as shown to us in Acts. We can read a lot into it, but if we take what is recorded, (and we may surely take it that the pith and substance of what the Apostles said is in their recorded speeches), the basic Christian dogmas that the Apostles preached are very simple statements. The Epistles, later on, developed more detailed expositions. There we have something more like the polemical Christianity with which we as Christadelphians are more familiar, the deeper more detailed arguments arising out of the basic preaching presented to us in the Acts of the Apostles.

It seems probable that the original apostolic preaching was quite simple, and that other more precise definitions were added later on, developed as it were to combat heresies that arose within the church and which are evident even in New Testament times. As we read through the Epistles we find "the mystery of iniquity" already working. We find men bringing in "damnable heresies" and things of that kind which had to be met, and it would seem that as the first century church developed, the simple basic preaching of the Acts was added to and developed in the Epistles, in order that the church might be instructed and that their understanding might be developed on the basis of the platform that had been truly laid in the early preaching of the Apostles. A little bit like the developing Statements of Faith in our own community. The primitive Christadelphian statement of faith was a fairly simple thing in Dr. Thomas' day, for example, but as other ideas came along and brethren felt the need to resist this view or that view, they built into the statement more and more detail so that now we have a very complex statement of faith that has arisen out of the simplicity of the early statement, in order to try to safeguard the truths from being spoiled by the intrusion of wrong ideas.

The primitive preaching was very simple, but it was added to, understandably, and rightly, by the apostles in their expositions in the Epistles, so that the church should grow in knowledge. There was "the milk of the word" and there was "the meat" to which the Apostles were leading them on, and which gave us such wonderful expositions as Romans and Ephesians and Hebrews, these classic demonstrations of the way in which the simple faith can be expanded and developed in all sorts of ways, along all sorts of avenues, so that the germs of truth have many facets which are developed in the Epistles.

Len Richardson

With a deep sense of loss and sorrow we report the falling asleep on June 22, [1997] aged 81, of our Bro. Len Richardson. Bro. Len was baptized in Northampton in 1933 and faithfully served his Master in many ecclesial offices for 64 years in many ecclesias. The Christadelphian, 1997 p 316.

Preaching

Peer Learning Discussion Groups — A Potential Outreach Opportunity

There is a possible way for senior brothers and sisters to reach out to other seniors in their communities by the use of Peer Learning Discussion Groups which are sometimes available in Senior Centers in towns and cities across your country.

The courses usually run for eight weeks and meet for one two-hour session per week. The meetings usually consist of approximately 8 to 12 people sitting around a large table. Each course has a theme that gives rise to a number of possible topics. At the preliminary meeting, the moderator proposes a list of subjects and the group may suggest others. Each person then selects a topic and undertakes to prepare a 20 minute talk to be given at some point in the next eight weeks. At each weekly meeting, there are two 20 minute presentations, each followed by a 30 minute discussion. This allows for a coffee or tea break between sessions. This type of atmosphere is very conducive to friendly discussion and an opportunity to meet others who have similar interests.

Course subjects can vary but in my local Senior Community Centre we have considered and are considering such subjects as:

- The Middle East — Roots of Conflict and Possible Solutions.
- The New Longevity.
- Faith, Religion and Science.
- Endangered Species and Invasive Species.

There are a host of possible subjects that could be considered and obviously suggestions which would engender discussion on Bible subjects would be preferred. Typically in Canada Senior Centers cater to those aged from 55 years and up and if your local senior organization doesn't presently run such a program it could be suggested that they do. Many of these Centers are actively encouraging seniors to exercise their minds as well as their bodies in order to prolong and enrich the retirement process. One could volunteer to set up a committee to organize and oversee such a program in your community. It is an opportunity for both brethren and sisters to engage in these talks and discussions. Typically an email list is made up from the attendees and even if people attending the sessions are reluctant to speak up on points made during discussion they can often correspond with you at some later date via email.

If brethren and sisters see an opportunity in their community and would like further details on setting up such a group I would be happy to share with you my personal experiences and some possible advice.

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD” (Isa 1:18).

Michael Carr (Kitchener/Waterloo, ON): buxtoncarr@hotmail.com

Meriden Family Bible Fair

The Family Bible Fair is an outreach idea that “just seemed to morph” into reality over a period of several months. Now that we have done it, we look forward to trying it again, in whole and in part.

Our inaugural effort ran for four hours — 9 am to 1 pm — on a very warm Saturday in August. As the name suggests, there were things for everyone in the family to do, and we made sure that there could be no mistake on the part of any visitors: we identify ourselves with the Bible. Of course, everything was free.

With beaches and amusement parks not far away and other churches running carnivals to beguile people, we didn’t expect to be trampled underfoot by big crowds. But a few families came, and we got to talk with some fathers and mothers.

A key part of this outreach effort, in our estimation, was the range of games, crafts, and prizes that catered to children. A large open tent was set up in our side yard with all kinds of activities for kids. It was highly visible. Additional stations were set up for children in our fellowship hall. Many of our sisters, brothers, and young people got involved running these events — most dressed in bright yellow T-shirts that had our name, logo, and website on them. There is little question that families came to the fair because there were things for children to do.

Beyond this, we made sure there were lots of Bible-related things for adults. We ran a Psalms Read-A-Thon in our meeting room and everyone was invited to join in.¹ One grandmother arrived at the beginning and listened quietly for more than two hours. She stayed through the reading of 75 psalms while her daughter and grandchildren enjoyed other parts of the fair. There were exhibits with large identifying banners: “Seven Centuries of the English Bible” and “The Bible Comes to America”. We had a “Bible and Technology Chat Room” just off the entryway for anyone who might be interested in Bible apps and things like that. Nearby, a flat panel TV played a continuously running slide show about our 122-year ecclesial history.

And, of course, we wanted to get information into visitors’ hands. To this end we had a big “Bible Build-A-Bag” table in the entryway. Each adult visitor was offered a large cloth bag — imprinted like the T-shirts — to fill with freebies: imprinted water bottles, fridge magnets, pens, three different Bible DVDs, laminated Bible Companion bookmarks, a nicely bound set of Bible reading tips, and items related to the exhibits. Copies of “Answering Your Questions About The Christadelphians” and a companion leaflet describing our ecclesial services were already in every bag.²

And what would a Bible fair be without Bibles? The centerpiece of our build-a-bag table was free Bibles. Since we live in an area that has a growing Hispanic population, we offered Bibles in both Spanish and English. A nice, relatively inexpensive, hardbound bilingual Bible drew particular interest.

Obviously, we had to advertise, and this took about half of our FBF budget. Two small, full-color display ads went into the local newspaper, starting about two weeks before the fair. An Ad Note (a stick-on ad) went on the front page of the

paper a week before the fair, and a flyer was inserted in the same paper two days beforehand.



In addition, our young people — and some not so young! — canvassed local neighborhoods one week before the fair with extra copies of the newspaper insert. We also put up two lawn signs in front of our hall to announce the event.

Nearly all the things we prepared for the Family Bible Fair can be used again. We also have leftover giveaways on hand for another time. It will not cost as much to run another fair. Some of the things can be used with other events as well. For example, the exhibits can be set up at Bible reading seminars. The Bible Companion and the set of Bible reading tips can be given away at almost any outreach event. The Family Bible Fair has good prospects of being cost effective.

And it is adaptable. We designed the fair to make good use of our entire ecclesial venue — inside and out. Other ecclesias would need to adapt it to their own settings. It is a “non-threatening” event, and we found that people come. Our visitors now know where we are and they have been inside our hall. Key things, we believe, include a range of inviting activities for all ages, advertising, and putting it firmly in God’s hands. We prayed a lot about this. Then it ran its course. And everyone in the ecclesia had an opportunity to get involved.

Meriden (CT) Preaching Committee

Notes:

1. Did you know that a group can read 119 Psalms aloud in 4 hours and 10 minutes?
2. Three Bible DVDs were offered free of charge: “Introducing the Bible”, “Introducing Jesus”, and “God’s Land of Promises”, all obtained from the Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation at an astonishing low cost. We played the DVDs on another small TV so visitors could see what they were getting.

Letters

Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?

From Bro. George Booker

Dear Brethren Peter and John,

I agree wholeheartedly with Bro. Barling's statement, which Bro. Bromet questions in his letter (*The Tidings*, Sept. 2015, p. 420). In the filler Bro. Barling quotes John 16:32: "I am not alone, because the Father is with me". Other passages also help to explain and mitigate what appears to be the temporary feeling of abandonment which our Lord experienced, when he cried, "My God... why have you forsaken me?" from the cross (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34; Luke 24:44, citing Psa 22:1).

In addition to John 16:32, which Bro. Barling quoted, a long list of other such mitigating passages also point in the same direction, such as vs 24 from the same Psalm 22, presumably also quoted by Jesus on the cross: "For he [the LORD] has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from but has listened to his cry for help." This suggests that Jesus' "Why have you forsaken me?" was a cry for help, which the Father heard.

A whole group of other Messianic psalms suggest our Lord's temporary fear or doubt. As we know, these are very human emotions, common to all of us. But whatever reservations Jesus felt were then answered by his own renewal of faith and trust in his heavenly Father. These include the following:

"Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God" (Psa 42:5,6).

"Do not forsake me when my strength is gone. For my enemies speak against me; those who wait to kill me conspire together. They say, 'God has forsaken him; pursue him and seize him, for no one will rescue him.' Be not far from me, O God; come quickly, O my God, to help me" (Psa 71:9-12). These verses actually suggest another possibility: that Jesus' "My God..." cry was, to some extent, referring to the taunts of his enemies.

"Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence... My heart was grieved and my spirit embittered... Yet... you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory" (Psa 73:13,21,23,24).

"Unless the LORD had given me help, I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death. When I said, 'My foot is slipping,' your love, O LORD, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul" (Psa 74:17-19).

Bro. Bromet refers to the "seemingly disturbing utterance" of Jesus on the cross ("My God, why have you forsaken me?"). But when I consider what it must have

meant for Jesus to be a man, born of a woman, and thus destined by his very nature to be tried in all matters like we are, then I do not find such a cry disturbing at all; I find it reassuring. Jesus' words give voice to our own fears and doubts, and help us to see the man in Gethsemane, and on the cross, as our Savior and our Redeemer, for he has experienced our weaknesses too.

Did God truly "forsake" His Son? Or does Jesus' perfectly understandable feeling of abandonment, expressed at that moment, explain the words? If it was the latter, then we have the very best example in his words and actions for how we ought to deal with our own similar feelings: by resorting to the Word of God and its assurances, and by reminding ourselves of how our heavenly Father has cared for us in the past.

Is a brief or momentary fear a sin? How can it be? If we see even the slightest hesitation or wavering in Jesus' purpose and faith as a sin, — and try to explain it away by looking for dubious translations or alternative readings — then I believe we are on the way to creating in our minds a would-be Savior who is much less man and more "Angel" or "God", and that is simply wrong. That Jesus felt such fears is proof that he was "tempted in every way, just as we are"; that he did not succumb to such fears, but overcame them by a continuing exercise of faith, is proof that he "*was without sin*" (*Heb 4:15*).

Bro. Bromet offers, as an absolute statement, that Jesus really said, "Why have you spared me?", and he cites as his only authority the Aramaic English New Testament. He then says — another absolute statement — that the AENT is "a translation of the oldest New Testament ever discovered, the Khabouris Codex written entirely in Aramaic". This is simply wrong for several reasons, as a quick search of the writings of such eminent New Testament scholars as F.F. Bruce and Bruce Metzger will confirm.

F.F. Bruce writes:

"Because the Syriac Bible is written in a variant dialect of the language that Jesus spoke, extreme views are sometimes expressed about the forms in which his sayings appear in the Syriac Gospels, as though his actual words in the language in which they were uttered might be found there. The ordinary reader, for example, may readily infer from the writings of Mr. George Lamsa [an early translator of the Aramaic Gospels] that the Peshitta Gospels preserve the very words of our Lord better than the Greek Gospels do. This, of course, is quite wrong; the Peshitta New Testament is simply a translation of the Greek."¹

Bruce Metzger, probably the leading world authority on the New Testament text until his recent death, has stated that Lamsa's claim to have translated the New Testament from original Aramaic manuscripts is a fraud, and that he would never produce the manuscripts from which he was supposedly translating. Metzger also points out that the whole of the New Testament could not have been written in Aramaic because the language would have been unknown to some of the ecclesias to whom Paul wrote, such as Rome or Corinth.²

Ironically, the recent (August 2015) special issue of *The Tidings*, entitled “God Has Spoken”, goes a long way toward refuting such claims about the Aramaic English New Testament and others. On page 354, Bro. Joe Hill lists a number of the most useful books on the textual criticism of the New Testament, including Bruce Metzger’s definitive work, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. The serious study of the history and background of the New Testament should start with such books as these. Again, on page 367, Bro. Steve Davis writes: “Aramaic is only used in about 250 verses in Daniel and Ezra.” And the “Further Reading” compiled on the last page of the special issue is another very useful resource.

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

Notes:

1. F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, p. 200.
2. Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, pp. 68-70; cited in *The Testimony*, 2003, p. 56.

From Bro. Rick Brower

I was intrigued by Bro Bromet’s commentary on this question. He suggests that Jesus’ statement on the cross, ‘*Why have you forsaken me*’, is better translated ‘*Why have you spared me*’. I would like to suggest that his conclusion is highly unlikely, for three specific reasons. I would also like to suggest a perspective which supports the traditional reading, and eliminates the “so called” dilemma.

In the first place, Bro. Bromet appeals to an Aramaic text known as the Khabouris Codex, which apparently prefers the word ‘spared’ in place of ‘forsaken’. However, as you rightly pointed out in a footnote, nearly all translations of all other manuscripts do use the English word ‘forsaken’. This renders the Khabouris Codex an outlier. Given that this manuscript is an isolated minority source, carbon dated to over a 1000 years after Christ, it is simply an unreliable basis upon which to make an appeal for alternative translation of a specific word. The text claims in its opening abstract to be a copy of a much older text, but whether it is or not is of little consequence. It is impossible to make a convincing textual argument for the alternative translation on scholarly grounds.

In the second place, the third party response to Jesus’ statement on the cross appears to support the traditional reading of ‘forsaken’. “*And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, ‘This man is calling Elijah’...But the others said, ‘Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him’ ”* (Matt 27:47,49 ESV). Although it is admitted that the bystanders either didn’t understand Aramaic, or at least didn’t understand Jesus very clearly (for they thought he called for Elijah), nevertheless they did assume that Jesus was calling for help. Not help, in the sense that Bro. Bromet assumes whereby Christ wished to hasten his own death, but help in the sense of salvation from the death experience itself. So then the bystanders themselves interpreted Jesus’ statement in a manner which makes more sense if we read ‘forsaken’, and not ‘spared’.

In the third place, we cannot change the original context of David’s emotional struggle in Psalm 22. He very obviously did feel that God had abandoned him, at least for the moment. This is a completely normal, human feeling. David states

“O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer” (ESV, v.2). So then to assert an alteration to Christ’s statement on the cross is to say that Christ did not actually quote Psalm 22. Considering the numerous and striking similarities between the experience of David and the experience of Christ as described in the passage, this too is an unnecessary stretch of the imagination.

All of these things indicate that we need look elsewhere for a Biblical solution. I believe we have that, with the final OT quote from Christ before he died. “*Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last*” (Luke 23:46 ESV). Based on this quote, we know that Christ had moved on in his mind at the point of death from Psalm 22 to Psalm 31. This is very significant, because there are several parallels in that passage as well between the life of David and the life Christ. For our purposes here, the most important can be found in Psa 31:22: “*For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee*”.

If the spiritual parallel holds, then it is clear that Christ did feel that God had abandoned him in the moment, even though he knew in a technical sense that such a thing was simply not true. Is this not the very essence of the human condition? Most certainly, and Christ would be forced to endure every bit of it. The tension between what we feel and what we know in our head is a very real and present struggle, which should cause us to reflect on the love and promises of our great Heavenly Father just as Christ did even in the face of death.

Rick Brower (Troy, IL)

Between the two living manifestations, was interposed the death-state. In this state, the Cherubic Flesh was deserted by the Eternal Substance. The effluent spirit forsook Jesus when he exclaimed upon the cross, “My ALL, my ALL, why hast Thou forsaken me?” The effluent power by which he had taught and worked was withdrawn from him for some time before he died. The Spirit no longer rested upon the Cherub, yet that Cherub continued to live as other men. In process of time he expired. He was now, like the Cherubic Veil of the Temple, “rent in twain.” It was no longer affirmable that “1 and the Father are one”; but that “1 and the Father are twain”; for the Father was no longer in him, nor he in the Father. In the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, the body was in the condition predicted in Psalm 38: “Yahweh’s arrows stuck fast in it, and His hand pressed it sore. There was no soundness in the flesh; its wounds stank; and its loins were filled with a loathsome disease; feeble and sore broken, his lovers and friends stood aloof from His stroke, which had consumed him, and laid him low in a horrible pit.” This was the death state of the Cherub. Will any one affirm that that dead body was the Father? That it had lived in the world before the world was? That it was the Creator of all things? Nay, it was the flesh only in which sin was condemned and had it been left there, it would have crumbled into unprofitable dust (Psa 30:9).

John Thomas, *Phanerosis*, p 45 (1869 edition)



Bible Mission News

Mexico Bible School 2015

From July 16-20 the Mexico Bible School was held at a hotel near Lake Chapala. Bro. David Lloyd, the link brother, shares these thoughts since he attended the school.

It was the second Mexico Bible School and was highlighted by a couple of baptisms and the visit of 12 brothers and sisters from Costa Rica (first time visitors). There were exactly 50 attendees — the 12 from Costa Rica, some from Campeche, in the Yucatan, one from Salamanca and the rest were from the greater Guadalajara area (including Ocotlan). It was a lovely cultural exchange and the Costa Ricans were very friendly and energetic.



Bro. Bill Rawson of England gave splendid classes on Ecclesiastes and there was much discussion about the talks and how to practice the valuable lessons in our lives. There was a large teen class taught by Bro. Luis. And there was a very small class of little children. Because there were spirited teens from Costa Rica, they really enlivened our young people and they seemed to have a great time together.

On the third day of the Bible School there were two baptisms, Bro. Gustavo Aguirre and Sis. Cynthia Alvarez. They are from Ocotlan and have been taking three classes a week in Ocotlan for more than a year. Ocotlan is an exciting area about an hour from Guadalajara where we have been having lots of interest and conduct a full meeting each week. It's not an ecclesia yet but a satellite — but this adds two more members to this group.

It was a full schedule of classes and afternoon activities for all. The afternoon Bible readings were popular and went overtime each day. These are special times for the brethren who live great distances to the ecclesia and do not have the fellowship of group Bible readings except at the Bible School. They also spent time singing some hymns (Spanish Hymnbook) that are favorites in Costa Rica.



The swimming pool was a big hit with everybody. There was a nice soccer field that some enjoyed. One afternoon the group went down to the shore of Lake Chapala and walked along the park and the pier and bought souvenirs from the artisans. A brother from Costa Rica bought me a fresh coconut cut open for a straw to drink from. Very tasty. The teens enjoyed getting to know each other.



The first evening program Bro. Teo gave a class and then everyone introduced themselves and told how they came to know the Truth and be baptized. Even the youngest of the young people shared. Some told detailed stories and were emotional because their finding the Truth was a life-saver.

The second evening program featured a lovely Hebrew dance by three of the young girls from Costa Rica and singing by first the group of Costa Rican visitors and then the whole congregation. It was very lively!

At the end, here is the group in their souvenir t-shirts to remember the time spent on things of eternal value. We in North America, as well as other heavily populated Christadelphian areas around the world have multiple Study Weekends and Bible Schools to choose to attend. This is a new experience to gather together in fellowship and new cultures based on their common faith.

Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau CBMA/CBMC Pubicity



Panama — A Spiritually and Naturally Refreshing Visit

Once again we were happy to team-up with Brother Clive and Sister Christine Drepaul from New York to support the two Panama ecclesias for special activities from July 19th to 29th, and their Annual Bible Camp which was held from July 24 to 26th at Santa Clara on the Pacific Coast of Panama.

Brother Clive gave the exhortation and Bible Class at the Panama City Ecclesia on Sunday, July 19th. The Colon Ecclesia had organized a preaching effort on Wednesday, July 22 at a hotel conference room near the Colon meeting room — there were 31 in attendance from both ecclesias, plus five visitors. Three of the visitors have previously attended and two had registered to go to the Bible Camp! The theme for the Colon initiative and also for the Panama City Ecclesia's witness evening on Tuesday, July 28th was — "Genesis — Foundation for Faith". The schedule concluded with a combined Bible Class on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus in Colon on July 29th, with members from both ecclesias present, as well as friends.



The focal point of our time in Panama was the Bible Camp. There were 21 members, teens and children from the two ecclesias present plus the two friends. The study theme for the weekend was based on four judges as found in Hebrews 11:32 — Barak, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson. Many lessons were gleaned from these examples of faith, mixed with failure through compromise. The admonition was clear for the Brotherhood today, in this very humanistic society — we must stand fast in the Faith, and put on the whole armor of God!

The waters of the Pacific Ocean were calmer this year, allowing a number to enjoy swimming. Another natural feature of this area of Panama is the abundance of mango trees. The trees are loaded with this fruit in July and the mangos were supremely delicious!



Our time in Panama was rewarded with enjoyable fellowship around the Word of God — a refreshing oasis in our busy lives. The two ecclesias are very hospitable and welcome visitors any time of the year, since each ecclesia has about 13 members with only a few brethren to take care of the weekly services.

Don Luff, CBMA linkman

Trinidad Bible School 2015

We were glad to have the opportunity to attend the Trinidad & Tobago Bible School, which was held on the island of Trinidad this year from July 31 – August 4. (The Bible School alternates between Trinidad and Tobago each year). It was an exceptional gathering around God's word as we enjoyed our studies and fellowship together. The hospitality of the Caribbean brethren is as warm as their sunshine! Bro. Sam and Sis. Bernadette Edwards graciously hosted us before and after the school. Their home is also the location for the Amiri Ecclesia. There are two other ecclesias on the island — Marabella and Erin. Brethren from all three ecclesias and from the Tobago ecclesia attended the Bible School. We had between 20-45 attendees throughout the school. Not everyone could stay at the site with us the whole time, as some were working or had other commitments. All ages participated, as well — we had newborn babes to beloved elders!

The Bible studies provided by Bro. Jeff Gelineau of Simi Hills, California, and Bro. David Andrews of Georgetown, Guyana were very well received. Bro. Jeff spoke about the purpose of our lives and how we can use our unique, personal skills and characteristics to serve God, and Bro. David spoke about the glory of God and how we can glorify Him. It was amazing how the two classes dovetailed together! They were continually referring to one another's remarks, and blending them together into a cohesive and rich whole. One of my favorite aspects of the Caribbean brethren is the lively questions and comments after each study. Those sessions were so helpful and inspiring. Everyone's intention of bringing the studies into practical use in our daily lives is apparent. The discussions always round out the program perfectly.

One afternoon, we had a fun outing to the beach. Along the way, we stopped to see the Pitch Lake, which is the largest natural deposit of asphalt in the world! It was quite odd to realize that what we cover our roads with comes out of a lake! From there we continued on to a nice beach. We played Frisbee in the warm water together, and had a lot of good laughs. (Not many of us were very skilled with the Frisbee!)

We greatly enjoyed meeting the brothers and sisters of Trinidad and Tobago and left feeling as if we had made many dear friends. We would highly recommend to everyone that you attend this Bible School. The brothers and sisters greatly appreciate visitors, and their vibrant faithfulness greatly blesses those who have the opportunity to visit their islands of the Caribbean.

*Written by Jeff Gelineau
Submitted by Jan Berneau*

Beginnings in Trinidad

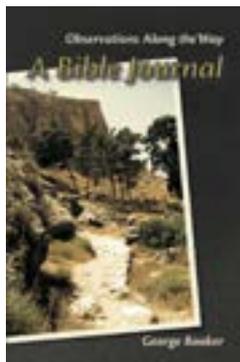
The true Gospel came first to Trinidad in 1889, when the intrepid Barbadian, Brother John Blenman, took the newly baptized Isaac Barnes from Kingston, Jamaica, to Port of Spain. They found the island to be a stronghold of Roman Catholicism (though Protestantism, Hinduism and Islam have since influenced its religious life), yet they managed to establish the roots of a small ecclesia in the capital. Their work was reported by a London brother, Herbert Horsman, in the Fraternal Visitor magazine in July 1890. However, Isaac Barnes soon left the Caribbean, on his way to West Africa; and by 1891, Brother Blenman — who said of Trinidad that ‘evil abounds there exceedingly’ — had become ill and had moved to Georgetown in British Guiana. Even so, by 1899 there was an ecclesia of eight members in Port of Spain. A Brother E A Thomas wrote of the difficulties at the time:

“Trinidad is a Roman Catholic community. Catholicism has greatly impoverished all spiritual appetite for Truth, especially among the higher and middle classes. We therefore, as poor fellows, are only able to sound our voices among friends — and that in a careful manner, to try to open up to them the Truth as it is in the Scriptures. In this way many have been startled and convinced.”

For the next 55 years Trinidad, like all the Caribbean outposts, remained isolated from the rest of the Christadelphian community. Then came those marvelous years in the 1950s when in so many parts of the world the Lord sent forth his servants once again. From Guyana in 1954 came ‘Operation Caribbean’ — a newspaper-advertisement campaign in the islands, which sowed the seeds of revival — followed by a steady flow of mission workers from other stations in the Caribbean or from overseas. It may well be true that very few countries have been as vigorously or extensively evangelized by Christadelphians as Trinidad and Tobago. The reasons are simply the zeal of the local members — they want the name and the message to be widely known — and the fact that over the years a succession of capable and active Christadelphian preachers has visited the islands.

(From “Into all the World”, Bro. Michael Owen, p. 97)

Books from The Tidings



Observations Along the Way: A Bible Journal, by George Booker

As the sequel to "On the Way", this book is the album of a spiritual journey, written for fellow travelers along the Way to the Kingdom. Its pages present in-depth studies and thoughtful exhortations, as well as lighter meditations and musings. The subject matter is wide-ranging: practical issues of life in the Truth, Bible exposition, biographical sketches, reflections on today's world, personal viewpoints, and much more.

305 pages, illustrated; \$9.00 USD

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

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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

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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).

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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.

Brief Note on the Current State of Reunion

Since the notice, in *The Tidings* of January 2015, of the Commendation Letter (CL) between some Unamended ecclesias in Ontario and elsewhere, and 12 Amended ecclesias in Ontario, there has continued to be tension, with many letters circulated by e-mail. This development was partially anticipated, as we acknowledged at the time of publishing the notice, “the confusion over fellowship in Ontario will not end with the publication of this Commendation Letter.” Unfortunately, some of this confusion appears to be spreading, with a few ecclesias communicating their decisions to refuse fellowship to all participants of the CL and also those Amended ecclesias who recognize it.

There have been a few positive developments, but the unfortunate cessation of the Ontario Conference Series (OCS), in which the majority of the Ontario ecclesias participated, has led to several other efforts to solve the various concerns expressed. There have been several recent meetings, both private and with larger groups, and a tentative consensus appears to have emerged:

- 1) First, the commendation process used, although founded on long-proven precedents in our community, has not yet produced the wide acceptance as hoped for within the Amended community. On the other hand, two of the four OCS ecclesias have accepted the commendation and there has been some success with those Unamended ecclesias that have indicated they share common beliefs with the Amended community over the areas that have historically divided us (e.g., resurrectional responsibility).
- 2) Second, it has been unhelpful and inconsistent with Central fellowship practice for Amended ecclesias to discontinue fellowshiping the Commending ecclesias and the other Central ecclesias that have accepted the commendation. These ecclesias have long been part of and remain part of the Central community. At present, the committees of the major fraternal magazines of the Central community (*The Christadelphian*, *The Tidings*, and *The Lampstand*) do not consider it appropriate for ecclesias to take such unilateral block-disfellowship actions regarding long-standing Central ecclesias.
- 3) Lastly, some of the ecclesias involved have provided concise assurances that are especially encouraging.¹ We hope that these assurances, if perhaps further explained and accompanied by a better-defined path towards the agreed upon end state, will result in acceptance, not only by the local ecclesias, but by all

the magazines and the wider community. This end state is of a fellowship community united, not only within North America, but worldwide, upon the Biblical principles as summarized in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (BASF). It is hoped that a clear path for achieving this agreed end state will be set forth within a few months and that all like-minded brethren will work toward its goal.

The Tidings Publishing Committee

Notes:

1. The Unity Communications Committee (UCC) of the Commended and Commending ecclesias recently stated, "It is the intent of the Commendation Letter (CL) process to welcome in Fellowship Unamended Ecclesias that confirm their agreement with the CL, dated September 3, 2014 (see <http://unitycl.org/>). The CL recognizes that the BASF is the basis of inter-ecclesial fellowship for the resulting world-wide Christadelphian Community."

BOSTON, MA

We are sad to announce that after a long illness, Bro. Jack Warner fell asleep in Christ on September 3, 2015. He was 86 years old. Bro. Jack was a dedicated servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Boston Ecclesia. He was baptized into the saving name of Jesus Christ on November 4, 1953, and remained an active member of the Christadelphian family in almost every capacity. Whether it was as an arranging, assistance and examining board member, or an exhorter, a presider, a Sunday school teacher, an outreach leader and so much more, he worked right up until the last couple of years when illness precluded him from continuing. Bro. Jack sleeps now with his wife, Sis. Alicia, resting in the sure hope of the resurrection at our Lord's return.

Jim Sullivan

HONESDALE, PA

Bro. David Stiles and his wife, Sis. Connie, visited us on September 27, 2015, all the way from the Meriden, CT Ecclesia. Bro. David gave us a wonderful exhortation during our memorial service and a great Holy Bible study afterwards. Our sisters hosted a very tasty luncheon where we were able to enjoy our fellowship.

Stephen J. DeMarco

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CA

We thankfully report the baptism on August 30, 2015 of NATHANIEL TUNNELL, son of Bro. Owen and Sis. Jolie Tunnell, and on September 12, 2015 of ALISE STICKNEY, daughter of Bro. Mike and Sis. Myra Stickney. Both have grown up in our Sunday School and CYC. We rejoice with their respective families, praise our Father that His Word is still at work, and offer our prayers for these young people as they begin their journey with us in the Lord.

By way of transfer from the Simi Hills Ecclesia, we welcome as members, Bro. Aidan Smith, who relocated here in January to pursue training, and his parents, Bro. Geoff and Sis. Brenda Lee Smith who recently relocated here in connection with employment. We also welcome Bro. Ramin Hatami, originally of Afghanistan and more recently of Turkey. He relocated here in January. In addition, we are happy to welcome as a member of our ecclesia, Bro. John McColl, who has relocated to our area from the Seattle, WA Ecclesia.

Our ecclesia joined in sorrow with the parents and family on the tragic loss of Vanessa Owen who died at age thirty-eight on April 4, 2015. We pray for God's healing for

Bro. Martin Owen, Sis. Becky Owen, Sis. Kathy Owen, and family. We also mourn the loss of Bro. Floyd Elsas of Santa Barbara, CA who was father, grandfather and great grandfather to members of our ecclesial family.

We recently became aware in July of a refugee family that was placed in our area. Bro. Alulu Kashindi and Sis. Noella Tabisengwa were originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, but spent approximately 15 years in a refugee camp. They arrived in San Diego in May 2015, with their five children. There are many challenges for them and also for our ecclesia as we attempt to be of help. We welcome any advice from other ecclesias dealing with similar opportunities.

We appreciate the various visiting speakers who encourage us by way of exhortation.

We are currently conducting a six-week “Learn to Read the Bible” series, and we have a continuing class with an interested couple from the Fall 2014 seminar. We praise God for allowing us these opportunities to share the gospel.

Kent Ellis

SARASOTA, FL

The sympathy of the Sarasota, FL Ecclesia is extended to Sis. Pat Souder on the falling asleep in the Lord Jesus Christ, on October 4, 2015, of her husband, Bro. Howard Souder.

Bro. Howard served this ecclesia faithfully for a number of years, including in the positions of recording brother, treasurer, and arranging brother. He also served for a number of years on the Florida Bible School committee. He set an example of diligence in the positions he held, guided by a great love for Christ and the brotherhood. He served his Master until only a few months ago, when due to his illness, he could no longer continue in those positions. He faced his final illness with courage and dignity, confident in the great hope we all share.

Amazingly, or perhaps not so amazingly, Howard found the strength, with a great deal of help from Pat, to attend Memorial service less than a month before falling asleep.

Our condolences also go to his daughters, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

James L Wilkinson

News correction: In the September Norfolk, VA news Bro. Jason Henderson’s baptism was in September 2011, and Bro. George Rams name was incorrectly given as Lams.

Sarasota Ecclesia Begins

*We [Detroit, MI] have been very sorry to lose bro. and sis. F. Gulbe and bro. and sis. W. S. Thomas, who have moved to **Sarasota, Florida**. With a few others already living there, they meet together regularly to encourage each other, to remember the Master, and to maintain a lightstand for the Truth. They would be very happy to have the company of any visiting in that area. (The Berean, June 1950 p 189)*

SARASOTA, Florida, U.S.A.—*We are happy to announce that here in this corner of God’s vineyard there is a Christadelphian ecclesia meeting regularly to study the Word and keep in memory the death and resurrection of our Lord. We shall be very glad to welcome all in our fellowship. Please send all communications to Fred Gulbe (Rec. Bro.),. (The Berean, July 1950).*

Minute Meditation

Steering wheel or spare tire?

Holocaust survivor Corrie Ten Boom once asked the question, “Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?” Do we steer our life by trusting in God? Do we pray about our daily duties and challenges or is prayer only for emergencies? Some pray only when in danger and forget about God when things are going well. During the war there was a saying that there are no atheists in the fox holes. Do we look to God for help when there are no other options, but then ignore Him once the crisis has past?

Truly God is our refuge and strength in time of trouble and He does hear prayer. James tells us, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” David said, “In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears.” However our Heavenly Father should not be merely an emergency lifeline but be our Father all the time, not just when we are in trouble. The prophet Micah tells of people who hate the good and love the evil, and that “Then they will cry to the LORD, but he will not listen to them. In fact, he will hide his face from them at that time, because they were so wicked in what they were doing.” If we don’t put God first using prayer as our steering wheel, we may find our spare tire flat when we go to use prayer in an emergency.

There are billions of people on earth today who never ever think about God. They would never think to pray, and should the thought occur to them, God might not be listening because of their godless way of life. There are many who only think about Him when in trouble or in danger. These are the ones who consider Him their spare tire, good in emergencies; but not for much else, and who would be surprised to know that God may not be listening to their prayer because of their lack of interest in Him. There also are some who do think about God more regularly and go to church on Sundays, but He does not have a high priority in their lives; religion is just one of a number of interests that they maintain. God expects more.

There are few who realize that God needs to be number one in their life and that they need to love Him with all their heart. God will not play second fiddle. He is either number one or we are failing Him. We need to steer our thoughts and actions towards focusing on God. We all have troubles and concerns about daily needs, but these should not be our priority. Jesus tells us in what has become known as the Sermon on the Mount to “Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.” If our love for God steers our life, then the other cares will fall into line.

How do we make God number one in our lives? Jesus says that we must, but how do we do it? It is not easy. Jesus tells us, “Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with thy soul, and with all thy mind.” Jesus was quoting Moses who told the children of Israel, “And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require

of thee, but to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.” The children of Israel had witnessed God dividing the waters of the Red Sea and had walked safely through it to escape the Egyptians. They also were fed every day with manna, their thirst was quenched by water from a rock, and they saw the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. These people had good reasons and daily reminders of the power of God in their lives, and it should have been easy for them to love God. Yet, out of the millions who left Egypt, only Joshua and Caleb entered the Promised Land. Obviously many did not love God the way Moses had commanded them to do —they did not love Him with all their hearts.

We have not witnessed the miracles God did for Israel but we know about them through the divine record in the Bible. We are seeing the hand of God shaping the nations today in preparation for the return of Christ. We also know that God loves us. He has not only given us this beautiful world to live in, but because of the sacrifice of Jesus He has given us the opportunity for eternal life through faith and obedience to His Word. We can have all our sins forgiven. God has called us from a world headed to certain death, and asks us to love Him and His Son who gave his life for us so that we can have life. We should be so full of thankfulness for the goodness that God has shown us, and the love He has for us that we feel an overflowing love for God and a burning desire to please Him. Our love for God will grow as we think about what He has done for us. We should humbly and gratefully make God the center of our life and praise and thank Him using prayer as our steering wheel to guide our steps in His service.

How comforting to know, not just think but know, that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose. The apostle Paul asks, “What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” Paul continues, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”

Let us, like Paul, steer our lives every step of the way towards living a life of godliness so we, with Paul, can say, “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Robert J. Lloyd

Note on Rom 5:38. *All Paul sought to do was to show that whatever the influences, personal or impersonal, which operate in the Christian's life, these are subject to ultimate Divine control. All things work out for the good, for the salvation, of those who are called according to God's purpose, and the assurance of victory lies both in God's power and in God's love. His theme is that "if God be for us, who can be against us?" The Christadelphian, 1961, p. 366.*

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

NOVEMBER, 2015

- 7-8 Sarasota, FL** Fall Study Weekend with Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON), speaking on: "Prophecy, Predestination, and the Purpose of God." Contact Bro. James Wilkinson at jameswilkinson@hotmail.com or 941-412-7988.
- 13-15 Austin Leander, TX** Gathering/Study weekend at HEB Camp, Leaky, TX (near Kerrville, TX). Bro. David Jennings (CA) speaking on "Led by the Spirit". Cost \$10 per person; Family cap \$40. Contact Sis. Maritta Terrell for registration by email at mt-ct@swbell.net.
- 14-15 Mississauga West, ON** Study weekend with Bro. David Levin (Baltimore, MD) on "The Many Facets of Resurrection". Begins Saturday at 10:30am. Classes on Saturday are "Resurrection as History: The Challenge and Value of an Empirical Basis of Faith"; "Resurrection as Worldview: The Bible's Ultimate Statement"; "Resurrection as Basis of Preaching: The Use of Resurrection in the First Century". Sunday begin at 9:30am. Talk titles are "Resurrection as the Basis of Character Development and Spiritual Growth" and "Resurrection the Basis of Exhortation". Contact John Mannell jwmannell@gmail.com.
- 14-15 Pittsburgh, PA** CYC Study Weekend. Our speaker will be Bro. Kevin Mayock (Moorestown, NJ). His subject will be "Joseph". Travelers' lunch will be provided at noon and classes will begin at 1:00pm. Contact Bro. David Pommer at david.pommer@verizon.net or (724) 224-7363.
- 20-22 Washington, DC** Family Bible Study weekend at Camp Hashawha, 300 John Owings Rd, Westminster, MD 21158. Our speaker will be Bro. Ryan King (Richmond Petersburg, VA) on "Jeremiah & His Friends". Everyone must register. Registration deadline is November 3rd. Forms available on hopeofthekingdom.com or contact Bro. Ken Green, 14006 Barkham Court, Laurel, MD 20707; phone: 443-497-3497 or e-mail Hashawha@gmail.com. **(Please note this is a week earlier than previous years when it was the Thanksgiving weekend.)**

DECEMBER, 2015

- 26-Jan 1 Ontario Winter Bible School**, The Best Western Highland Inn & Conference Center, Midland (ON). Speakers: Bro. Mark O'Grady (Tawa, NZ); Bro. Everett Muniz (Paris Ave, OH); Bro. Paul Billington (Brantford, ON) adults; Bro Jesse Adair (Hamilton Book Rd, ON) young people. Registration information and other details are available from our web site www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com.

FEBRUARY, 2016

- 6 Brantford, ON** Annual Junior CYC & Little Disciples Winter Gathering at Camp Trillium. Workbooks will be posted toward the end of the year on www.brantfordchristadelphians.com. For information email Bro. Peter and Sis. Karly Styles at peterandkarly@juno.com..
- 21-26 Palm Springs Bible School** will be held, Lord willing, at the Miracle Springs Resort in Desert Hot Springs, CA. The speakers for 2016 are Bro. Anthony Whitehorn (Maidenhead, UK): "Faith and Doubt" and Bro. Steve Davis (Boston, MA): "Moving on to Maturity". The Bible School is held at a natural hot springs resort with seven different pools on the premises, each one fed by natural hot springs at temperatures varying from 86 degrees

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to106 degrees. 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, please contact Jeff Gelineau at jeffgelineau@gmail.com or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org for more details.