

The
Christadelphian Tidings
of the Kingdom of God

**Thoughts on the Way
Constraining Love**

**Editorial
Freedom of Speech**

**Exhortation
The Greatest
Commandment**

**Reflection
One in Seven, Seven in One**

**Why I Left ...
The Trinity, Idols**

**Jonathan
Final Article: The Greater
Picture**

**Reflection
So What Now?**

**Doctrines to be Rejected
The Death State**

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Freedom of Speech

“... Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:28-29)

Preaching etc.

The First Amendment to the US Constitution, passed in 1791, reads “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” But what does this mean in the reality of our present society, with its other freedoms:

- 1) Freedom of same-sex marriage.
- 2) The freedom in our society to blaspheme the name of God.
- 3) In the USA, the Castle Doctrine: the apparent freedom to kill someone if he/she enters your house without permission (along with the freedom to own as many guns as you care to buy).
- 4) In both the USA and Canada, no public school can offer any sort of Christian religious prayer.¹
- 5) On almost any topic, we see public protests and are asked to sign petitions: should we voice our opinions on such topics when asked, or not? One thinks of global warming, environmental affairs in general, petitions for or against same sex marriage — the list is endless.

And what about preaching? I know I personally would be reluctant to see a Christadelphian public lecture advertised as “homosexuality is condemned in the Bible” or “same sex marriage is against the commandments of Christ”. Or how about “You should use the bathroom of your biological sex, says the Bible”. In every case, I would suspect at least some of the local populace would object, and needless controversy ensue. But by being reluctant to address these topics, are we bowing down to what the United States Supreme Court says? Or just following the example of the apostles in the first century, who largely only objected to the rule of the authorities when commanded not to preach about Jesus Christ. They did not object to the cruelties of the Roman Rule, or preach against the immorality of the society outside the ecclesia. They commanded the disciples to follow the moral code of Christ, but did not protest against practices of the community of non-believers. Instead, they tried to turn individuals from the wicked practices of society by preaching. As the Apostle Peter said:

“Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers and for the praise of those who do

good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men — as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God” (1Pet 2:13-16)

Of course, as “bondservants of God”, where there is a conflict of principle, the disciple “*ought to obey God rather than men*” (Acts 5:29) — but this is no permit to protest through the political or legal system.

Defamation²

Both ecclesias and magazines should realize that individuals can be litigious. We have found that some who have conflict with ecclesias, and through them magazines, may be willing to turn to the law when they believe ecclesias have acted maliciously or inappropriately. It is for this reason that *The Tidings* only publish the bare facts of such situations as withdrawal or transfer. There is a risk that in our normal ecclesial life we might publish defamatory material, such as:

- The making of platform announcements, the circulation of letters or the publication of news items in magazines, that name brothers or sisters as having done or said certain things;
- Giving lectures or publishing magazine articles that refer to particular nations, ethnic or religious groups (e.g. lectures on Prophecy), or homosexuality; and
- The making of statements or publishing material (e.g. photographs) on Twitter, Facebook and other forms of online social media.

It is somewhat unlikely for ecclesias or individuals to be sued in the USA, but the situation in Canada is in fact more potentially troublesome. According to the article on “defamation” from Wikipedia:

At common law [in Canada], defamation covers any communication that tends to lower the esteem of the subject in the minds of ordinary members of the public... Where a communication is expressing a fact, it can still be found defamatory through innuendo suggested by the juxtaposition of the text or picture next to other pictures and words.

Whether this is troublesome just in theory I am not sure: I personally know of no related legal problems in Canada.

Internally

There is, however, another aspect of “Freedom of Speech” that is relevant. The Christadelphians often assert they are truly the “people of the Book”, and rely on the Bible to provide guidance in all our beliefs and actions. As such, we claim to study the Bible in an open manner, without pre-conceived notions, and indeed our early history is replete with vigorous open dialog. As the Bible says: “*Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true*” (Acts 17:11 NIV).

This trait has largely disappeared in our community. As I grew up in the 1960’s, there was a considerable amount of discussion about many topics, such as

Biblical inspiration, the precise role of the Holy Spirit, attempts to reconcile the early chapters of Genesis with scientific observations, as well as much deep study of the text of the Bible, its message to the early Church, and its implications for today. I listened to Brethren AD Norris, Harry Whitaker, Len Richardson, Edward Whittaker, and many others of high intelligence, deep Biblical knowledge, and searching minds as they strove to answer deep questions. They were not afraid to be questioned by younger minds, they stood up ably in debates with academics, and they devoted their whole being to understanding the message of the Bible. And if you read the magazines of the time, you can see the debates about these topics echoing through the pages.

But I have to say that my impression of our community is that it has withdrawn somewhat from such activities of recent years. Many of the writings of that time have been, if not exactly put on a list of proscribed books, at least little referred to today, and sometimes even actively attacked. I must admit there is much in these writings I personally disagree with: but I would like to say they have the freedom to express their ideas. I might mention:

- *Balancing The Book: A Study Of Biblical Paradoxes* by Bro. Len Richardson.
- *What is His Name* by Bro. AD Norris.
- *The Drama of Creation* by Bro. Alan Fowler.
- *The Last Days* by Bro. Harry Whittaker (and many other of his books).
- *The Holy Spirit And The Believer Today* by Bro. AD Norris.

Some of these are topics I am reluctant to address in the pages of this magazine, and there are other topics that almost invariably cause opposing views to be forcefully brought forth: some of the many aspects of the reconciling work of Christ,³ or alternate views of some passages of Scripture.⁴

Questions from the young

Invariably, many young people, whether baptized or not, struggle with their understanding of God and His message in the Bible. Perhaps this is a topic I will deal with at another time, but we have to be very careful not to brush their concerns away, nor to supply answers without reflection or understanding, just because they are the ones that have been traditionally offered. After all, most of us can remember being disappointed in some of the answers in their youth: let us not perpetuate this!

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. A somewhat simplified statement of an obviously complex legal situation, as can be seen by looking at the Wikipedia article on "School prayer".
2. There is an interesting paper, "Minimizing Liability for Defamation" By the Australian AACE, which makes similar comments.
3. I am reluctant to use "atonement", its use in the New Testament is so rare (Rom 5:11 in the KJV, not at all in the RSV, rarely in the other modern translations).
4. Does the reference to water in John 3:5 refer back to Isa 44:3-5, or to water baptism, for example?

Exhortation

The Greatest Commandment

Rules

Rules... Do they “rule” or not? Some people exert their independence by resisting some rules. Sometimes it’s part of the teenage “coming of age” and can include pushing away from parents to a degree, sometimes to make separating feel less difficult. This can apply whether going off to college or moving to their own place. Most would agree that rules help society function in a safer and fairer manner. While young children and teenagers may push their limits and test rules, many actually are glad to know they have certain limits. Also, we see that rules are important in sports and on the road as we drive our cars.

The dictionary definitions of commandment include: an important rule given by God that tells people how to behave. It can be the act or power of commanding or something that is commanded; especially: one of the Biblical Ten Commandments. Some of the many synonyms for commandment include: behest, charge, command, decree, dictate, direction, directive, do, edict, imperative, injunction, order and, interestingly, instruction and word.

“And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:28-31).

Let us briefly consider the meanings of a couple of the words used here, from Vines Bible Dictionary.

“Hear, O Israel”. Jesus starts his answer with this phrase. “Hear” means to both listen and understand and sometimes to both listen and obey. This can sometimes result in gaining knowledge, as when Moses listened to God.

“With all your soul” Soul means self, life, person, or heart. It can signify the essence of life... breathing, the breath of life or a moving creature that has life. It is the part of a person that perceives, reflects, feels and desires.

“Neighbor” can mean one living in the same land or dwelling around. It can also have a more comprehensive meaning including helpfulness, sincerity.

The Answer

Jesus’ answer goes back to the Old Testament: *“Listen, Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You must love the LORD your God with your whole mind, your whole being, and all your strength” (Deut 6:4-5 NET).* The phrase “Heart and

being” used here mean, in a sense, mind times two. “Heart” in Scripture is not about emotions; it’s one’s thinking and “mind”. In the New Testament it usually means spiritual insight versus brainpower. “Strength” here implies with your whole body. In addition, to there being only one true God perhaps this verse also speaks to being one with His family in the Millennium.

Comparing this Mark passage it to the Matthew account *“On these two commandments depend [or hang] all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt 22:40)*. Note that “hang” is the same word as was used at the crucifixion in Acts 5:30: *“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree”*.

“...Jesus said to [the man], ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God’” (Mark 12:34). Jesus was brilliant again in his response resulting in, as one commentator (Bro. Purkis) put it, “the law and the prophets become suddenly alive and personal to this man.” Jesus’ answer was, of course familiar to the man as it was quoted from Deuteronomy. Let’s consider some of the related sections of that book. A summary of Deut 6: 4-9 might be that we ought to pass God’s commandments on to the next generations, to read them, discuss them, and to do good to all men.

“You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other... Acknowledge and take heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other” (Deut 4:35,39).

“Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always... If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow — to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways and to hold fast to him, then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you. Every place where you set your foot will be yours...” (Deut 11:1, 22-24).

These are positive things to help guard against distraction and idols in all their forms. “Walking” speaks to how we live our lives. “Holding fast” is like a strong cleaving such as marriage teaches us. It’s testing our desire: is our desire more towards the world or towards God’s Kingdom?

The Good Samaritan

The other time Jesus teaches about the greatest commandments is in the account of the Good Samaritan that is recorded in Luke 10, starting at verse 25. With *“What shall I do”*, the man seems focused on trying to earn eternal life, or justification by works. Jesus focuses him on what the man knows and said: *“What is written in the Law?”* He answered correctly, v.29 *“But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’”*

The answer is the story of the Good Samaritan. A brief summary: A man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho and he was robbed and beaten. Later a priest, and then a Levite, came along and passed him on the other side of the road. However, the Samaritan when he saw the man had compassion and looked after him with great care and kindness. The Samaritan cleansed and bandaged the wounds.



He did all he could to ease pain and provide comfort, and he went even further by paying the innkeeper for current and future expenses.

Jesus then asks the expert in the law: “*Who was the neighbor?*” The expert said, “*The one who showed him mercy.*” And Jesus said to him, “*You go, and do [keep doing] likewise*” (Luke 10:37 ESV). The neighbor to be loved

is someone in front of you who needs help, and you have means to help him ... and how? With all the compassion and means that you have.

Some feel that we are all like the injured man, in need of help. We can also be like the Samaritan and help to heal others using God’s word. The Samaritan represented Jesus as he was neighbor to the sinner in need. I think that we can fulfill both roles at different times in our lives. And like ourselves, the Samaritan was regarded as a Gentile by the Jews, and would certainly be not regarded as a neighbor by a devout Jew. In general, Jews would refuse to be helped by Samaritans: but this Jew was in desperate need of help, as we are by Jesus.

By saying the expert in the Law was “*Not far from the kingdom*”, Jesus gave a great response, likely inferring that the others were farther, though they may have thought they were guaranteed salvation by their way of life... let’s not make the same mistake of being presumptuous in this regard.

Regarding the “neighbor” part of it: “*Do not seek revenge [or avenge] or bear a grudge against anyone among your [own] people, but [you shall] love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD*” (Lev 19:18 NIV).

The law and the prophets

In Matt 7:12, as part of Jesus’ explanation of asking/seeking/knocking... “*So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*”

Concerning “*Do to others as you would have them do to you*” (Luke 6:31). This is in the same paragraph as “*bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*” And a few verses later: “*love your enemies, do good to them...*”

“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal 5:13-14). Of course this also goes back to Moses and the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20.

There are implications for us based on the Greatest Commandment(s): We are to be doers of the word which requires a whole-hearted commitment to the things of God and not being “a forgetful hearer” as per James 1:22-27... Let’s be encouraged to:

- 1) Participate and help out with some aspect of ecclesial life.
- 2) Pray every day. I would hope this is an easy one to accomplish.
- 3) Try to read and/or study God’s Word every day... a little more difficult:
- 4) Fulfill the two great commandments and other things will fall into place.

Adhering to these great commandments requires sacrifice. We learn about love from our relationships with people, and true love involves making sacrifices. Should we, or could we, be making more sacrifices for our Heavenly Father? What about for our families in Christ? In the last section of Mark 12 is the poor widow’s offering. She made a large sacrifice by giving all she had in life. Giving all she had to live on was not just generous, but involved faith that she would find food and other needs later.

What else can we do out of love for God? We can help strengthen the faith of our brothers and sisters... teaching, speaking... also just being present, being available, and making time to have a short chat. We can write the commandments on the tablets of our minds and talk to our children about God and our hope. We can let our light shine, whether it through how we conduct ourselves or through direct preaching.

God sees the quiet, often behind-the-scenes works... as in another section of Mark 12, the teachers of the law liked to be noticed, be greeted, and make lengthy prayers out of self-aggrandizement. All of us can contribute. God’s ecclesia is made up of many very different members with different gifts and experiences. Our physical body wouldn’t be very productive if it was made up only of big toes!

We are to walk in His ways

This past week I drove by a rural church, which had a billboard that read “Exercise daily, walk with God”.

“You have declared today that the Lord is your God, and that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his rules, and will obey his voice” (Deut 26:17).

“Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law... to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Josh 22:5).

We are not to follow idols, we are to have no idols, American or otherwise.

“...and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but ... go after other gods that you have not known” (Deut 11:28)

“... they abandoned all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made for themselves metal images of two calves; and they... served Baal” (2Kgs 17:16).

We must give our all, including all our hearts.

“...obey the voice of the LORD your God, ...keep His commandments and His statutes that are written in this Book of the Law, when you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut 30:10).

“With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!” (Psa 119:10).

The end of the matter

In conclusion: to be a faithful person one must start with a strong love for God. Every first day of the week we remember our Lord and Savior Jesus, and his loving sacrifice for us, in accordance with his Father's will. Let us recall that God's commandments are in both the first and the last books of the Bible. The last book says *“Here is call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in [or the faith of] Jesus” (Rev 14:12 ESV)*. In order to please our Heavenly Father, we must try to do our very best to follow after the example and commandments of His son.

In Deut 5:1 we recall that Moses called together all of Israel and said *“Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.”* Eccl 12:13 is a brilliant summary: *“The end of the matter... Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”* And finally, in Rom13:9, the many commandments including: not committing adultery, not murdering, not stealing, not coveting, and many other commandment, are all summed up in this: *“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”*.

Dave Kerr (Baltimore, MD)

Special Invitation

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

You, your family, and friends are invited to the
41st annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 25-31, 2016.

Bro. Kyle Tucker: “A Study in First-Century Christianity”

Bro. Todd Fazekas: “The Lord Saves”

Bro. David Styles: “The Forgotten Stories: Lessons from the End of Judges”

Contact Bro. Brad Rek at 330-609-6957, or brad.rek@gmail.com.

Visit our website at www.abrahamicfaithgathering.org for more.

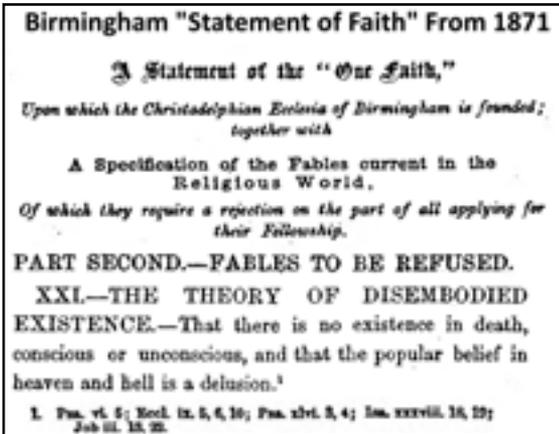
First Principles

Doctrines to Be Rejected, (11) Death State

Doctrine to Be Rejected # 8: “That man consciously exists in death.”

This can be positively stated as: **At death, man ceases to exist in every respect. He has no consciousness in death.**

Traditional statements and Biblical proofs



The early statement of faith by bro. Roberts, in 1871, has a similar thought:

21. The Theory Of Disembodied Existence. — That there is no existence in death, conscious or unconscious, and that the popular belief in heaven and hell is a delusion.

The following Biblical references are cited:

“For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise?” (Psa 6:5).

“For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun... Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest” (Eccl 9:5,6,10).

“For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth” (Isa 38:18-19).

“For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest... Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave?” (Job 3:13,22).

“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.” (Psa 146:3,4).

Note: the last reference was given in 1871 as Psa 46:3-4, and this was repeated in at least the 1868 through 1877 versions, but *The Declaration* has the (presumably) correct version.

Declaration 1867 (First Edition)

C.—That in the death state, a man, instead of having “gone to another world,” is simply a body deprived of life, and as utterly unconscious as if he had never existed. Corruption will destroy his dead body, and he will pass away like a dream. Hence, the necessity for “resurrection.”

Other references often cited are:

“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one

thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity” (Eccl 3:19).

“For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish” (Psa 49:17-20).

Daniel has a remarkable statement on this subject. It is especially significant because of the use made of the same idea in the New Testament. His prophecy contains this reference to events in “the last days”, when God will show His power once more in the earth, at “a time of trouble such as never was

“Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:1-2).

It is noticeable that all these references are from the Old Testament, and as we showed in the last article, (#11, *The Tidings*, May 2016), in fact a belief in the immortal soul is absent from the Old Testament.

New Testament

The situation is different when we look at what the Jews of Jesus’ time believed, particularly the Pharisees and Essenes¹. It is clear that there was much effect of the Greek or Hellenistic views on the Immortality of the Soul, and such beliefs appear to have become part of the beliefs of many Jews by the time of Christ. So to be realistic, we need to turn to what Jesus and the apostles taught about the afterlife. The teachings about resurrection at the return of Jesus is clear, but as we know from many of those around us, this does not preclude the idea of some sort of afterlife.

To answer this question it is essential to understand what the attitude of Jesus, and the Apostles after him, to the writings now known as the Old Testament. The facts are clear and beyond question: they all accepted “the law, the psalms and the prophets”, as the inspired Word of God. They quote from them constantly in support of their preaching; they never contradict or cast doubt upon any Old Testament passage, but rather seek to draw out the true significance of what was written. You would thus expect the New Testament writings to agree in their

teaching with the Old, and so it proves. Here are a few examples.

There had been a tragedy in Galilee. Roman soldiers had killed a number of Jews in a religious riot. Some Jews came to Jesus to tell him of it. His response is very significant. Do you think, he asked, that those Galileans who died were greater sinners than all the other inhabitants of Galilee, because they suffered such a fate? Not at all, he said, but I tell you this:

“except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:1-31)

Now “to perish” in the Bible means just what it means to us: to cease to exist with no suggestion of survival. There is no escaping the teaching of Jesus here: all mankind will perish, unless they repent. This is just like Psalm 49: man is like the beasts that perish, unless he understands. Here we have the first hint of the answer to our question, “Understand what?” It has evidently something to do with repentance.

Jesus also agreed with Daniel, who had declared that *“many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake” (12:21)*. This is how John’s Gospel records his saying:

“. . . The hour is coming, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his (Jesus’) voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29).

Look where the dead are: “in the tombs” (“sleep in the dust of the earth”, Daniel); they “come forth” by resurrection (“they awake”, Daniel); they come forth either to life or to judgement. The harmony between Jesus and Daniel is complete; the Lord is endorsing the teaching of the Old Testament on this important matter of the place, the state, and the fate of the dead.

The Apostles uphold the same teaching. John, in the best-known verse of the New Testament, declares:

*“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, **should not perish**, but have everlasting life” (3:16).*

The words we have emphasized are frequently ignored, but there is no escaping the verdict that those who do not “believe on” Jesus (in the way the Scriptures explain) will perish, that is cease to exist.

The Apostle Paul has the same message. Writing to the believers in Ephesus, he tells them that before they came to know and believe in Christ, they were *“without Christ having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph.2:1,2)*. This is a shattering saying. It tells us plainly that if we are not related to God through Christ, in the way He requires, we are “without hope”. How precious must be that “understanding” that can save us from such a fate!

The Apostle James tells his readers not to make too confident assertions of what they will do at some future time. You never know what will happen tomorrow, he says; and then adds:

“What is your life? For ye are a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14, RV).

Daniel’s description of the dead as “sleeping” in the grave is reproduced by the Apostle Paul. The believers at Thessalonica were mourning the death of some who had believed in Christ:

“I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep (he means in death), that ye sorrow not, even as the rest who have no hope.... For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven... with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise. . .” (1Thess 4:13,16)

Notice what this passage is saying: the faithful believers who have died are “asleep”; those who do not believe have “no hope”; Christ personally (note “himself”) will descend from heaven; and the faithful dead will rise—from the grave of course. Paul uses the same idiom elsewhere: *“After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep” (1Cor 15:6)*. Here are basic teachings which are found throughout the New Testament. They are foundation truths of the Gospel.²

Conclusion

The “proof texts” used by many are ably dealt with in the book *Wrested Scriptures*.³ However, I believe we need to be careful about relying solely or too heavily on the Old Testament references when we consider this topic. The certainty of the doctrine is not in dispute: but to rely on specific passages from Ecclesiastes is somewhat dubious. For example, we cited Eccl 3:19: but you can glance down and see *“Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” (Eccl 3:21)*. In the context of the book, what is this whole passage teaching? Only that Solomon was searching for the meaning of life, and having difficulties in coming up with a satisfying answer.

So as we work our way through these “doctrines to be rejected”, we need to be careful to avoid merely repeating the standard Christadelphian “proof texts”, without considering the background to the New Testament. There was a long time, 400 years, between the close of the Old Testament and the time of Jesus.

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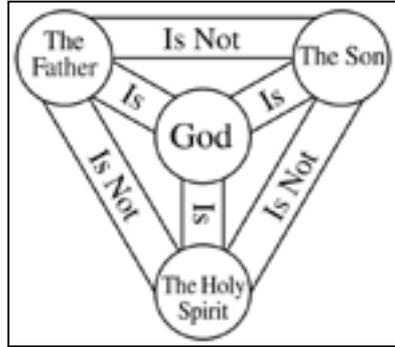
Notes:

1. “Two independent doctrines of the afterlife for the individual emerged in Judaism, probably during the last two centuries BC: the doctrine of the resurrection of bodies and that of the immortality of souls. In time (probably the first century AD), these two doctrines became conflated so as to yield the theory that, at the end of days, God will resurrect dead bodies, rejoin them with their souls, which never died, and the individual human being, reconstituted as he or she existed on earth, will come before God in judgment.” Cited from the Wikipedia article on Christian Mortalism, May 2016.
2. Cited from “After Death, what?” By Fred Pearce (Pamphlet available from the Christadelphian office and on-line.)
3. *Wrested Scriptures* (Ron Abel) July 2011, edited by John Allfree.

Why I Left the Roman Catholic Church (2)

The Trinity and worshipping images

In the Nicene Creed, we say "... We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son *he is worshipped and glorified...*" However, this is wrong — it is not Biblically correct. The Trinity is not a Biblical concept, but a pagan one. It is not a term mentioned in the Bible, and even the concept cannot be found in the Bible. The idea of the Trinity came about three hundred years after the Bible was written:



Encyclopedia Britannica has these interesting points on the Trinity:

Neither the word trinity nor the explicit doctrine appears in the New Testament... the doctrine developed gradually over several centuries and through many controversies. Initially, both the requirements of monotheism inherited from the Old Testament and the implications of the need to interpret the biblical teaching to Greco-Roman religions seemed to demand that the divine in Christ as the Word, or Logos, be interpreted as subordinate to the Supreme Being. An alternative solution was to interpret Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three modes of the self-disclosure of the one God but not as distinct within the being of God itself... It was not until the fourth century that the distinctness of the three and their unity were brought together in a single orthodox doctrine of one essence and three persons¹.

In commenting on this reference it has been noted: "Britannica is confessing that the formulation of the doctrine was heavily influenced by the interpretations of Greek and Roman religious thought. Why should pagan thought even be considered when interpreting scripture? Again the answer is clear: the development of the doctrine was a compromise. A compromise of paganism into Christianity at the expense of Biblical truth,"² God said: "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD,*" (Deut 6:4); and: "*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,*" (Exod 20:2). God did not say "we" are your God.

Jesus is the Son of God (Luke 1:35). He was flesh, or man. Jesus is not God, nor is he co-equal with God. Consider the following points:

If he were God, he would not have to be raised by God (Acts 3: 26; Gal 1:1), or exalted by God (Phil 2: 9) — he could do it himself.

In addition:

- In Mark 1: 12-13, and Matt 4:1-11, *Jesus is tempted*, but remains sinless. In Heb 4:15, Paul writes that Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses because he was “*in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*” Now, James (1:13) writes, “*God cannot be tempted.*” Since Jesus was tempted, yet God cannot be tempted, then Jesus cannot be God.
- God cannot die, because He alone has immortality, and God cannot be seen by men (1Tim. 6:16); however, Jesus died (Rev 1:18), and he was seen by men. Therefore, Jesus is not God.
- “*The child [Jesus] grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him,*” (Luke 2:40). If Jesus was God, why did he have to become strong in spirit and filled with wisdom? Would this Jesus/God not automatically be filled with the spirit and wisdom of God? Again, Jesus said: “*I can of myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous, because I do not seek my own will but the will of the Father who sent me,* (John 5:30). And, “*when you crucify the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father taught me, I speak these things,*” (John 8:29). These statements show that Jesus and God are two distinct beings, God is the Father, and Jesus is the Son of God.

The head of Christ is God (1Cor 11:3); Jesus is subject to God (1Cor 15:27-28); and Jesus stated that his Father is greater (John 14:28). Therefore, Jesus is not co-equal with God. This truth is put clearly thus: At his second coming:

“Christ will overcome all spiritual rulers, authorities, and powers, and will hand over the Kingdom to God the Father. For Christ must rule until God defeats all enemies and puts them under his feet. The last enemy to be defeated will be death. For the Scripture says, ‘God put all things under his feet.’ It is clear, of course, that the words ‘all things’ do not include God Himself, who puts all things under Christ. But when all things have been placed under Christ’s rule, then he himself, the Son, will place himself under God, who placed all things under him; and God will rule completely over all” (1Cor 15: 24-28).

Jesus shared our human nature, our flesh: Jesus was “*made of woman*” (Gal 4:4);

*“...concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and **declared to be the Son of God** with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead,” (Rom 1:3-4);*

*“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, **he himself likewise shared in the same**, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death” (Heb 2:14);*

*“...who **in the days of his flesh**, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears **to Him who was able to save Him from death**, and was heard because of his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. And having been perfected, he **became** the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him” (Heb 5:7-9);*

“Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and this is now already in the world” (1John 4:2-3).

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is not God. The Holy Spirit is not referred to as Lord in the Bible. The Holy Spirit is called Helper, Comforter, Spirit of Truth in John 14: 16-18. The Holy Spirit is not worshipped in the Bible. These beliefs came from man, not God. The Holy Spirit is not the “giver of life”, *God* is.

In Gen 1:7, the Bible reveals that God gives Adam life, not the Holy Spirit: *“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being [soul].”* God did not need the help of the Holy Spirit to give life.

The Holy Spirit is God’s breath, spirit, or power, or word (Gen 1:2; Psa 33:6-9) - whatever God says, is accomplished (Gen 1:3). God’s spirit/breath/word is both intelligent and powerful. We are told that in the beginning, “wisdom” accompanied God in Creation (See Prov 8:22-31). In Prov 8:1-3 and 9:1-3, this wisdom is personified as a woman (“her”, “she”). Thus, the Holy Spirit is not a “being” separate from God, to be worshipped or glorified; rather, it is God’s word or power going forth from God.

In my considerations of the Trinity, eventually my inability to fully understand it was excused because the doctrine is a “mystery”, yet in the Bible, there is no “mystery” about who God is or what God’s plan for Creation and salvation is: The mystery is fully revealed in Jesus the Christ.

*“And he said to them, ‘To you it has been given to **know the mystery** [secret; hidden truths] **of the kingdom of God**’” (Mark 4:11);*

*“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of **this mystery**” (Rom 11:25);*

*“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, **according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations**” (Rom 16:25-26);*

*“...**this is a great mystery**, but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32).*

Throughout the New Testament all “mysteries” have been revealed. It is in fact, our duty to know these mysteries by reading the Scriptures.

Worshipping images:

God said:

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image - any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor worship them.

For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Exod 20: 4-6).

“Do not make idols or set up statues, stone pillars, or carved stones to bow down to; I am the LORD your God,” (Lev 21:1).

From this, I understand that it is a sin against God to even make images or statues. In Roman Catholic Churches, we have many statues and images, some set upon pillars: Jesus on a cross, statues of Mary, images of people the Roman Catholic Church has said are saints, etc. We are taught to use the rosary beads, which include the image of Jesus on the cross, for prayer, and in many rosary booklets, are taught to kiss the cross as a sign of reverence/worship. At Melancthon, Ontario, a stone pillar was recently erected, and a statue of Mary was set upon it for reverence, worship and prayer. “Worship” in Hebrew means “to bow”, and is translated as bow, bow down, obeisance, reverence, fall down, stoop, and crouch.

As we enter the pew, we kneel, or bow, to the tabernacle. According to Scripture, this is a sin.

At Mass on Good Friday, we worship the carved image of a cross. From pages 306-307 of the 1996 Sunday Missal, it says: “...The one carrying the cross stops, lifts it up, and sings the invitation: This is the wood of the cross. All respond: Come, let us worship. After each response all kneel and venerate the cross briefly in silence as above... they make a simple genuflection or perform some other appropriate sign of reverence according to local custom, for example, kissing the cross. In a few words he invites the people to venerate the cross and then holds it up briefly for them to worship in silence. After the veneration, the cross is carried to its place at the altar, and the lighted candles are placed around the altar or near the cross.” According to God’s Word in the Bible, I sin when I participate in this Easter ritual.

God warns us through *“Your carved images I will also cut off, and your sacred pillars from your midst; you shall no more worship the work of your hands; I will pluck your wooden images from your midst...And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury on the nations that have not heard” (Mic 5:13-15):* Because: *“the hour is coming and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24).* Thus, we are told not to use any type of image in our worship of God; we must worship God in spirit. We are told to fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2Cor 4:18).

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Notes:

1. To be found on the Internet.
2. *How Can Three Be One? An Analysis of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, by Stephen David Snobelen, Sign of the Times Publishing, 1986, page 31.

Jonathan the Faithful Prince (23) The Greater Picture

The last visit



As David departed from his friend and the two of them could no longer see each other, they must have wondered how it was that God would reverse this situation. How would David go from a fugitive in the wilderness to the king of Israel? David had been in the perfect position to become king — he had recently been brought into the king's family and the prince had clearly demonstrated that he was willing to give the throne to him. He had fought a number of battles with the

Philistines and had gained quite a reputation within and without the nation. But, instead of ascending to the throne or waiting until Saul had passed it to him, he was being driven further away from everything related to royalty. In fact, his life would soon be the exact opposite of how he would have expected it to be. He would live in caves, running from the king of Israel and surrounded by a band of discontents and debtors! How would God reverse all of what had been done and bring David back to the throne?

Yet regardless of the fact that neither of these men understood what God was doing and how He was working, Jonathan never let David forget that God had said that he would be king — therefore, he would be the king, no matter what happened. After this farewell meeting, in which the two men likely thought it was their last before the Kingdom of God, Jonathan and David were able to see each other once more. As always, though time was short and though they would have wanted to exchange stories with one another, Jonathan set David's mind on the future:

“And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth”
(1Sam 23:16-17).

Saul had been scouring the countryside looking for David, yet as soon as Jonathan sought to find him, he knew where to look. Just think of the danger that Jonathan encountered trying to do this — trying to depart from his father's camp without

Saul seeing him or realizing that he was gone! Nevertheless, Jonathan went to his friend, a visit which would be their last before he died — and throughout this final meeting, Jonathan “strengthened his hand in God.” Though David had been gone for months, Jonathan hadn’t changed. He was still that mentor who was focused on the things of the Kingdom and who would constantly bring David’s mind back to the things that were good. Thus, Jonathan’s words were again focused on the time in which David would be king. *“The hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel.”*

Truly, Jonathan did all that he could to prevent David from forgetting. He thought past all of the difficulties of today, and spoke to his friend about the glories of tomorrow.

Thus ends the story of David and Jonathan — throughout the rest of the record, the two men never see each other again. In fact, as the years passed, Jonathan followed Saul into battle with the Philistines and loyally gave his life in service to his father. Yet though Jonathan died on Mount Gilboa, David and Jonathan’s friendship lived on, because David never forgot the things which Jonathan had taught him and the example which Jonathan had left. Throughout the rest of his life, David thought about his friend, and as will be seen in a later chapter, he even fulfilled his promise to continue his kindness to Jonathan’s descendants.

But even more so, the friendship has not been forgotten because it was a type of a greater friendship to come.

Type of Christ

In the pages of Jonathan and David’s friendship, it can clearly be seen who was the leader of it all. Jonathan was the one who initiated all three of the covenants that the two men made with one another, he was the one who was older, he was the one who consistently helped David to think of the joy that was set before him. Jonathan was the mentor, Jonathan was the one who gave of himself, and Jonathan was the one who loved David as his own soul (1Sam 20:17).

Throughout the record, this love that Jonathan had for David became a type of the love that the Lord Jesus Christ has for us. Just notice some of the similarities between Jonathan and the Lord:

- In David’s distress, Jonathan promised him that he would do whatever he needed him to do (1Sam 20:4). The Lord Jesus Christ has given us the same assurance (John 14:13).
- Just before his life was threatened, Jonathan made a new covenant with his friend (1Sam 20:16). The Lord Jesus, the same night on which he was betrayed, made a new covenant with his followers (Mark 14:22-25).
- Jonathan, in love for his friend, almost lost his life at the hands of a man who was set in ritual and self-service (1Sam 20:33). So it was with the Lord Jesus. In love for his friends, he lost his life at the hands of the Jews (John 15:13-15).

The same ritual-bound man who sought to kill Jonathan, also slandered him by calling him illegitimate — the son of a *“perverse and rebellious woman”* (1Sam 20:30). Once again, this was endured for the sake of his friend. In the same way,

the Master was called the same thing by the Jews — illegitimate, yet he endured it so that he might complete his mission, all for the sake of his friends (John 8:41).

As David was about to go off alone into the wilderness, unaware of what challenges might face him, Jonathan was able to say to him “Go in peace,” because he could assure David of the eternal hope which he had. The Lord Jesus has said the same to us — though we know not what trials we may have to endure, the Master has told us to “Go in peace,” knowing that we have an eternal hope (John 14:27-28).

These acts of love on the part of Jonathan beautifully come together to show a shadow of the love that the Lord Jesus had and still has for his disciples. But far and above all of the other connections, there stands one which truly shows the greatness of the love which Jonathan had for his friend, and in turn, magnifies the Lord which the Lord Jesus has for all of his followers — Jonathan’s love for David was greater than any other love that David had ever experienced:

“I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women”
(2Sam 1:26).

Jonathan’s love surpassed anything that David had ever felt or seen — such was its quality of selflessness, humility, and patience with a man who needed to have his hand “strengthened” in God. Yet so it is with us. Truly, can it be said that we have ever experienced any love greater than the love which the Lord has for us? As he said:

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

That love which Jonathan had for David was simply a shadow of the things which were to come in the love which the Lord Jesus Christ has for us. As we have meditated upon Jonathan’s love and as we have seen his fervent attempts — even to the point of risking his own life — to lift up David’s mind to the things of the Kingdom and the things of the future, may we too see the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, and may we remember that this isn’t simply a story in a book, but it’s a story that involves us too. As recipients of that love of the Lord, it is our goal to seek to give him that level of love back — to seek to be selfless, to be full of humility, and to be full of trust in what he is working every day.

Thus, the story of Jonathan not only demonstrates to us the quality of the love of the Master, but it also sets a standard for us. May we, as we ponder these lessons, seek to love as he did, and ultimately, even be willing to give up our lives for the sake of the brethren — because truly, when we learn to love like that, we won’t merely be loving like Jonathan, but we will be loving like the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Note, with this separation of David and Jonathan, the series is concluded. Perhaps one day the account will be completed, ending with the tragic death of Jonathan on Mount Gilboa. [Editor].

The New Testament Church (11) Ecclesias Develop

Study to be quiet

The phrase “study to be quiet” sums up in a sense the Christian way of life. The New Testament word “study” means to put all your energies forward — it does not mean to read books. It means apply yourself. Conybeare and Howson say that the nearest equivalent you can get in English is to say: “Make it your ambition to be unambitious.” It is a play on words. You are to strive to lead a quiet life, to work with your own hands, to go about your daily business. So what Paul was really saying to the Christians of the first century was that they were called not to do spectacular things, but to be something; to be the kind of people that God wanted them to be. To live the Truth out in their daily life. To lead a quiet life of faithfulness and service and love towards others, so that men would be able to see, by the quality of their life, what changed people you were since becoming members of the Christian religion.

This was the task of every Christian. It was the task of some in apostolic times to go and preach the gospel in far-off lands. It was the task of some to have the ministry of healing and miracles. It was the task of some to be “prophets” in the ecclesia. But it was the task of everybody to be “examples of the believers, in word, in conversation, (which means your manner of life) and in godliness.” And in the quiet life of the everyday to display the love and the warmth and the enthusiasm of men and women called to be saints.

We go back to “the love chapter” and we put it into its context in Paul’s writing. *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (1Cor 13:1).* Now, why did Paul write all that? It was not intended as an “essay” on Christian love. What he wrote it for was to try to drill into their minds that this is what Christianity is all about. There they were, arguing about which was the more important of all the Spirit gifts. They have to write to Paul and say; “Look, give us your ruling about it, Apostle Paul, we would like to know. There are some of us who think that the gift of speaking with tongues is the most important, and there are others who say that it is the gift of prophecy, or miracles.”

Paul has to say to them in effect, “This is the way you ought to look at it. If you really want to serve the Lord, then the gift of prophecy is the most important, because you are able to instruct others, and to help others in their understanding; so if you want to have a gift, aspire to prophecy first of all. All these more spectacular gifts, such as speaking with tongues, are well down the list, right at the bottom. They do not really matter very much.” So, “covet, the best gifts,” is his advice. If you want to serve the ecclesia, if you want to be one of the serving brethren, this is all right, as long as you want it for the right motives. There is

work to be done, there are offices to be held, but I am going to tell you something that is more important than all of it, and show you a more excellent way.

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (1Cor 13:1-3).

All these other things, he says, are not really important. They have their place, — and their part to play in the building up of the church. They were necessary, and God bestowed the gifts. But these were not the lasting qualities, for *“but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away” (1Cor 13:8)*. There are some things on the other hand, he says, that shall never cease. And these are the work of God’s spirit in men’s lives throughout all ages, and they apply today as well. These are the things we must keep central, always central, in our thinking about religion; in our thinking about what we like to call “the Truth”; in our thinking about the Bible, and Christianity, and the New Testament church, these are the central things. “Faith, hope and love, these three, and the greatest of these is love.”

The evolution of the Church’s attitudes: The adaptability of the Church: Jerusalem to Rome

WE have already seen in our previous studies development taking place even in the apostolic church. As numbers increased, the organization to meet the needs of the increasing number became necessary, and the small group of enthusiasts in the Jerusalem Ecclesia who shared everything in Acts 4 became an organized body having various parts and functions. It became necessary to have more specialization in the work as seen, for instance, in Rom 12:6-13. By the second century this simple and necessary organization of the work appears to have grown already into a rigid hierarchical system. Though still simple, as we move into the second century, it is nevertheless much more advanced than in the New Testament church. By the end of the third century we clearly have a world-wide highly organized church and early in the fourth century, in the Constantinian period, something very similar to the Roman Catholic system had emerged, which survives to this day in various forms: Roman; Anglican; Greek Orthodox; and so on. Perhaps it was inevitable that with the massive increases in numbers there should be a dilution of the primitive simplicity of Christianity, or perhaps it was the dilution of the original simple gospel by philosophical considerations which led to the increase in numbers.

There were certainly some adaptations made to meet the changing situation of the church in New Testament times and some of these we have already seen. The first church at Jerusalem was clearly Jewish in origin and in membership. It still gravitated to the temple and to the synagogue. So in Acts 3:1 we find Peter and John going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, and it would seem probable

that they were going up there to take part in the temple service. Later on, when Paul and Barnabas took the message out to the Gentile world they always seem to have gone to the synagogue first of all. Acts 13:5 and verses 14-15 are examples of this. We have already looked from another angle at the Council at Jerusalem in Acts 15, which was clearly making new decisions in the light of the changing circumstances brought about by the influx of Gentile Christians. And in the pronouncement made by “the apostles and elders with the whole church” which we have looked at already we see the transitional period brought to a head in the declaration sent out to all the churches for their obedience.

“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well” (Acts 28:15).

A transition period

Now it seems to me that the church here, in this Council at Jerusalem, is meeting a new situation and devising a form of words, which is a compromise to help their Jewish brethren over a difficult period. It was a transition period. The church was having to adapt to the idea that the Gentiles, to whom Paul was preaching the gospel of grace, were not in any sense nurtured in the Laws of Moses, but because this offended their Jewish brethren, who had been brought up in the rigid obedience to the Law, this pronouncement was made, I think, as a temporary measure. That is to say, it would not appear to have relevance at all to the days in which we live.

I would not think that even the Apostle Paul later on would have viewed this as being a good definition of the Christian position in regard to the Jewish law. It was simply a transitional judgment for the time then present which the church decreed, and the apostles and elders and all the brethren felt to be a necessary thing. I know that from time to time brethren still argue whether or not we should eat black pudding or blood sausage and things of that kind, but I do not think, personally, it has anything at all to do with us today. Paul has made it clear that whatever is sold in the market place you can eat, “asking no questions for conscience sake.” The only overriding principle in the matter is the good of one’s brother — the fear of offending (or “causing to stumble”) one of one’s brethren.

This is just one example of the way in which the attitude of the Christian church grew and adapted to its changing membership. It is only by realizing that there was this shift of emphasis taking place, this changing attitude, that we can understand the apparent inconsistency of Paul:

- “Taking and circumcising Timothy,”
- Associating himself with the Jews who were under a vow,
- Appearing to be anxious to prove himself to be a good law-abiding Jew.

Because this is what they were urging on Paul: they were saying, “There are all these Jews here and they have heard that you do not keep the Law, and that you are saying the Law does not matter any longer. Now prove to them that you

are a good Jew and put yourself at charges with these men and associate with them in their vow.”

Because he wanted to win the Jews to hear his message, Paul was willing to do this thing. In fact, of course, he was putting into practice his own teaching, when he said *“For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; (1Cor 9:19-20)*. But let us be clear that when Paul adapted himself, he always compromised from strength. He always maintained what was right. For example, he declared the true position to be that *“an idol is nothing in the world and that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is nothing” (1Cor 8:4)*. We know that, he says, so start from there. Now having accepted this as the true position, he could begin to bend over backwards to accommodate the Jewish brethren who have doubts and difficulties over this matter.

There is a lesson here for us. We must always maintain the principles of the truth. We must always maintain what is clearly and Scripturally laid down. But having maintained that, we must always be prepared to meet the other man half way in the difficulties that arise among us. Many of our ecclesial problems, I believe, have arisen from a refusal to compromise. We have made some kind of great virtue out of being uncompromising. But compromise from strength, from righteousness, from principle, is a good thing. We should seek unity and not uniformity, and this is what Paul was doing. He wanted to gather in as many as possible, so he held his own position, but was prepared to bend towards others in order to help them, if it were possible, to see the truth that he had to proclaim. However, when the church compromised its principles then it became “the mother of harlots” as we well know.

The same adaptability to changing conditions is seen in other ways and these I want to go on to now, because we have already looked often enough at the way in which the church had to deal with the Judaizing element.

We have seen previously the establishment of ecclesial officers in the New Testament and the growth of the church organization to a quite complex order of ministry. From very simple beginnings when the apostles were clearly the leaders appointed by the Lord Jesus himself, and Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples and they listened to what he had to say, we go on into later New Testament times when we have the whole order of bishops, elders, evangelists, pastors, teachers, deacons, ministers and so on which we have already studied. There was a development here, a necessary development, and this is the point. All these evolved in order to adapt to the changing conditions; increased numbers; the growth of the church; and the bringing in of the Gentiles: That was why these things took place.

The lesson we may take is that although necessary developments take place, the danger is that they may accelerate and go too far. Thus, from a reasonable development in New Testament times, in which the various ecclesial offices and officers were clearly developed, and wisely so, under the guidance of the apostles, we only have to move into the second century to find the breach

growing between the clergy and the laity, and the bishops taking more power and riches to themselves with the growth of the church hierarchy to which I have already referred.

Len Richardson

Reflection

Giving the Bible its Present Shape

If someone asked you where to find the Bible verse that begins, *“For God so loved the world...”* you’d probably know he was asking about John 3:16. If you had a Bible, you could find it for him in no time. But there was a time when no one could find a single verse in the whole Bible. There was no John 3:16, Gen 1:1, or any other verse because the Bible wasn’t divided into verses or even chapters. Worse yet, there were hundreds of years when there weren’t even any word divisions. Punctuation marks, capital letters, and even vowels were omitted. In those days, if Genesis had been written in English, it would have started:

“NTHBGNNNGDCRDTTHHVNSNDTHRTH.”

You would have had to spend hours or days just to find your favorite verse.

Words were divided by Jesus’s time, but vowels weren’t used in Hebrew Old Testaments until the sixth century AD. Gradually, capitalizations, punctuation and paragraphing worked their way into the Old and New Testaments. But Bible chapters such as we have today didn’t come into being until the 13th century. They were the work of Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

For the next 200 years, the Bible, now divided into chapters, continued to be copied by hand. Then in 1448, Rabbi Nathan startled the world by breaking the Old Testament into verses. The New Testament wasn’t divided into numbered verses until 1551 when a French printer, Robert Estienne, did the job. He was planning a study Bible that would have side-by-side columns in three translations when he got the idea. He was so rushed for time he decided to do the dividing on a trip from Paris to Lyons. Some people have suggested he did the work on horseback and his sometimes awkward divisions resulted when his “jogging horse bumped his pen in the wrong places.” Yet, with a few exceptions, Estienne’s divisions provide us with the verses we have today.

So just as number of people were used in writing of the Bible over a period of centuries, it was the contribution of countless scribes, hundreds of years, and three men in particular — a Catholic archbishop, a Jewish rabbi, and a Protestant printer — who turned:

“NTHBGNNNGDCRDTTHHVNSNDTHRTH”

Into

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen 1:1).

Miller Clarke, “Campus Life”, March 1981, p. 40.

So What Now?

We have all acknowledged that ecclesias are in trouble (Both *The Tidings* and *The Christadelphian* recently summarized our plight in separate articles)¹. A decline in interest and attendance (the rate of decline of 1% a year in the UK is mirrored both in parts of our community and nearly all other denominations)², in quality teaching, in financial donations, and a combination of apathy, divisiveness and resignation plagues some of our community. This is in combination with a secular culture that relentlessly pounds us with messages that subvert the fundamentals of our faith. If ever there was a time to “hold fast”³, this is it. Here are some thoughts that may help us redirect our paths in the days ahead:

Let us not be surprised

One fundamental of our faith, that we quickly forget and underestimate, is how pervasive the mind of the flesh is. Our minds are literally “*hostile to God*” (*Rom 8:7*). Our flesh loves apathy, divisiveness and the notion of quitting. It thrives on being comfortable and predictable, and loathes us asking if what we are doing is meaningful or productive. Hebrews describes us as being “*hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*” (*Heb 3:13*). This is not a surprise for students of Christ’s teachings: We know we love excuses and ritual. Doing the same, unsurprising things brings comfort, even if we know it is a worthless exercise. Talking about our inclination to mediocrity and doing the perfunctory, these characteristics of ourselves, rather than being ambushed by them, will encourage us in the days ahead. More than anything else we should reminded what Peter tells us: “*Beloved, do not be surprised at the...ordeal among you...as though some strange thing were happening to you*” (*1Pet 4:12*).

Let us not give in to fear or paralysis:

We have divinely inspired instructions as to how to conduct ecclesial endeavors. The key now, knowing we are in a crisis of our own making, is not to give in to panic, blame or despair. This is exactly what the serpent thinking thrives on. We know the difficulty we’re in. What else can we do, but the things of Scripture? **But far more deliberately and intentionally**, let us recall the passion, the “inexpressible joy” we all had in days past.

Using Scripture to arbitrate our decisions is the most comforting component of our problem; our decisions will be moderated by God’s divine ideas.

We have the clear direction from Acts 2 about the nature of our meetings: praising, singing hymns, fellowship, studying, breaking bread, continuously meeting together, and giving charitably.

Let us accept what cannot be changed:

There is no resolution to the reality that our community exists on a large continuum.

Some have far more liberal views than others. Some are more insistent on traditional (conservative) influences. It has been this way for generations. Both

of these mindsets have their strengths. Both have, at their roots, a desire to serve meaningfully. This will not change.

Remember the first order of our faith: *“Whatever else happens, conduct yourself according to the gospel of Christ” (Phil.1:27)*. Spending time improving in this area, as opposed to trying to change what will not change, will improve virtually every aspect of our lives.

Let us be clear minded:

The best thing about Christadelphians is this: we sincerely want to know what God wants of us. We have doggedly searched Scripture to get insight into this. And, having seen the light of Scripture, we are equally doggedly trying to sustain this message for ourselves, and transmit this message to the public and our children.

As we’re told the first ecclesias *“gladly received his word”*. Let’s remember the purpose of the ecclesia: **that those in attendance will leave the meeting more desirous of serving the God of Scripture**. Anything less is a failure of purpose. If people are coming away uninspired, harried, bored, unengaged, untaught or ignored, we have not met our ecclesial obligations. .

Watch out for the self-fulfilling prophecy: “Look, ecclesias are in trouble. Nothing is working, so let’s not try something new because we know it won’t work.” Or, “No one’s engaged with the meeting. Hmmm, this must be the time when ‘the hearts of many will grow cold’. We shouldn’t expect success.”

Let’s call things by their real names: If something is wrong, let’s address it. If something is not wrong, but we’re describing it as evil, let’s also discuss that. One example comes from an older brother who tells us: when radios first came out there were those who castigated them as evil. Things that are new or modern are not the problem. Anything can be used for ill. Any modern media can be an example of this. All the more reason to have informed discussions about everything.

Let us improve the quality of our teaching:

Instructional theory is very pointed in this. The **best way to improve learning is to improve the quality of teachers**. It follows that solid Biblical instruction fosters good Bible students.

- Remember the Apostle’s assertion: *“I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue” (1Cor 14:19 NIV)*. This means Paul thought teaching and learning trumped the gift of the Holy Spirit! Someone with the Holy Spirit might be encouraged temporarily, but someone who has a deeper understanding of our calling has a far more sustainable asset. Incredible! Even 2000 years ago, ecclesial leadership promoted the importance of good teaching.
- Hold brothers and sisters who teach to a high standard of accountability. If they were not clear in their lesson, tell them. If they babbled, tell them. If they weren’t prepared, tell them. Politely, discreetly, and gently, of course.

Conversely, be specific about their strengths.

- Insist that those who speak/teach have a message for everyone, not just to those interested in the minutiae of Scripture.
- If we are doing anything for the public, let's be sure it is the highest quality possible.
- It is better to 'do less, better', than to do the same things we've always done.
- Variety and audience engagement are solid predictors of instructional success: Let's be prepared to think out of the box. Start, immediately, doing things that show that our audiences are engaged with the class or presentation. Stop doing anything, immediately, that doesn't show evidence our audiences are actively interested in what we're teaching.
- In classes, insist that 'discussion time' (instructional theory states discussion is up to 50% effective) is equal to or greater than 'speaking' (only 5% effective!) time. This will do several things:
 - It will provide an opportunity for everyone to participate.
 - It will reduce our community's dependence on the hierarchy of those who are continually called on to speak.
 - It will distribute the learning, and responsibility, to more people.

Let us remember whose job it is to be transformed: ours.

Remind ourselves: It is about all of us individually coming to the God of Heaven. The ecclesia is sometimes a vehicle to this. Sadly, this vehicle can, at times, have flat tires. But that does not eliminate the responsibility of those who ought to be seeking. If our greater ecclesia is in trouble, that's the time to roll up our sleeves and work. It is also the time to individually, read, pray and reflect more.

We can spend our whole lives lamenting what we don't have. Ecclesias and the brotherhood are made up of the flesh. Spending time being critical of the ecclesia is all too easy. Thoughtful reflection on what we do ecclesially, and being more inclusive, can't help but improve the status quo.

Ecclesial difficulties do not eliminate our responsibility to hold fast to the high calling. Ecclesial difficulties do not cancel out our personal obligation to be those that seek first the Kingdom of God.

It really is about families:

Parents, devoted to their children, are a transformative force.

It is about strong families. Parents who are intent on living up to the high calling are the core of any ecclesia. Expecting sustainability from any other source is misguided.

Keeping our children close to us, talking to them about Scripture, reading together and living as examples are the first order of our future. Remember the proverb: *"but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame"* (Prov 29:15).

It is a myth that children need lots of peers. It is a myth that giving children much time on their own builds independence. It is a myth that giving children

unsupervised access to computers builds in them responsibility. Having parents that care about them, monitor them and hold them to account is far more likely to build the strong, independent decision makers we need children to grow into.

Conclusion

We live in a time like no other. We've never had such wealth, ease and comfort. Never in history has it been that most households have a relatively struggle free, leisure-oriented existence (and yes, we recognize many of us still have profoundly difficult trials).

This perennial comfort and ease is a perfect setting for the alarm, apathy and disengagement that we now see. It is the perfect setting for **the active deception of the flesh**. It provokes us to throw up our hands and surrender to resignation and paralysis. This throwing up of our hands is the work of the flesh. We must master it.

We can't help but reflect on Scripture to guide us in the goals we set in the days ahead. There is a reason that Scripture says "*I, even I, am your comforter...*" and "*I am the Lord, there is none else*". This is Scripture's way of saying there is no other meaningful purveyor of guidance, comfort and direction than God's word. Our flesh wants us to forget this. Let us embrace the true light of Christ's teachings and passionately "*draw near to God*" and "*resist the devil*" of fear, confusion and resignation.

Dana Kohlman, (Calgary, AB)

Notes:

1. *The Tidings* editorial "Our Self-Inflicted Problems", December 2015, and *The Christadelphian* article, "The Big Conversation", January 2016
2. A cursory search of "church attendance decline" in N. America confirms this.
3. There are at least 10 passages in Scripture that use the phrase "hold fast".

One in Seven, and Seven in One

Ephesians 4:1-16

This passage is about unity, and especially the unity of the One Body of Christ. It has been suggested that it represented at least an outline of an early "statement of faith", organized under seven headings (vv 4-6):

- 1) One body
- 2) One Spirit
- 3) One hope
- 4) One Lord
- 5) One faith
- 6) One baptism
- 7) One God and Father

The passage is presented below, from the New International Version. This presentation is intended to highlight certain features of the passage, e.g., how the whole passage (vv 1-16) revolves around, and explains and amplifies, the

seven-fold “unity” of the One Faith (vv 4-6). These seven “unities” provide the ‘first principles’ which define the members of that Body, or — to put it another way — the foundation upon which the One Body of Christ, like a tabernacle or temple, is constructed.

Taking note of the highlighting, as we read and reread the passage, helps us to keep in mind how intricately connected the Word of God is. We learn how helpful it can be, as we read the Bible, to think of context, and to seek out the threads holding together words and ideas. If the Bible is the Word of God, which alone gives life, then it deserves every bit of careful attention we can muster:

- Verses 4-6 give the briefer outline of the seven unities. These verses are shown below in all capitals, with the key word or words in each item shown also in italics, bold, and numbered 1-7 — e.g., **ONE BODY (#1)**.
- In the rest of the text (vv 1-3 and 7-16), the parenthetical numbers (#s 1-7) link the preceding word or words to the relevant number of the seven “unities” in verses 4-6. For example, in verse 1: **Lord (#4)** points out that “the Lord” is a verbal link to #4 of the seven “unities” (“one Lord”, in verse 5).
- Throughout the text, the asterisks (*) highlight phrases that emphasize the oneness or unity itself, e.g., “bond” (v 3), “fill (finish or complete) all things” (v 10), and “joined” and “held together” (v 16).

Paul seems to give the passage two separate titles; they are found within the text itself. They are also shown in all capitals, italics, and bold: **THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT** (v 3), and **UNITY IN THE FAITH** (v 13).

- 1) As a prisoner for the **LORD (#4)**, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the **CALLING (#3)** you have received.
- 2) Be **COMPLETELY (in all, altogether) (#7)** humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.
- 3) Make every effort to keep **THE UNITY* OF THE SPIRIT (#2)** through the bond* of peace.
- 4) THERE IS **ONE* BODY (#1)** AND **ONE* SPIRIT (#2)** — JUST AS YOU WERE CALLED TO **ONE* HOPE** WHEN YOU WERE CALLED (#3) —
- 5) **ONE* LORD (#4)**, **ONE* FAITH (#5)**, **ONE* BAPTISM (#6)**;
- 6) **ONE* GOD AND FATHER OF ALL, WHO IS OVER ALL AND THROUGH ALL AND IN ALL (#7)**.
- 7) But to each one of us **GRACE (#2)** has been given as **CHRIST (#4)** apportioned it.
- 8) This is why **GOD (#7)** says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and **GAVE GIFTS (#2)** to men” [Psa 68:18].
- 9) (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the depths of the earth?
- 10) He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to **FILL* [finish, complete] all things.) (#7)**
- 11) It was he who **GAVE (#2)** some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

- 12) to prepare **GOD'S (#7)** people for works of service, so that the **BODY (#1)** of **CHRIST (4)** may be built* up
- 13) until we **all (#7)** reach **UNITY* IN THE FAITH (#5)** and in the knowledge of the **SON OF GOD (#s 4,7)** and become mature* (*complete, perfect*), attaining to the whole measure of the **FULLNESS (#7)** of **CHRIST (#4)**.
- 14) Then we will no longer be **INFANTS (#7)**, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.
- 15) Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in **ALL THINGS (#7)** grow up into him who is the **HEAD (#4)**, that is, **CHRIST (#4)**.
- 16) From him the whole **BODY (#1)**, joined* and held together* by every supporting ligament, grows and builds* itself up in love, as each part does its work.

We shall now consider certain features of the seven “unities” of verses 4-6. We begin by taking, together, the first two.

The One Body (#1) and the One Spirit (#2)

Notice the word “bond” in verse 3; this means, literally, joint (or ligament: cp v 16). Two concepts exist here, side by side:

- 1) First of all, a *body* (like the One Body of Christ: 1Cor 12, etc.), held together by joints and ligaments and muscles, receiving oxygen and food by the intricate working together of its various parts, and receiving outside stimuli from eyes, ears, nose, etc. — in short, every part joined together and working together for the good of the whole. Also, in Ephesians 4:13,14, the “body” of believers is spoken of as “growing up”, i.e., from the “infant” stage to a maturity of stature and judgment and strength.
- 2) Then there is a *building* (cp Eph 2:11-22), also held together by “joints”: Jews and Gentiles “joined together” or “framed together” (2:21) as a “temple” in which God will dwell. This concept is revisited here in Ephesians 4: notice the “building up” in verses 12,16. A building has a lot in common with a human body. It has an outer frame which holds the structure together, gives it unity, and protects vital elements inside. As one example of this simile, Ecclesiastes 12 describes a human body as it ages, and compares it to a house deteriorating.

Notice also, in the outline, that “body” comes first (the One Body being the **first** of the seven unities), and that “one body” is immediately followed by “one Spirit”. What does this remind us of?

“The LORD God formed the man [Adam] from the dust of the ground [adamah] and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gen 2:7).

The first Adam was made of dust, and that’s what he would have remained: a lifeless body if the LORD had not breathed into him the *spirit*, or *breath*, of life! This is a picture of the giving of life, and a prophetic picture of the resurrection of the dead.

For us, right now, it is also a picture of a spiritual renewal of life. A person, or even a collection of people, is nothing more than a “body”, without spiritual life, until and unless the Spirit of God is breathed upon (and into) them. The Body is dead without the Spirit! What does this mean? Does it mean, as others might say, that we must have the Holy Spirit “gifts” before we are truly alive in Christ? Of course not. But it *does* mean that we must have God’s Spirit before we can live spiritually. And that’s a key thought in this section of Ephesians 4.

In another New Testament letter it is written: *“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works (or deeds, or actions) is dead”* (James 2:26).

James says that we are not saved by faith alone. Our “actions” must work together with “faith” to make the “faith” complete (James 2:22). A primary example in James 2 is Abraham: he believes and then God considers, or reckons, him to be righteous because of his faith in what God has promised. But even Abraham was called upon to *do* certain things: he had to leave his nation and family, and follow God’s leading to a strange land. And he had to be prepared even to offer his own special son when God requested it. So: *“You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone”* (v 24).

This explains what is happening here in Ephesians 4. The “one body” means nothing as a ideal all by itself. It is given unity, and purpose, when the parts of the One Body, its various members, join together and work together to “build up” one another as the body (or the Temple) of God’s Son.

Thus, in the first century, the “unity” of the Body was achieved by God’s Spirit working among the believers. How did this actually work?

- God’s Spirit, through Christ, was the means of conferring “grace” (signifying a “gift”) upon believers (v 7).
- The “gifts” were given (v 11), including the power and ability to be apostles, prophets, preachers, counselors and/or teachers.
- By this means, God’s people would be “prepared” for “works of service” (v 12).
- The only purpose of such service was to “build up” the whole body of Christ, in all its fullness (vv 12,13).

Now that sounds like the Holy Spirit gifts were really *required* before the Body could be brought together. And in some sense, they *were* required in the beginning. The Holy Spirit oversaw the writing and the preserving of the Bible itself, and demonstrated that it was a divine production. That was essential at the beginning.

But what about us? We plainly don’t have the Holy Spirit gifts among us in the same way today. However, we do have the results of the Holy Spirit, in what those gifts produced. We have the Bible, able to make us wise unto salvation, and able to encourage us by its teachings, stories, and personal examples, so that we may live lives of faith today. This is something never to be disparaged.

More than that: Even the Holy Spirit gifts, by themselves, did not guarantee that the Body of Christ would automatically grow and develop and produce fruit to

God's glory. It required faith and commitment and sacrifice by individuals, as well as the "gifts" themselves, in order for the Body to grow.

So that's the point today: we don't have Holy Spirit gifts of preaching and healing and prophesying. But we still have the Bible today, the most important result of those first-century "gifts". In addition, we *do* have — *all* of us have! — other "gifts", talents, abilities, interests and inclinations. These we may voluntarily use to serve God, and to build up the Body of Christ, the Temple of God. The question is: *Do* we have the faith and desire to put them to use?

The exhortation of verses 7-13 is that we achieve *all* the unities, and we build up the One Body, by identifying the gifts we each have, and by putting them to use. We might well ask, 'What gifts do I have?' Let's think for a moment, shall we? Every one of us has at least some of the abilities to be:

- Bible students, speakers, counselors, and Sunday school teachers;
- Gospel preachers, writers, and organizers;
- Accountants, musicians, singers and artists;
- Cooks, builders, maintenance people, maids, and janitors;
- Kitchen workers, sound recording engineers, and secretaries;
- Chauffeurs, listeners, caregivers, friends, visitors, hosts and hostesses;
- Contributors of money and other material resources; and
- Messengers and letter writers.

The list goes on and on.

Like the various parts of the human body, the parts of the Body of Christ can each play a role in helping the whole Body. That's the object.

That's why we start with the One Body (#1 in the text above), and then go immediately to One Spirit (#2). It isn't just about God's Spirit endowing us with abilities; it's about our "spirits", responsive to the call of God's Spirit, putting our abilities to use to help others.

The opening thought of unity led directly to #s 1 and 2 on our list of seven. Now we go to #3.

One Hope (#3)

Verse 1 urges the Ephesians to "live a life worthy of your *calling*", and (note the verbal connections) verse 4 tells them that their "*calling*" was to embrace the "one hope".

"One hope" encompasses much of what Christadelphians, particularly and uniquely, believe. We have only to think of the Book of Acts, where "the hope" is variously defined as:

- the "good news of the kingdom of God" (8:12),
- the "hope in the resurrection of the dead" (23:6), and
- the "hope of Israel" (28:20).

A true, or Biblical, "hope" needs, at the very least, to take into account these

three items (resurrection, the kingdom, and Israel). If one's "hope" doesn't deal with these things, it can scarcely be the *one* hope.

And if we find ourselves, in this life, "hoping" too much for some *thing*, money, a gift, a job, a relationship, some "pleasure", more than for God's Kingdom, then we may have to stop and ask ourselves, *'What is my one hope?'*

One Lord (#4)

We notice that Paul speaks of himself as "the prisoner of the *Lord*" (v 1), and this ties in well with the Psalm 68 quotation about "captives" in verse 8. Those who are "captured" by the *Lord* Jesus Christ become his slaves, or servants. But this is no burden; it is a blessing. As his servants, they receive "gifts" to enable them to carry out his will. This includes the "grace" of sins forgiven (v 7). Who would not gladly become a prisoner and a captive so that he or she might receive the forgiveness of sins?

In the first century, the "grace" or "gift" may have included special Holy Spirit powers that enabled the Lord's servants to perform wonders and miracles. And for us, the talents and abilities (and material resources) we have been given are the Lord's blessings upon us, and the means by which we can show our gratitude to him for those blessings.

Interestingly, #s 3 and 4 on our list are actually another way of saying "the gospel of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12):

	... Is equal to...
The "one hope"...	... "the kingdom of God"
The "one Lord"...	... "the name of Jesus Christ"

Using the gifts that the Lord Jesus, and his Father, have given each of us, we can do his work in the ecclesia and in the world. The purpose of this work is to help the One Body of Christ, in all its members, to grow together in faith and knowledge of the one hope and the one Lord. By this means, the "One Body", of which Christ is the head (vv 15,16), grows to a full maturity (v 13).

One Faith (#5)

The "one faith" is a belief, or faith, in that which is real: the kingdom of God and the work of Jesus Christ. But it is more than some kind of vague, nebulous "faith" (or reluctant consent) to what is *real*. It is, especially, a *real faith!* It is this sort of faith that will save us — not just *knowing* what is right, but a loving commitment to *do* what is right: a faith made perfect in deeds and actions. A "*faith*" which *does nothing is no faith at all!* All by itself, this passage, Ephesians 4, makes this plain:

- Those who have been "captured" by the Lord must live lives worthy of the eternal glory to which they have been called (v 1).
- They must, in *love* (the crucial ingredient), demonstrate humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance (v 2).

- They must make every effort to maintain the “unity of *their* spirits” focusing on the final goal (v 3).
- They must use all their gifts in “works of service”, to “build up”, and not to tear down, the body of Christ (vv 11,12).
- They must grow in faith and knowledge, and endeavor to become “mature”, and to help others to become “mature”, in Christ (v 13).
- They must “speak the truth in love”, and grow up into “the Head, who is Christ” (v 15). If there is no real resemblance between themselves and the Lord they profess to serve, then how can they be said to truly belong to him?
- Once again, all their effort must be directed to “build up” the whole body “in love”, “as each part does its work” (v 16).

One Baptism (#6)

The “one baptism” must relate to the method of “baptism”, which is by total immersion and not by sprinkling. Furthermore, it must be undertaken by those who are old enough, and mature enough, to know why they are doing it. And old enough and mature enough to make a real commitment, and to carry it out.

One key feature of baptism, explained by Paul in Romans 6, is that the act itself symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. In this simple ceremony, there is an enacted parable, in at least these three different ways:

- 3) A parable of a new birth (which suggests a new life and a new commitment);
- 4) A picture of the ongoing, day-to-day life of the “prisoner of the Lord”, making an effort to put to death the old man, and bring to life the new man in Christ; and
- 5) A prophecy of the future resurrection itself, when Christ returns.

All this, and more, is comprehended in the “one baptism”?

Sam Houston was a drunk and a carouser; he was also a fascinating orator, a brilliant politician and a great general — he led the fight for Texas independence and then worked to bring Texas into the United States. He was also a man of tremendous courage, and great wit and self-deprecating humor. When, late in life, he was baptized (into the Baptist Church), he remarked first of all that, if his sins were indeed all washed away, he feared for all the fish downstream when the huge numbers of sins reached them! Thereafter, and for the last years of his life, he devoted a large portion of his income to charitable purposes, telling anyone who asked that, when he was baptized, his wallet was baptized also. It is surely a worthwhile exhortation: When we are baptized, we should remember that our wallet or checkbook has been baptized also!

One God and Father (#7)

Our first question is: ‘Why didn’t this statement come first, instead of last?’ The BASF and other equivalent Christadelphian statements of faith start with “God”, and then go on to explain, step by step, what God’s plan for the world and man is.

The answer finally came to me, as I read this passage over and over: This seven-part statement is written, not from God’s perspective, so much as from man’s

perspective. In short, Paul's statement to the Ephesians does not start with God; rather, it starts with the body of believers, and progresses until that Body grows up into its Head (v 15) and becomes, in its maturity and fullness (v 13), the true children of the "one God and Father of all" (v 6). So even the order of Paul's seven "unities" is significant:

- 1) The "one body" — all of us — is only a collection of people, all sorts of people, *until*
- 2) The "one Spirit" is breathed upon us.
- 3) Then we become a living organism, with "one hope" in the future.
- 4) The "one Lord" becomes our Head, and
- 5) We develop and nurture our "one faith" in him and his kingdom.
- 6) The "one baptism" has set us upon a servant path: we have been blessed by God so that we can be a means of blessing others.
- 7) We spend a lifetime growing up in this divine family of the "one God and Father", who will ultimately, through us, be "all in all" (1Cor 15:28).

If the seven unities describe a process, how do we ever know when we are finally finished?

The story is told of an old man, an accomplished artist, who was applying the finishing touches to a bronze sculpture. Occasionally a truck would come from the art gallery in the city to pick up his latest work. Meanwhile he just kept filing, scraping and polishing every little surface of his masterpiece. "How do you know when it's done?" asked an observer. "I don't," came the reply. "I just keep working and working until they come and take it away."

This last statement is the longest of the seven "unity" statements:

"One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

It expresses two basic facts:

- 1) There is only One God; this is obviously fundamental: (a) Jesus Christ is not a second god, and (b) the Holy Spirit is not a third god.
- 2) The One God has condescended to become the One Father, first of a Son, born in the flesh of human nature, and then through him the prospective Father of a whole race of human beings, who have been lost in sin. By this means alone, and the path described (in this passage and others), the One God and Father has worked, and will work, to bring together in one family *all* those who believe in Him.

How do we achieve this? By embracing the gift offered to us, truly *believing* in the One God, and loving Him with all our mind and strength and substance. And then, by loving our neighbors as ourselves:

- If there is only One God and Father, then He has only one family, and that family must be *completely* (in all, or altogether) humble and gentle, patient, and bearing one another's burdens in love (v 2).
- They must work in His family to *fill* (finish, or complete) all of the Father's work in this world. It is not up to them alone, because the Father will work

with them. But they must never give up on that work (v 10).

- Tragically, there are those who are “born” into the Family of God, but who never grow beyond the “infant” stage (v 14).
- Those who are sons and daughters of the heavenly Father will always be seeking to “grow up” in His Family, to become more like the Head of that Family, and the Head of their Body, Christ (v 15).

“From him (Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (v 16).

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Joins

The power of a joint is that it brings the parts together effectively. When broken its real purpose is destroyed. Joints show union, not division. They are a complex mixture of tendons and sinews that bind the various parts of the body together. Individually the parts cannot be compared with the whole body; the whole is much greater than the sum of its individual parts. But the parts contribute to the identity assumed by the whole; it is this to which they belong. It is through joints that the body is extended and enhanced.

What strength, power and vitality the joints provide for our bodies. Think of a musician’s or sportsman’s needs for supple joints to enable their various skills to be demonstrated. How much of everyday life depends on the effective use of our bodily joints to perform necessary tasks. And when the joints are inflamed with rheumatism or swollen from arthritis, the whole body is affected. The strength or weakness of the body can be measured by its joints, particularly as we grow older.

Our Spiritual Joints: What we all appreciate naturally has a telling spiritual lesson. The Apostle Paul used this figure when he corresponded with the ecclesia at Ephesus. He wrote: *“We will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph 4:15, 16, NIV)*

Notice how the whole body identifies with the head, even Christ. As individual parts of his body, we belong to his greatness; we must blend with his lifestyle. But the parts are joined and held together. Through effective joints the parts show love for each other and contribute to the development of the well-being of the whole. Each part must be involved. There are no Sunday-only joints — this binding must be practiced every day.

Is this also the goal for our contribution across the joints in our ecclesia? We must all contribute. Are we a blessing to the body, or are we stiff and awkward, causing friction which impedes growth and love? If we are “out of joint”, then the operation of the body is impaired, its strength and power is reduced, and it becomes less effective — perhaps even immobilized.

The Christadelphian, 1995, p. 143.

Letters

Dear Bro John,

I would like to add some additional comments with respect to the article on the “Hope, Resurrection” in *The Tidings* February 2016 issue.

The central subject of this article is the resurrection — clearly, a first principle subject. The subject is resurrection, but some confusion is introduced by a listing of resurrections as recorded in the Scriptures; all of which, other than that of our Lord, resulted in a returning to corruption. These should not to be confused with the “resurrection at the last day” of which we all have a particular and vital interest (John 10:27-28), hoping to be participants in a successful outcome.

Bro L. G. Sargent, editor of “The Christadelphian” once wrote:

“The real question is not simply, “Who will be raised to judgment, and how and when?” It is, “What is the basis of relationship to God which renders men subject to judgment?” One view, that has led to continued controversy, was a legal interpretation of man’s relationship to God, which stated that only those in the covenant relationship would be raised for judgment, and discussion has centered on the consequence rather than on the principle which led to it.”

To write about resurrection and not address, in a doctrinal section of the magazine, the subject of the basis of resurrection, and the subject of judgment is to water down the purpose of the magazine.

I have lived all my 49 years in the Truth within a divided community in North America. I spent several years serving on the Pacific Coast Amended Reunion Committee. We are blessed with a successful effort on the Pacific Coast and pray that other efforts are likewise successful. However, for that to happen there must be clarity on what are clearly first principle subjects.

Our desire is to be in fellowship with God and His Son and to be part of that united community that is patiently waiting the return of the Master to establish his kingdom. We begin to realize our hope of eternal life when we are called to His Truth through the teachings of the Scriptures, and God’s calling to us to repent and submit to His will.

After a long time of separation, it is reasonable that assurances be provided between brethren, to put to rest any residual concerns and to dispel any myths that may have developed over time. This was true in the UK with the Final Statement, in Australia with the Carter Cooper Addendum and on the West Coast. In writing about the California unity effort, *The Christadelphian Magazine*, after a visit by three representatives of the CMPA to Pasadena, recorded this:

“The letter of assurance from the Unamended brethren which accompanies

the proposals and will form a permanent part of any reunion agreement states that ‘We believe that God holds a person liable to resurrectional judgement based upon his knowledge and understanding of God’s revealed will when his circumstances are such as to leave him without excuse.’”¹

Yours by Grace, James Land (Los Angeles, CA).

Notes:

1. Although this reunion proposal was never implemented as such, it reveals the principles of reunion and fellowship as identified by the CMPA.

Dear Brother Peter.

Thank you for your helpful article on Bible Study (*The Tidings*, March 2016). It is possible that some may have difficulty with the concluding statement at the end of paragraph 4 page 107. “Of course, the ‘commandments of Christ’ do indeed cover our walk in Christ, but they are referred to **only occasionally**”.

I was brought up in a Christadelphian family, when I was baptized in my late teens I was given Bro. R Roberts, “epitome of the Commandments of Christ” and told to put it in my wallet. It was in there for some 25 years and I cannot remember ever referring to it, so the point is made. However, the reason for this is that we were raised from childhood to know the Lord’s requirements, though we didn’t always necessarily follow them. For a person coming to Christ in today’s lack of Bible knowledge world, the epitome can be a great help.

Some years ago one of our members at Peterborough UK, had found a set of “commandments cards”, and suggested the idea that members could take one home every week. At that point we introduced the reading of a section of the epitome after the breaking of bread each week.

In my youth a brother said to me that the answer to the question, “What is Truth?”, is “The commandments of Christ.” I believe that is fundamentally correct.

The oft used words from Scripture “*the mind of Christ*” (1Cor 2:16) and also “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*” (Phil 2:5). This is the practical side of the commandments in daily discipleship and one is reminded of those who go into the kingdom in Matt 25:34 – 39. The reason for their approval was because they had the mind of Christ. This was an “intrinsic” virtue in their lives, the doing or saying of which had become part of their nature, and upon which the “divine nature” will be bestowed. It is ever helpful to remember that even Paul, who had the gifts of the spirit, struggled with the mind of the flesh, as we can see from Rom 7:15 – 23. He knew the requirements in the commandments, but the mind of the flesh was a hindrance. It is said we are “leaky vessels” and this is so even when the “intrinsic” has become our nature, it is this awareness that will frame us as it did those in Matthew 25.

Your Brother by Grace, Ernest Wisner, (Peterborough, UK)

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.

Dear Brethren,

In the March-April 2016 edition of The Tidings, in the article “Hope in Revelation”, I feel compelled to comment on the illustration used in connection with the paragraph on “Revelation is full of symbolism and eternal hope”. The article does not mention what the illustration purports to be and does not identify it in any way.



It does appear, however, to suggest the continuation of a disproven “urban myth” that prevailed some years ago that it was to do with the occult and “Satan” when in fact it is a registered trademark of Procter and Gamble that was developed in the following way:

In 1837 William Procter emigrated from England, and James Gamble emigrated from Ireland, both to Cincinnati, Ohio. On the advice of their father-in-law, William and James took on a partnership manufacturing candles and soap. The company, rather than just making generic candles, developed the brand called “Star Candles” which were shipped in crates on stern-wheelers operating on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. The illiterate stevedores learned to recognize the brand by the crude “X” denoting a star on each crate. After a while someone with an artistic bent marked more X’s on each crate and then a basic Moon in 1859. By the time the 1930s came around the Moon had been stylized to what we see in the illustration noted above. The number of stars were fixed at 13 for the original 13 colonies. This became the trade mark on all products until 2014 when it was changed due to the ongoing, but unfounded accusations placed against the company.

Having been employed by P & G some years ago, I do have at least one company publication which backs up my statements, plus there are many other internet posts which verify the above.

So, my question after all of this is what would prompt the use of any unidentified illustration in the magazine?

Your brother in Christ, Tom Alexander (Nanaimo, BC)

[Editor: I must apologize for any offence caused by the use of this illustration. It was just a random illustration of a symbol often associated with the book of Revelation, and I was not aware of the background.]

When we believe the truth, we must next obey the commandments. If we fail to do this, the truth is not only no advantage to us, but will be to our condemnation. A community in which the commandments of Christ are not obeyed is not the house of Christ, but the synagogue of Satan, however correctly the truth may be discerned as a theory.

(From the Original Ecclesial Guide, 1883)

Bible Mission

Guyana Visit 2015

Sis. Beth Stuchlik and I (Sis. Trudy Stuchlik) from the Ann Arbor Ecclesia (MI) embarked on an unforgettable journey this year on July 28th to August 20th. Our purpose was to help out with Guyana's Vacation Bible School, the triennial Caribbean youth conference, performing pastoral visiting and to hang out with all my friends. This year was my third year going. I was so blessed to be a part of the 2013 Truth Corps, which was my first eye opener to Guyana and to all the amazing brothers and sisters there. I would highly recommend Truth Corps for anyone and everyone. My mom had heard all the different stories for years and had wanted to go in person, so she hopped on the plane with me. She was looking forward to seeing a whole new land and culture.

Guyana offers a lot to anyone who would like to visit or do missionary work there. It has the Atlantic Ocean right there that you can visit; it has a stunning view of the sunset or long walks on the beach if you choose. The Guyana Zoo is so incredible, you get to see leopards, ocelots, tapirs and you will even be able to feed and pet manatees. You can enjoy the fresh fruit and amazing different juices there. Guyana is so cool, you get to see wild animals like parrots, geckos, monkeys and toucans right outside your door. We were able to enjoy the water park in Guyana with everyone that went to the youth conference, which was super enjoyable in the Guyana heat.

We were so blessed with the outcome of the Vacation Bible School in New Amsterdam. We started with 16 children and had 32 children by the last day. We started each day with prayer, our week's songs, a Bible lesson, questions, crafts,



lunch and some discussion, and then it was time to go home for the day. Our kids listened very well and had great participation, especially with the crafts. We were so blessed to have our favorite friend, Sis. Laurie Wilkenson help us out and provide us with some top-notch crafts that went along with our lessons. It was uplifting having the young people Brian Kellawan, Sonia Rupenarine, Imraz Khan, Susan Arjune, Sarah Khan, Gilbert Ndjekulu help from the Kilcoy and New Amsterdam CYC's, along with the children at the Vacation Bible school. We couldn't have done it without their help. We had a fantastic time being pampered by Sister Bibi and Brother Robin Rupenarine; they really make you feel at home, specially being able to hang out with tiny beautiful Isabella (Sister Dilean's baby daughter).



The Plegt Anker Ecclesia

Going out to the Plegt Anker Ecclesia was extraordinary! We did a CYC class out there. There were 25 young people who came from near and far to hear the classes on Micah 2 and 3, also a presentation on Shiloh and information from The Promised Land Youth Conference going

over Israel. Talking with the locals there we found around seven young people who want to take baptismal classes! It's amazing how many people you touch and influence on your travels there and how many new people you get to meet. It's worth going to see all the lovely, friendly faces!

We visited the widows from the Georgetown Ecclesia, Lorraine and her sister, Glancy, they are such a breath of fresh air, always full of such a joyful spirit for our Lord. Sisters' classes in New Amsterdam and Georgetown were most enjoyable, all the sisters had such great input.



Georgetown sisters over 90

Caribbean Youth Conference 2015 was huge with many new faces. It was on “Youth At The Crossroads”. The brothers, Tyron Smart and Ian Mcfarlane, had incredible classes that moved everyone. We had such a great group of people this year; it was a blast! Sis. Dawne Semple helped drive us around everywhere while we were there. She always amazes me with something new every time I go there. Dawne is such a big help to the ecclesias. She always wants to do more and more, helping as many in the ecclesia with anything she can. She is a wonderful lesson in how to use the gifts God gives us. I love having fellowship time with such wonderful and humble brethren and friends.

We had a tragic departure the day our flight was leaving this amazing place. We got a phone call saying Bro. Timothy Barnwell was in the hospital; he'd been in a serious car accident. He fell asleep in the Lord a few days later, and all I know is that I cannot wait for the Kingdom to see his



Sister's class

smile from ear to ear again. May God be with his family, fiancé and loved ones who he impacted by his life.

On our way back we were able to stop in Trinidad a little also. Bro. Sam Edwards' family took us in and they treated us to a marvelous meal on our travel home. It was an amazing feeling and I can't wait to go and visit Trinidad.

We must all always remember this: The CBMC desperately needs more and new faces for missionary work. We must have a willing spirit, especially in the Last Days. *Deut 31:6: "I will not forsake thee or fail thee."* *Isaiah 6:8: "Here am I; send me."* What really is our issue? What should our response be? If you find yourselves able, Guyana and Trinidad would love to entertain you.

Trudy Stuchlik

*And Thou Shall Love Thy LORD Thy God With All Thine Heart,
And With All Thy Soul, And With All Thy Might.
Thy Shall Love Thy Neighbor As Thyself.*

The following poem from: www.THISISYOURBIBLE.com

Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

How Hast Thou Spent Thy Time?

*I stood far from the judgement seat, head bowed in bitter shame,
within my brain words echoed long, for I had myself to blame.
I had seen the King standing there, beheld his Glorious face,
And just aside in joy supreme, my friend-saints saved by grace.*

*Engulfed in grief, alone, afraid, my pleadings all in vain,
The words re-echoed louder now and burned within my brain.
Come now! And so I went before the one I'd longed to see
Said angels standing near the throne; the Master calleth thee.*

*To give account of what I had done, one reason I was asked
Why I neglected things of God, and hurrying by them passed.
I then recalled how often I'd said, O dear there is no time;
I'll do it well another day; that had been my crime.*

*I answered not, dumb, full of guilt, but Jesus knew and said:
No time to do the things of God? No time to bow thine head?
No time to kneel in daily prayer or wait till him you heard?
No time to pause and meditate upon the riches of his word?*

*No time to visit poor and sick? No time to smile and give
The stranger in your gates, a word of hope that he might live?
No time to weep with those who weep? No time to joy with one
Whose victory over human sin was well and truly won?*

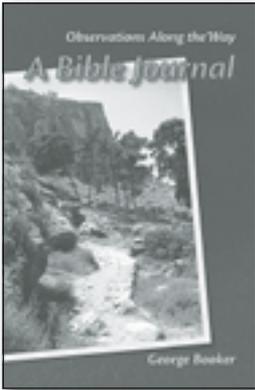
*But you had time for menial tasks and time to exercise
Your mental powers on common things, your home to supervise;
You found the time to read and talk of things that mattered not;
But things that mattered most to God, you spurned and just forgot!*

*That was enough, I heard no more, tho' words continued long;
My talents lay neglected there, to him they did belong,
But I had forgotten they were his and cast them on one side,
And now before the throne they lay. I then my face did hide.*

*The saints remained there on the right, safe in the Savior's cleft;
But I was thrust among the ones onto the Judge's left.
Those words which burned within my brain were verdict of guilty crime.
No place. No hope to righteous crown. For you, I have no time!*

*A dream you say? But oh how real; and what relief to wake
To find I still have unspent time, 'ere the judgement morning break.
For us the Savior scourged and scorned, up Calvary Hill did climb.
What shall we say, when he shall ask "How hast thou spent thy time?"*

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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.

BEDFORD, NS

We have a change of Recording Brother from me to Bro. John Ching.

Dale Crawford

CHICAGO, IL

The Chicago meeting has been extremely blessed with new members and transfers. We currently have three large Congolese refugee families, which have moved to our area over the past three years. We owe much thanks to the Pretoria, South Africa meeting for helping these families grow in faith and also with practical support. The transformation in the individual lives and our meeting has been incredible. Just a few years ago we were a shrinking light stand, and today we are vibrant, growing and acquiring a parking lot problem!

About two years ago, SIS. BRIDGETT (BAPEMACHO) RUHUNGO, a mom of six, was baptized, and she was followed in baptism by her daughter, BAWILL, and son-in-law, DANIEL RULINDA in Fall 2015. Last October, we were thrilled to welcome our third Congolese family, which includes Sis. Eliza Anisi, and her family of seven. They have been in the US for just over two years, mainly in Massachusetts. At the same time, two Iranian brothers settled in Chicago after gaining refugee status in Sri Lanka. Bre. Milad and Masih Bahadorzadeh have been enthusiastic new additions, having been trained by Bro. Tim Galbraith and Bro. Karl Baloch.

Recently, Bro. Robert Frisby relocated here from Mexico with his wife Sis. Gabby and three children. Bro. Robert found Christadelphians through a friend and has become very involved in our meeting. About the same time, Bro. Jamil Itani moved here from NM, and previously NJ, due to work. We thank our heavenly Father for our new additions and hope to grow together in our common faith as we wait for Jesus' return.

Dan Richard

HONESDALE, PA

We are all very happy to have welcomed back into active fellowship Sis. Nancy Kutch. Share our joy.

Stephen J. DeMarco

SUSSEX, NB

Thank you to Bro. Dan Demarest of the Meriden, CT Ecclesia for leading our Studies on "The Passover" at our 2016 April Study Weekend. Bro. Dan has inspired us all in a simple manner to visualize, participate in and remember the significance of the Passover...it was a very spiritually uplifting weekend.

Paul Baines

Thoughts on the Way:

Constraining Love

“The love of Christ constraineth us” (2Cor 5:14, KJV).

Today we witness a baptism, an act quite familiar to most of us — so familiar, in fact, that it may be difficult to recall the wonder and awe with which we ourselves submitted to it. Why do we do this?

The Scriptures give several answers. We are baptized:

- Because it is commanded (Matt 28:19,20);
- Because, being no longer ignorant of the call of Christ, we now know what is required of us (Acts 17:30,31);
- Because rejection brings punishment (John 12:48); and
- Because baptism represents the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 6:1-4).
- But, most of all (and lest we forget), we should be baptized because of one paramount fact: Christ loves us!

“The love of Christ constrains us” — ...not just his power, not just his holiness, and certainly not just our fear of him. But Christ’s love for us is the motivating force that brings us to the water. Christ’s love, and God’s love:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son” (John 3:16, KJV), and

“...delivered him up for us all” (Rom 8:32, KJV).

Such a love frightens us with its intensity. It is the fervor of emotion that is, somewhat imperfectly, demonstrated by a father’s love for his child — a pitying, sympathetic, compassionate love that knows no limits and makes no conditions

“As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;” (Psa 103:13).

“The love of Christ constrains us.” The Greek word “sunecho” is a combination of two roots: “syn” (with) and “echo” (hold, keep — with connotations of firmness and protection). Christ’s love “compels” (NIV) us, and “controls” (NET) us, but these translations imply that he are held and kept and moved along perhaps against our will. Love does not do this against our will. Christ’s love holds us and keeps us and protects us, with the firm hand of a father or an older brother, walking with us every step of the way — reminding us along the way that we are sheltered and cherished. Love does all this.

We are not so much forced or shoved as we are drawn and helped and supported, by an appeal to our inmost selves, the better “angels” of our natures. Whatever we do for God and His Son (as if we could truly do anything for them!) must be done out of love. No other motive can, in the final assessment, have any meaning.

Our love must reciprocate that of the Father who first loved us. Our devotion must echo Christ's devotion. Christ's love constrains us...

"...because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2Cor 5:14b,15).

We hear, so often, do we not, that baptism is a "death"? And death sounds so painful, so fearful, so final — as, in fact, it can be! But this baptismal "death", with all it implies, is not an end; it is a beginning. It is a joyful, loving, grateful response: 'I give up my old life freely, because my new life in Christ — even with the trials and hardships that may come — will be so much better.'

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

Our obedience in baptism, then, cannot be just an intellectual agreement to certain facts and principles. But it must be, finally and foremost, the emotional commitment of our whole beings to the revelation of God's amazing love through Christ. If life were a hand of poker, we'd take a look at the cards that God has dealt us through His Son, and we'd take every chip we have, and everything else we could lay our hands on, and we would go "all in". We would want everything to be riding on this one hand we are holding, because we would see that it could not be beaten!

However, the Almighty God, who spans the heavens with *His* hands, does not need our money and our possessions. They all belonged to Him before we ever staked our puny, temporary claim to them! And the Creator of the universe needs no temple of wood or stone made with *our* hands — how presumptuous can we be! The cattle on a thousand hills are His already; we could not "give" them to Him, no matter how hard we try.

One thing, and one thing only, remains ours exclusively, the "treasure" that can never be His until we offer it to Him, in rapturous response to the miracle of His love made flesh to die for us. Listen, He is asking now:

"My son, my daughter — my child," He calls, "give me your heart!" (Prov 23:26).

George Booker

The love of Christ compels us to live a life of service, dedication and self-denial. A proper appreciation of the atonement leads us to serve and obey God, not out of fear of punishment or hope of reward, but out of love and appreciation for what was done for us.

Yes, it is certain that we long for the redemption of this mortal body; but as we mature in our understanding of the atonement, we seek immortality, not as a personal benefit only, but so that we might fully glorify God.

Gary Burns, Richmond VA. The Tidings, 2000 p. 390

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable. Send all submissions to kathytidings@aol.com

JUNE, 2016

17-19 New York Metropolitan Sisters' Retreat, The Homewood Suites, Lancaster, PA. Speaker is Sis. Cadi Phillips (Moorestown, NJ). Her topic is, "The Importance of Words." For registration, please contact: Sis. Averil Ferguson at 718-877-6616, e-mail adferguson922@gmail.com.

30-July 5 Calaveras Family Bible Camp Calaveras Big Trees State Park, Arnold, CA. Contact Bro. Brian McDonald at 626-335-3787 or bmcDonald@mcDonald-printing.com.

JULY, 2016

2-10 Mid-Atlantic Bible School, Shippensburg, PA. The speakers are Bro. Ron Kidd (London, ON), "A Journey of Life in a Wilderness of Death" (Adults), and "Building for the Future (Prophecy of Haggai)" (Teens); Bro. Dafydd Jenkins (Cardiff, Museum Place, UK), "Prophets and Kings" (Adults), and "Getting to Know My Lord" (Teens); and Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch North, New Zealand), "Gabriel — Messiah's Evening Angel" (Adults), and "The Spiritual Habits of the Saints of God" (Teens). This information will also be available on the MACBS website www.midatlanticbibleschool.com.

9-16 Manitoulin Family Bible Camp The speakers are Bro. Andrew Bramhill (Birmingham, Shirley, UK), and Bro. David Billington (Brantford, ON). See the website for details www.manitoulinfamilycamp.com.

10-16 Southwest Bible School at Schreiner University in Kerrville, TX. The speakers this year are Bro. Roger Lewis, "The Four Faces of Christ in the Gospels" (Adults), and "The Spiritual Habits of the Saints of God" (Teens); Bro. Wilfred Alleyne, "The Book of Beginnings" (both); and Bro. David Jennings, "For Who Hath Despised the Day of Small Things" (both). Registration forms are available on the Bible school website, www.swcbs.com.

16-24 Midwest Bible School held at Trine University, Angola, IN. The speakers and their subjects are: Bro. Jesse Adair (Canada), "Judas Iscariot"; Bro. Matt Norton (Australia), "The Tabernacle in the Wilderness"; and Bro. Tim Morgan (UK), "Arise and Build." For registration information,, contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 44943 Yorkshire Dr., Novi, MI 48375, phone: 248-462-5740, e-mail: mike.live@gmail.com, or visit www.midwestbibleschool.com.

23-30 Christadelphian Bible Camp, Manitoulin Island. Theme: "... even so we also should walk in newness of life." The speakers and topics will be Bro. Bill Link (Baltimore, MD): "The Righteousness of Faith: Paul's Letter to the Romans" and Bro. Shane Kirkwood (Sydney, Australia): "John the Baptist — The Lord's Best Man". More details on www.christadelphianbiblecamp.ca. For registration, contact Bro. Mike Keene at mikesharon.keene@gmail.com or phone 613-353-6599.

23-30 Eastern Bible School **New Location This Year** Franklin Pierce University, Rindge, NH; Theme: "Let Us Consider One Another to Provoke unto Love and Good Works." Bro. Dennis Bevans (Baltimore, MD): "Jonah and Nahum: Christ's First and Second Advent" (adults), and "Philippians: Christ Our Everything" (teens); Bro. Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD): "Peter: A Living Hope" (adults and teens); Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA): "Family

Life Lessons from Genesis” (adults), and “Ecclesiastes: Lasting Happiness Can Only Be Found with God” (teens). For registration information contact Sis. Cindy Nevers at 18 Sibley St., Auburn, MA 01501, or cindynevers@verizon.net.

24-30 Western Bible School at Menucha Conference Center in Corbett, OR. The speakers are, Bro. George Booker (Austin Leander, TX): “Freedom and Assurance of Glory”; Bro. Cameron Beeler: “Our Kingdom Lives”; Bro. Jeff Paggi *(Verdugo Hills, CA): “Second Principles of the Bible Guiding Us on the Way.” For more information and registration see the website: www.menchabibleschool.org, or contact Sis. Rachel Launchbury: rachel.launchbury@gmail.com, or 503-702-6138.

31-Aug 6 Idyllwild Bible School at the Idyllwild Pines camp in Idyllwild, CA. The speakers and topics for this year are: Bro. Wilfred Alleyne (Handsworth Birmingham, UK): “Learning from the Lord”; Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto Church Street, ON): “Esther: Thou Art Come to the Kingdom for Such a Time as This”; and Bro. Simon O’Grady (Tawa Wellington, New Zealand): “Daniel Narratives.” Idyllwild Pines is a rustic camp in the San Bernardino National Forest in the mountains above Palm Springs. The camp is at 5,200 feet elevation, and is quite dry and dusty. There is a lot of walking required on the campus, with a few hills. The Bible School is considered fairly “casual” due to the camping nature of the school. To register, or for more information, go to www.californiabibleschool.org, or e-mail Bro. Jeff Gelineau at: jeffgelineau@gmail.com.

31-Aug 6 Rogue River Bible School Speakers: Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Australia), “The Life of Noah”; Bro. David Wisniewski (Brant County, ON), “The Honor of Kings — Searching Out the Parables”; and Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI), “Forgiveness.” For registration information, contact Sis. Pat Posey at pat1posey@gmail.com.

AUGUST, 2016

20-26 Winfield Bible School will be held at Winfield, BC in the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia. Our speakers this year will be Bro. Roger Long (UK): “We have found the Messiah”; Bro. Richard Morgan (Canada): “Malachi” and Bro. Joseph Palmer (USA): “Philippians”. Registration: Winfield Bible School, c/o Dan Fuhr, 4401 Westview Drive, Vernon, BC, Canada V1T 9B2 or email: registerforwinfield@hotmail.com. All other enquiries: Bro. John Gareau (250) 275-7787 or Bro. Ken Loveridge (778) 475-4602 or email: winfieldbibleschool@hotmail.com.

22-27 Lakefield Bible School at Lakefield College School, located east of Toronto near Peterborough, ON, on a beautiful lakeside campus. Full program of fellowship, instruction, and recreation for all ages. For information, please contact Bro. Bruce and Sis. Barbara Abel br71abel@gmail.com, or call 519-925-5297. Website: www.lakefieldbibleschool.com.

27-28 Victoria, BC Fraternal Gathering will be held one week earlier this year. Bro. Roger Long will be our speaker. Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen at victoria@csl.ca.

SEPTEMBER, 2016

17-18 Bedford, NS Study weekend with Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto Church Street, ON). His topic is “I will arise and shake myself! A life of Samson”. The classes will be held at the North Woodside Community Centre, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. For information contact Bro. John Ching at kiwijohn47@hotmail.com or 1-902-404-0196.

24-25 Kouts, IN Fall Study Weekend at Woodland Park Community Center, 2100 Willowcreek Rd., beginning at 10:00 a.m. The speaker will be Bro. Bryan Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI). Theme: “Peter’s Conversion.” Please contact Bro. Joe Bennett at 219-762-2704, or jkb8275@comcast.net.

The Christadelphian Tidings of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)

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OCTOBER, 2016

1-2 Ontario Fall Gathering at Maple High School, Vaughan, ON. Perennial Theme: "For he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb 2: 11). Speaker: Bro. Bill Link (Baltimore, MD). Topic: "Portraits of the Lord". Contact Bro. Bruce Abel at br71abel@gmail.com or 519-925-5297.

8-10 Atlanta, GA. Fraternal gathering. Speaker is Bro. Nigel Small (Echo Lake, NJ). His theme is "Faith, Hope and Love". Registration deadline September 1, 2016. Contact Sis. Carolyn Carter 770-833-8915.

8-9 Vancouver, BC Fraternal Gathering. Speaker Bro. Marc Hunter (Saanich Peninsula, BC): "Thinking Twice & the Sermon on the Mount" Contact Sis. Pam Snobelen at pamela721@shaw.ca or 604 881 4733 for a program and accommodation.