

The
Christadelphian Tidings
of the Kingdom of God

Editorial
Central Christadelphians

History
1866 Statement

Doctrines
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Why Does John Come Last?

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“Central” Christadelphians

Our heritage

It is a fact that of all the groups, divisions, and fellowships that are known as Christadelphian, or closely associated, the “Central”, commonly called “Amended” in North America, is by far the largest group, with more than 90% of the total. It has not suffered a major division since 1923, and God willing this will continue.

This has not always been the case, at least outside Great Britain. For many years after the turn of the 19th century, in both North America and Australia, the majority was not associated with “Central”. In Australia, the “Shield” group dominated, while in North America Christadelphians were very roughly split into thirds between Central, Berean (from 1923), and Unamended. In the UK, Central were in the majority, but the “Suffolk Street” group were a significant, active minority, and it was in fellowship with the Shield Group in Australia and the Unamended in North America. In the UK, most Bereans divided in the 1940’s to form the Dawn fellowship, which only a few in North America joined. So from about 1923 to the mid 1950’s, the Christadelphians were divided, separated not only by distance but also by affiliation. Except for the Unamended, all subscribed to the Biblical principles of the BASF (Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith), but all accused each other of various infractions, both doctrinal and moral.

Everything changed in the 1950’s when Bro. John Carter, then editor of *The Christadelphian* magazine, used his position to orchestrate the re-union, first of the Bereans in North America, then of the complex situation in Australia, and finally with the Suffolk Street group in the UK. Not included were the Unamended in North America and the Dawn fellowship, and this has remained essentially the status to date. There has been some successes in further uniting of factions, but only locally. However, for the past sixty years the Central Fellowship has remained united, at least on the surface: in most of the world, the existence of other “Christadelphian” fellowships is almost unknown. Members regard themselves as “Christadelphians”, and even the term “Central” is falling out of use.

Central

It is interesting that the word “Central” reflects a connection that no longer exists. In fact, up until 1932 the largest segment of the community was known as the “Temperance Hall” fellowship, after the name of the meeting place in the center of Birmingham. This was where the largest ecclesia had met since 1872, and where successive editors of *The Christadelphian* from Robert Roberts on were members. In fact the term did not come into use as a designator of a fellowship until after about 1885, for although there were some disputes, none produced a large enough number of ecclesias to require a distinctive name. The Temperance Hall was a rented property, and when it was sold in 1932 the ecclesia moved to

another rented property, the Midland Institute. By this time, other ecclesias had sprung up around Birmingham, so the ecclesia, still over 1,000 members strong, took up the designation of “Birmingham Central Ecclesia”. And so the term “Central Fellowship” came into being. (The term “Amended Fellowship” is little used outside of North America.)

It is somewhat sad that the Birmingham Central Ecclesia closed in December 2007, when the Midland Institute was sold: by that time it had dwindled to a handful. I have memories of it in the 1970’s, when over 1,500 members filled a large, ornate hall with hymns that seemed to lift the rafters.

Until the 1970’s, because of its size and because of the fact that the editors of the main magazine of its community were members, the Birmingham Central Ecclesia had a great deal of influence over Christadelphians worldwide. With the reduction in size, and the fact that after LG Sargent the editors belonged to other ecclesias, its influence, and to some extent that of the editors, has disappeared. Many sections of the community look elsewhere for guidance, and sometimes even object to the fact that the editors of *The Christadelphian* offer guidance and counsel at all. No other magazine, or even any particular individual, commands respect in all quarters, at least in North America.

The glue

So what is the glue that holds our community together? Why has the Central Fellowship managed to avoid the divisions that plagued its first sixty years? After all, there have been no split since 1923, and that split has been resolved to a large extent (although remnants still exist.) There is no centralized authority: each ecclesia is a legal as well as a practical self-governing entity. Along with no paid ministry, there is no formal instruction of any of our teachers, and even the Mutual Improvement classes that used to exist seemed to have died out in the 1960’s, with very rare exceptions.

The normal answer, of course, is “The BASF.” This indeed is the doctrinal glue, which all Central Ecclesias accept as a true definition of our beliefs: but if you just glance at the discussion boards on the Internet, many of our young people either are ignorant of its contents, or are quite happy to disregard it. And remaining on the same theme, if you just collect a random sample of twenty “Beliefs” from the websites of ecclesias and some of our organizations, none include the actual BASF, and only one refers to it. (Of course, looking for the term “Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith” produces the desired result: the abbreviation “BASF” usually returns what is a large chemical company.)

So what is the practical glue?

It could be:

- Family ties
- Bible Schools, Fraternal, and Youth Weekends
- The magazines and literature of the community
- The ALS diary and, in North America, the various address lists

The common thread is due in some part to all of these, but I believe it is due in a large part to the heritage of a simple document, written by a wise brother in 1883, which has changed little through numerous printings. It contains, not only the forerunner of our statement of faith, later modified somewhat to counter some errant beliefs, but a “Guide to the Formation and Conduct of Ecclesias”.

The Guide

The Guide to me is quite amazing: I have had many occasions to consult it for guidance in difficult areas of ecclesial affairs, both internal and external, and its sound words continue to be relevant. Whether dealing with individual problems, or relationships between ecclesias, its advice has more often than not helped, if not to solve problems, at least reduce their impact. There is a tendency to speak words in public that are unwise: its counsel is that such words should not be considered before the subject and accuser have sat down and talked face to face, and this has often solved the problem then and there. The situation where a topic is brought up by an individual at a meeting, perhaps an arranging meeting, regarding another member and dealt with then and there should never happen. Sometimes the wise advice is ignored, and the outcome is then almost never good.

Another principle of the ecclesial guide is that the decision of the majority should, in general, be adhered to. There has been a tendency to declare:

- **The majority is usually wrong** — after all, we as Christadelphians are a small minority among Christian denominations. But any other way, except in rare cases, is neither practical nor desirable. As Bro. Roberts points out, in his section on “A Time to Separate, and How to go about it”, there is the right way to handle the case of a departure from the Truth, or a disavowal of the commandments of Christ. His advice has largely been followed, with the result that true dis-fellowship of an ecclesia is extremely rare.
- **Unanimity in all things is the only Christian way:** *“Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Phil 2:2).* The NET Bible reads *“complete my joy and be of the same mind, by having the same love, being united in spirit, and having one purpose”*, with the note to “same mind” being properly “feel the same way”. **It is not a command to agree in all things, but to have the same Christ-like approach.**

I must say that some ecclesias have declared themselves out of fellowship with other local ecclesias over perceived problems with doctrine, fellowship, or the perennial disagreements over divorce: but such declarations have, almost always, not been recognized by the larger community. Perhaps we should regard ourselves as a confederation of ecclesias joined together by a common set of beliefs, but allowed internal freedom to govern themselves, subject to only limited community oversight, and an agreement on both doctrines and rules.

Peter Hemingray

Letters to the editor can be sent to letters@tidings.org. Please include your name, address, e-mail, and phone. Submissions under 300 words are encouraged — the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity.

A Prayer of Repentance

Psalm 51

Psalm 51 is aptly titled “A Prayer of Repentance” in the NKJV. Written by King David, it is confessing his sins to God and pleading for mercy. But why did he need to do this? At the height of his power, David became infatuated with the wife of one of his military officers, whose name was Bathsheba, and made her pregnant. He really needed to do something about the problem that he had imposed upon her, so he decided that he would solve his problem by arranging for her husband to lead a suicide squad into the midst of a battle, and by so doing, her husband was killed. Then conveniently forgetting his intrigue, David proceeded to marry his officer’s pregnant wife.

So it seems like the mighty King David got away with it. But there was one problem. He couldn’t get rid of the guilt. Like trying to scrub a blood stain out of a white shirt, he couldn’t scrub that guilt from his heart. He came to the point where he was obsessed with his sin. And out of that obsession, he writes Psalm 51.

Catholic or Christadelphian

Now before we go into the Psalm a little deeper, I’d like to take you back to when I was five years old. We were living in Melbourne, Australia and my father was still a Catholic. He would sometimes take us along to Catholic Sunday School or Catholic Mass. Being a Catholic all his life, my father finally started taking a deeper look into his Bible, and began to realize there were some discrepancies with what he was reading, and what he was hearing at Mass.

He approached the Catholic priest and started asking questions, to which he either got a shrug, or “it’s all part of the great mystery” or “because it’s been like that for thousands of years”. A lot of people would be happy with those answers, but he wasn’t. He started searching and came across an advertisement in the local newspaper for a Christadelphian Bible Talk, to which the public was welcome to attend. So off he went, down to the nearby hall, and listened. He decided to go again, and again, and while attending he met some lifelong friends who would soon become his brothers and sisters in Christ.

Eventually, my father dragged us along. I remember it was different to Catholic Mass. Less kneeling, less of the chant-like responses, less of the repetitive prayer. But there’s one thing I noticed there was a lot more of — there was a lot more quiet time.

As a young child with a super short attention span, I didn’t really understand this. Especially during the memorial service. I saw my father eat the bread, and just bend forward with this eyes closed for what seemed like an eternity. Then he would do the same after the wine. What was he thinking about? Was he praying? After being raised Catholic I guess I recognized this as some kind of ritual just

as they have in Catholic Mass. Maybe he was saying three “Hail Mary’s” and four “Our Fathers”. Maybe he was thinking about what he needs to pick up on the way home; bread, eggs and milk. What was he thinking?

It wasn’t until many years later that it clicked and the reading of 1 Corinthians 11, which I had heard over and over again on Sundays, was finally understood. Let’s turn to that now and we’ll have a read.

“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (1Cor 11:27-29).

And here we see in verse 28 exactly what happens. *Let a man examine himself.* Let a man search his heart. And we think of David, and the sin that was eating away at this heart. He came to a point where he examined himself. He saw that he was an unworthy sinner. He pleaded and begged for mercy, for his sin to be forgiven and washed clean.

Back to Psalm 51

Let’s take a deeper look at this process that David went through in Psalm 51:

“Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight — That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge” (Psa 51:1-4).

David starts off by pleading for mercy. We only plead for mercy when we know we’re guilty. It’s as if we’re in a court of law. We don’t plead for mercy if we’re pleading not guilty to the charges before us. We plead for mercy after the jury has decided and found us guilty. We know we deserve judgement. By pleading for mercy, we’re saying “Please God, don’t give me what I deserve”. Because Paul tells us what we deserve: *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:23).*

But consider more words of David: *“He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him” (Psa 103:10-11).*

We’ve all got to be so happy for that, that God hasn’t dealt with us according to our sins. He hasn’t given us what we really deserve. But instead, David tells here of God’s massive mercy toward those who follow Him.

Jumping back to Psa 51:2: *“Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin”.*

David pleads to God to be washed clean of his sin. He wants all the uncleanness, all the evil, all the sin washed away, so he can be clean again. It’s always such a

nice analogy that parallels with baptism. To be made new, to do away with the old, to be purified. As Jesus said:

“He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, ‘Lord, do you wash my feet?’ Jesus answered him, ‘What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.’ Peter said to him, ‘You shall never wash my feet.’ Jesus answered him, ‘If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.’ Simon Peter said to him, ‘Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!’ Jesus said to him, ‘The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean’” (John 13:6-10).

Look at that last verse again: *“The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean”*. Here we have none other than Jesus Christ himself, telling the disciples that although they may have been washed before, they still need to be washed again.

It’s a powerful lesson we can get out of this. That we’ve been baptized, we’ve been washed completely clean, but our feet still get dirty. We still get ourselves, from time to time, dirty with sin. We still need our hearts to be washed clean. That’s why King David, “a man after God’s own heart”, still appeals to be washed clean. *Psa 51:7* echoes this: *“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow”*. And again, David says: *“For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me” (Psa 51:3)*.

David acknowledged that he did this. Not his advisors, not his colleagues, not his officials. He’s not trying to shift the blame here onto someone else. Notice as well that this is another great verse for disproving the existence of a supernatural devil. Does he say the devil made him do it? No, not at all. He puts his own hand up and says, “Yes, — it was me”.

David could have put his sin back on God: he could have said “God, why’d You let me get into this mess to start with? Why didn’t You intervene? Technically this is Your fault for not stopping me, or even for putting Bathsheba on the rooftop to start with”. But no, he never says this. He knows he did the wrong thing. He confesses and takes full responsibility.

“Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight — That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge” (Psa 51:4).

It’s really just David saying: “You know what God? I clear you of all of this. It’s my fault and I’ve committed it against you. I have sinned. You are justified. You are clear. I don’t hold you responsible. It’s my sin.”

So here we see that *Psa 51:1-4* really does give us a good summary of a solid process of confession and repentance. It shows us that when we come before our creator and take a good look at ourselves, examining ourselves, we recognize that we are guilty and need to plead for mercy. That we really do deserve judgement, that we need to be washed clean in order to move on, and that we need to take ownership of our sin. It’s such a great insight into confession, when we lay our sins before God.

So now we've come to a point, just as David did, and we've laid it all on the table before God. We've asked for his undeserved mercy, his forgiveness to wash us clean. But where do we go from here? Well I think there was a good reason that Jesus called John the Baptist great. And I believe it is, in part, because of his preaching of repentance. The message of "changing your ways" was no doubt screamed by John in the wilderness. It's exactly what Christ and his Father want of us. We've confessed, we've laid it all before Him, but we need to change our ways.

One example

I remember teaching in Australia, for three years I taught third grade children. As young children would do, they'd often get into fights in the playground, then come running up to me while I was supervising. One day a little boy named Jack ran up to me and cried, "Mr. Boyle, Tom just hit me on my arm!" with tears streaming down his face. I'd walk over to Tom, with Jack alongside, and I'd look Tom in the face and say, "Tom, did you hit Jack on the arm?" He said he did; he confessed. "Well, what do you say?" He sheepishly looked over to Jack, "Sorry Jack." Now at that point, I could have left it at that and they would have gone on their merry way. But I wanted to make sure the message hit home. I'd always ask the offending child, "But what does sorry mean?" I usually got a shrug, or just "well it means I'm sorry I hit him." "But what else does it mean? Does it mean you can say sorry and then go and hit him again and just say sorry again?" "Well, no. It means I won't do it again".

This little bit of extra counselling seemed to help them understand what it truly means to be sorry. As adults, as brothers and sisters in Christ, we can learn lessons from that too; we can't just say sorry to others as a "get-out-of-jail" pass, then go and commit the same crime. This is the Gospel's message of repentance. Say sorry, but mean it. Don't go doing it again.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psa 51:10).

It's David appeal that he needs a new attitude, a new heart. To be made clean and no longer commit the sin he now finds so appalling.

When we prepare ourselves for the memorial service of our Lord, to examine ourselves before we partake of the bread and the wine and remember his sacrifice for us. As we do this, let us, like David, plead to God for mercy for

our sins. Let us take ownership of them, let us ask to be washed clean and to change our ways. We need to say sorry and really mean it. There's sin in my life. There's sin in all of our lives. It could be lying, cheating, stealing, and lusting after things in the world, failing to pray or read the Bible, selfishness, pride, or overindulgence. It could be a few things. So let's take a moment, before our master and creator, to consider our sin, to consider God and recognize, just like David did, that we need him, now more than ever. We can't do this on our own anymore. We can't keep stockpiling sin and guilt and think we're fine. Let's confess, let's repent.

When we confess, when we repent, when we are forgiven, we are to thank God for this incredible gift of forgiveness. Let's turn to Psalm 32, where we find David giving thanks for this astonishing blessing of forgiveness.

"For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer" (Psa 32:3-4).

This guilt he had, of his sins, had really sucked the life out of him. And in reading on we find a confession:

"I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin" (Psa 32:5).

At this point he could have stopped and walked away. I've felt guilt, I've confessed, and you've forgiven me. But next David shows his appreciation for such mercy.

"Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance" (Psa 32:6-7).

So we should remember to give praise to our Lord who has undeservedly, mercifully forgiven us, preserved us, delivered us.

I'd like to finish with a really nice passage from Micah, just to remind us of this undeserving mercy that God actually delights in providing us:

"Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities" (Mic 7:18-19).

God will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

Nick Boyle (Saanich Peninsula, BC)

How oft do we stray and find ourselves in the shadow of sin's dark pathway! And how oft are we made cognizant of the fact that we are turned away from the light, by our temptations, troubles, and trials which are the result of God's chastening hand to humble and prove us, and to produce in us a spirit of contrition and sorrow, that, from our hearts may sound forth the prayer of repentance, *"Turn us again O God, cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved" (Psa 80:3)*. The necessity for this change of attitude proceeds from our native tendency to forget, to abandon our lives to temporal pursuits, to things which appeal to our tastes in every phase of this fleeting life, and which we imagine demands the major part of our attention.

John Edward Jarvis, *The Christadelphian*, 1933 p. 361.

First Principles

Doctrines to Be Rejected, (14) Heaven

Doctrine to Be Rejected #10. **That the righteous will ascend to the kingdoms beyond the skies when they die.**

Heaven

The doctrine concerning heaven-going can be stated in a positive way:

None ascend to heaven; the Lord Jesus being the only exception, and in this case for the purpose of his continuing mediatorial work. The righteous await the return of Christ for the bestowal of immortality. *“And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3:13).*

Heaven is certainly not “man’s eternal abode” but “God’s throne” (Matt 5:34), for *“no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven” (John 3:13).* And if Peter could say of David that *“He is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day . . . for David is not ascended into the heavens” (Acts 2:29, 34),* then who else could expect to go there? The late William Temple in his book *Nature, Man and God* neatly summed the hope of the Christian by writing: “The authentic Christian doctrine is a doctrine not of immortality, but of resurrection.”

False doctrine

The vast majority of Christian denominations teach that there is no such thing as death, if “death” is properly defined as “the total absence of life.”

Instead, according to their teaching, when the body dies, the “soul,” the “real you,” goes to heaven or hell, and keeps right on living either in eternal bliss or eternal torment. Therefore, most Christians do not believe that people actually experience “death” when their body dies.

Some scholars believe the shift in belief came because the Kingdom of God (i.e., Christ’s return) wasn’t immediate. Once the religions of the world accepted the idea that the “soul” or “spirit” did not die when the body died, the next step was to determine its post-mortem address. Where does the soul live after the body dies? A study of the various religions of the world shows that it was, and still is, very common to believe that “good” people go either to the abode of the gods (sometimes called “heaven”), while evil people go to a place of punishment or torment. These beliefs eventually found their way into both Judaism and Christianity.

“Man is mortal”...

This remains a vital truth. We have long thought it necessary to point out that the immortality of the soul is derived from pagan, especially Greek, sources. For this wrong view of the human condition has triggered wrong beliefs about heaven-

going. If souls are immortal, the righteous must go somewhere after death! It then follows that there must be somewhere less pleasant for the unrighteous, who are doomed to live forever in imagined torment. By contrast, the teaching of Scripture is both clear and fair. When we die we return to dust; there we lie unconscious, as though we were in a dreamless sleep. Some people are destined to remain forever in that death state: they could be described as dead in the dust, or as asleep perpetually. As Jeremiah says: *“In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD” (Jer 51:39).*

The Psalmist (Psa 49:19,20) says of all without *“understanding”* that they will perish as though they were beasts; *“they shall never see light”*. Others have the hope of being rescued from the bondage of death. Their sleep in the dust is to end in an awakening. Daniel (12:2) contains the promise that *“many (not ‘all’) that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake”*. That was the Psalmist’s personal hope (Psa 17:15) and it was the clear teaching of the Lord and his apostles. Isaiah brings both prospects together. Contemplating the dominion of God, he recalls others who have sought to exercise ruler-ship. Of those “lords”, who are now extinct, he says:

“They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish” (Isa 26:14).

The majority of people who have died are now as if they never existed: they know nothing, and we know nothing about them. But a minority are known to God; they died in the hope of resurrection at the second coming of Christ: *“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (Isa 26:19).*

Death state

The view of the death state in the New Testament is clearly not of the dichotomy of Heaven or Hell, as many denominations believe. Rather, the death state is likened to being asleep, and we all know that we are unconscious, unaware of our surroundings, in that state.

“And 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 12:2).

“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (1Cor 11:30).

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed” (1Cor 15:51).

“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1Thess 4:14).

What is heaven

So what is heaven? It is a very common term, being used 420 times or so in the Bible. If we just look at the New Testament, the term is used 284 times, 94 times in the plural, but it is hard to see any particular significance in this distinction. Heaven is used in several different ways, and it helps to briefly consider the major aspects. It is noticeable that in no case is it described as a place to which we ascend when we die: there are no pearly gates, no clouds, none of our antecedents looking down on us. So let us look briefly at the chief ways it is used in the New Testament.

- 1) Heaven (and earth) were created by God.

“Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is” (Acts 4:24).

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24).

- 2) Heaven is a term for the firmament, the realm above the earth.

“Behold the fowls of the air (Gk ouranos: heaven)” (Matt 6:26).

“And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven” (Mark 6:41).

- 3) Jesus will come down from Heaven.

“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1Thess 1:10).

- 4) God is in Heaven.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt 5:16).

- 5) Heaven is the origin of the events described in Revelation.

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev 21:2-3).

- 6) Heaven is the dwelling place of angels.

“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt 18:10).

“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the father” (Mark 13:32).

- 7) Heaven has been and will be opened.

“And [Stephen] said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56).

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

Why I Left the Roman Catholic Church

(4) Priesthood, Immortal Soul

Priesthood

Men of the Roman Catholic faith who wish to become priests are forbidden to marry. This doctrine goes directly against what Scripture says: *“Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith... forbidding to marry”* (1Tim. 4:1-3). God’s first chosen priests, the Levites, were married and had children (see Lev 10:8). Likewise, all newly appointed overseers of the church are to be *“husbands of but one wife”* (see 1Tim 3:8-13; Titus 1:5-9).

The Apostle Peter (the first supposed “pope”) was married (see Matt 8:14) as were other Apostles (1Cor 9:5). There were married bishops (1Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6).

Therefore, this Catholic rule about forbidding priests to marry is a “doctrine of men”: God forbids no one to marry. Indeed, marriage was instituted and blessed by God (Gen 1:27-28 and 2:24-25) so that man could have a suitable companion to help him (Gen 2:20). Marriage is the only lawful way for humans to obey God’s command to *“be fruitful and multiply [have children]”* (Gen 1:28).

I have learned that God, through His Son, Jesus the Christ, has abolished the need for “priests” to serve a special role, separate from the rest of God’s people. The *whole church* (people) of God are now called to be a “royal priesthood”.

Now the Apostle Peter calls *all believers* to be a “royal priesthood”. As he wrote to the early Christians:

“[Jesus] Coming to him as a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.... You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (1Pet 2:4-10).

And again in Revelation, the Apostle John greets the seven churches, and tells them that Jesus Christ *“loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests to his God and Father”* (Rev 1:5). Was he speaking only to Roman Catholic priests? It does not appear so from the scriptures.

Paul calls *all* followers of Christ “brothers” and “sisters”. He did not give himself a title of Teacher or Priest, or Father: *“Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as Apostles of Christ,”* (1Thess 2:6). This is in keeping with what Jesus told His disciples:

*“But you, do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and **you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father;** for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your*

servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted,” (Matt 23:8-12).

When I read this with an open mind, I can come to no other conclusion than that I sin when I call a priest “Father”. Paul says that Jesus:

“gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, [no priests are mentioned here] for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph 4:11-12).

Even though the original twelve Apostles of Jesus gave themselves “*continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word,*” (Acts 6:4), preachers of the gospel are told to work (outside of preaching) to earn their food. Paul himself was a tent-maker, and used his skill to earn money to pay his own expenses. He wrote:

“nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labour and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (2Thess 3:8).

Because we are all “brethren”, overseers of the church are called elders, deacons, and pastors. According to God, they are not called priests. Paul writes to Titus, a young pastor, advising him to appoint elders (bishops, deacons), men of proven spiritual character in their homes and businesses, to oversee the work of the church. “*appoint elders in every city as I commanded you — if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination*” (Titus 1:5-9; see also 2Thess 2:15). Paul writes the same thing to Timothy (see 1Tim 3: 8-13).

We are told to confess our sins in order to be forgiven by God (Psa 32:5; 1John 1:9). But who are we to confess our sins *to*? Since we are all brothers and sisters in Christ, and are all part of his holy priesthood, James tells us to “*confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed*” (James 5:16).

According to Catholic doctrine, a priest is needed during the memorial celebration in order for Christ to be there. However, Jesus spoke to his disciples/followers and said, “*for where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them*” (Matt 18:20). This Catholic doctrine, then, clearly opposes what Jesus said, and is therefore wrong.

Thus, in Christ’s church, there is no hierarchy, as is set up by the Roman Catholic Church (Pope, Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, Deacons, etc.). “*But Christ is all and is in all*” (Col 3:11).

Death, and the immortality of the soul

In many Christian religions, we are led to believe that all good people (or at least all good people who believe in Jesus Christ) go to heaven as soon as they

die. They don't have to wait until Christ's second coming, when he judges the living and the dead.

However, the Holy Scriptures tell us a different story: we are told that the dead are unconscious of anything, that they "know nothing", that *"there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going"* (Eccl 9:5,6,10). We are told that King David *"did not ascend into the heavens"* (Acts 2:34) and in fact, no man had until the Jesus did (John 3:13). We are told that all the dead in Christ are "asleep" in the earth, waiting for judgment at the second coming — they are not alive in heaven. We are told that *"each one will be raised in his proper order: Christ, first of all; then, at the time of His [second] coming, those who belong to Him"* (1Cor. 15:23).

Some people quote Luke 23:43 to confirm the belief that righteous people go to paradise as soon as they die: *"And Jesus said to him [the robber], 'Assuredly I say to you today you will be with me in Paradise.'"* In the original Greek language of the gospels, commas were not used. However, in the translation to English, a comma was inserted between "you" and "today". If, on the other hand, one inserts a comma between "today" and "you", a different meaning emerges: *"I say to you today, you will be with me in Paradise."* Jesus told the robber that day that he would be in paradise, but he did not say when this would occur. Where was Jesus going that day? He was going to the grave: *"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"* (Matt 12:40). Note he did not say "my body" will be in the grave, but his whole being, or soul will be in the grave.

Gen 2:7 states, *"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 soul."* Soul is the English translation of the Hebrew word "nephesh", which means "a breathing creature"; it has also been translated as beast, body, breath, and creature. We can see that for man to have his being, or to be a living soul, he needs both "dust" and the breath of life.

Paul clearly explained that at Christ's triumphant second coming, the faithful who are dead will be raised and given immortality. They are not immortal souls waiting in heaven for Christ's coming and judgment — we are all mortal and all die, but if we are judged worthy, we will become immortal.

"This is how it will be when the dead are raised to life. When the body is buried, it is mortal; when raised, it will be immortal. When buried, it is ugly and weak; when raised, it will be beautiful and strong. When buried, it is a physical body; when raised, it will be a spiritual body. There is, of course, a physical body, so there has to be a spiritual body. For the scripture says, 'the first man, Adam, was created a living soul [being]; but the last Adam [Jesus] is the life-giving Spirit'. It is not the spiritual that comes first, but the physical, and then the spiritual" (1Cor 15:42-49).

The doctrine that humans have an immortal soul has its roots in Egyptian and Greek (pagan) philosophy:

“William Tyndale, heroic translator of the Scriptures into English, and martyred on that account in 1536, wrote: ‘And ye in putting them in heaven, hell and purgatory, destroy the arguments wherewith Christ and Paul prove the resurrection. What God doth with them, that shall we know when we come to them. The true faith putteth the resurrection, which we be warned to look for every hour. The heathen philosophers, denying that, did put that souls did ever live. And the Pope joineth the spiritual doctrine of Christ and the fleshly doctrine of philosophers together, things so contrary that they cannot agree, no more than the Spirit and the flesh do in a Christian man. And because the fleshly minded Pope consenteth unto heathen doctrine, therefore he corrupteth the Scripture to establish it’

“The Swedish scholar Anders Nygren, in his work *Agape and Eros*, wrote: ‘The ancient Church differs most of all from Hellenism in its belief in Resurrection. Christian tradition affirmed the “Resurrection of the flesh”, which the Apologists opposed to the Hellenistic doctrine of the “Immortality of the soul”... One who believes in the ‘Immortality of the Soul’ shows thereby that he is not a Christian. As Justin says: ‘If you have fallen in with some who are called Christians... and who say there is no resurrection of the dead, but that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians.’ The idea of the immortality of the soul causes offence primarily because it is an expression of man’s insolence towards God. For Christian faith, salvation from death is a mighty act of God; in the Platonic, Hellenistic view, immortality is a native possession of the human soul. But such a doctrine from the Christian point of view, is in line with the Fall; it is man’s attempt to make himself like God, to make himself God; it is an assault on God’s divinity. When God through Christ awakens the dead to life on the Last Day, there can no longer be any doubt that eternal life is His gift. By setting the Resurrection faith over against the Hellenistic doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, the Apologists maintained a position of the utmost importance for Christianity.”¹

We are clearly warned in the Bible that some early Christians “*have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past*” (2Tim 2: 18). The Bible plainly states that only after Christ’s second coming will the resurrection of the dead take place, and then Christ will judge the living and the dead. The righteous will rise to everlasting life here on earth (not in heaven).

Ruth Anne Chisholm-Davin (Shelburne, ON)

Notes:

1. “A Declaration of the Truth Revealed in the Bible”, 1981.

Isn't It Time To Discuss *Revelation*? (2)

A Christadelphian crisis

We concluded the previous article (*The Tidings*, July 2016) with the following paragraph:

For almost the next hundred years, *Eureka* became in Christadelphian circles the standard exposition of *Revelation*. During that time, almost all the books published on the subject by Christadelphians were attempts to simplify *Eureka* and to make its ideas more accessible to ordinary brothers and sisters. The time came, however, when thinking readers were compelled to acknowledge that *Eureka* no longer offered answers to questions raised by the events of the 20th century.

This realization would precipitate a Christadelphian crisis.

Impelled as he was by his fervent wish to see Christ's kingdom established and the folly and wickedness of man dethroned, Bro. John Thomas came to believe from his study of Bible prophecy that the Second Coming might occur in 1868¹. He had no way of telling or even imagining the world changes that still had to occur. Three years later he was laid to rest in a New York cemetery. But the community he had helped to found held firmly to the picture he had painted, with the guidance of the prophetic books of the Bible, of the things that lay ahead.

However, before the 20th century had completed its second decade, the old world had gone forever, without John Thomas's wish being fulfilled. The Great War, which many Christadelphians thought at first might be Armageddon, destroyed an estimated 10 million lives, overturned no fewer than four world powers, and seriously weakening those empires that had survived. Age-old class barriers were swept aside and the voice of the common man came to be more clearly to be heard, along with the unfamiliar accents of two powers from outside Europe, in the USA and the USSR. The increasing use of the internal combustion engine with its voracious appetite for petroleum catapulted on to the world stage remote countries whose hidden oil reserves were suddenly in huge demand.

The pace of change was further accelerated by the Great Depression and the Second World War, followed by the Cold War and the miraculous emergence of an independent Israel. Other new nations appeared all over Asia and Africa. Then came the dramatic destruction of the Berlin Wall and the sudden collapse of the USSR. But this new world was rapidly polluting its environment and using up valuable resources in the pursuit of wealth. The old political divisions were replaced by the even older but neglected economic barriers that separated haves from have-nots, the developed nations from those developing, the rich North from the poor South.

One of the results of these massive changes was the appearance in the brotherhood of suggestions that, in the light of 20th century developments, our understanding of the pattern of future events needed modification. A factor in this change that cannot be overlooked is that, in the century since the publication of *Eureka*, the general level of formal education in the brotherhood had risen considerably. The result was that there were a greater number of brothers and sisters who were accustomed to forming their own opinions on complex issues and, in consequence, less ready to accept pre-packaged solutions.

The discussion starts

A change in attitude was clearly discernible by the 1950's in Britain. One writer who played a role in this cautious revisionism was a brother from the north of England called Fred Bilton. In *An Exposition of the Apocalypse* and *The Apocalypse and the Gospels* (1955), Bilton argued that no exposition of future events could reasonably exclude Nazi Germany, the Holocaust, the state of Israel and the importance of Middle Eastern oil. Bilton was not the only one to suggest such tweaking of the *Eureka* thesis. It was not difficult to amend references to the Tsar of Russia, as the latter-day Gog, to mean his egalitarian counterpart in the Kremlin. Nor was it hard to accept that the three spirits like frogs, traditionally associated with the French Revolution, might also describe the activity of those labelled 'communist agitators'. These modifications appeared in Australian Bro. H.P. Mansfield's *The Apocalypse Epitomised* (no date, c. 1965) although the book was in essence yet a further attempt to simplify *Eureka*. Another revisionist book appeared in 1972, John Doble's *The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory*. In retrospect, it is possible to see all this as evidence of a significant shift of opinion in parts of the brotherhood, as the last quarter of the century would more fully reveal. But it was also recognition of the way the world had changed in a hundred years, forcing a process of re-thinking. One result was a revival of interest in the book of *Revelation*. Another was increased stress on the fault lines that were beginning to appear in the community.

By the second half of the 20th century there was clear acknowledgement of a developing problem in the brotherhood over how the book of *Revelation* was to be understood. Predictably, there were two very different reactions to the situation.

Writing in a commemorative issue of *The Christadelphian*, produced in 1964 to mark a century of the use of that name in the community, editor Louis Sargent commented on the key issue: "It must be admitted that much has worked out very differently from expectations that we held and much that was written needs revision in the light of history." It revealed recognition that divergent thinking on the subject of *Revelation* was becoming more widespread and, further, acknowledged its necessity.

It was another decade, however, before there was a major parting of the ways. In 1976 Bro Harry Whittaker, living up to his reputation as a maverick Bible student and an unconventional thinker on matters scriptural, published *Revelation: a Biblical Approach*. This volume earned Whittaker howls of execration and paeans of praise in perhaps roughly equal proportions. These demonstrations,

however, left the majority in the middle ground bewildered. Whittaker had proposed an understanding of *Revelation* which radically departed from that in *Eureka*. Whittaker argued that the first part of the prophecy applied to events in Palestine around A.D. 70. Subsequent sections applied to the intervening history as well as to the last days. It was, in other words, a blend of preterist, historical and futurist interpretation.

By the 1980s other differing voices had come to be heard. Just before his death, Bro. Peter Watkins, having long resisted persuasion from friends to go into print, finally prepared a manuscript which was posthumously published by his family. It was the product of more than one generation of family study and discussion. *Exploring the Apocalypse and the Future* saw the fulfilment of *Revelation* as future but also proposed that the book was largely concerned with events affecting the modern state of Israel.

Vigorously attacked

Two years later, Bro Alfred Norris produced *Apocalypse for Everyman*. This explanation proposed that while the first chapters of the prophecy referred to historical events, the bulk of it was devoted to the last days. It too was vigorously attacked by traditionalists. The main argument against it, as with all futurist interpretations, was that it implied a prophetic silence of eighteen centuries during which believers had no word to encourage them. Norris subsequently produced some answers to his critics which contributed little to resolving differences.

Quite plainly, no clear picture of an alternative understanding of *Revelation* had emerged and this was abundant evidence to conservatives of the wrong-headedness of attempting to provide one. These defenders of the traditional explanation appeared to pay little attention to the editorial observation of Alfred Nicholls in November 1981: "It is sometimes said that we are not so clear and firm in our expectations, not so ready to pronounce on world events as our forebears, the pioneers of a century ago. The reason is not far to seek: we have often raised hope prematurely; we have been too dogmatic and created disillusionment." Nicholls followed this with a series of articles which later appeared in book form; *Interpreting Revelation* (1988). He did not enter the lists in favour of one side or the other but sought to set out the basic principles that should be applied in any attempt to explain the prophecy.

Two other titles which appeared at a similar time showed that, in the view of some, the problem could be resolved by a simple choice. Bro. Paul Billington wrote: *Revelation: an Appeal for Correct Understanding* (no date) and Bro Graham Pearce published *Revelation — Which Interpretation?* (1991). What the dust of controversy effectively concealed, however, was that there was a significant number of brethren and sisters, neither malcontents nor rebels, for whom the picture presented in *Eureka* was no longer adequate. In such a charged atmosphere it was not likely that anyone would notice that there was another option that would modify the need for choice.

With the dawn of the 21st century, it was clear that on the subject of understanding the book of *Revelation*, there were two clearly defined camps in the Christadelphian world: those who continued to trust *Eureka* and those who were no longer willing to do so.

There was little if any evidence that those of either camp had considered the merits of their opponents' case or cases. Those who engaged in the debate on the relevant merits of the differing views all seemed to belong to the Aunt Sally school of argument, which considers a rival's claims only to expose its perceived flaws and never to acknowledge any positive features. This inescapable characteristic of internal strife is one of its most distressing features. As so often has been remarked, the first casualty in any conflict is inevitably truth, even among those whose ostensible aim is the pursuit of that often elusive commodity.

By 2009 several other brethren had published material arguing for a futurist understanding of *Revelation*. One of them, Bro Ian Hyndman of Australia, made a significant comment in his introduction. Having come to the tentative conclusion that the book's message refers to an Arab invasion of Israel at the time of the end, he feared that those who had rejected this notion would find their theory of fulfilled prophecy failing and with that their faith. In the preface to *Revelation — A Message from Jesus About the Last Days* (2000) he wrote: "This is not the accepted view of some Bible students, and for some, the unexpected prospect of Israel suffering defeat and exile could have the effect of shaking their faith when these events occur".

[To be continued, God Willing, in the October issue.]

Robin Lamplough (Pinetown, South Africa)

Notes:

1. "My conviction is that the judgment upon Babylon will be announced as about to sit; and that the Ancient of Days and the saints will meet 'in the air' and among the clouds, in the common A. D. 1866, or 1260 years from A. D. 606." (*Anatolia*, 1854, p. 92) The "Exposition of Daniel" has 1868, but this book was first produced in that same year.

Islam

Central and pivotal in these latter days is the growth and influence of Islam. Islam is growing fast throughout the world. Islamic philosophy and beliefs stunningly resemble the characteristics of the Beast described in Revelation 13 and elsewhere. Islam is a direct and growing threat to God's people — both Jews and Christians. It is strongly expected that the prophesied attack against Jerusalem (Zechariah 14) will be by Arab Islamic nations who will be joined by non-Arab Islamic nations such as Iran, Turkey and maybe others.

The growth, influence and objectives of Islam are a distinct latter-day phenomenon. The writer has believed for years that the Beast of Revelation is likely to be Islamic. As each day passes, the likelihood of this becomes more compelling, as Islam becomes more and more dominant and demanding all over the world. The threat of Islam against Israel is also very significant.

The Tidings, June 2011, Ian Hyndman

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Three Lesson Review Games

How well do you know ...? ¹

This is a review game that can be enjoyed after any set of Sunday school lessons. Prepare the review questions that you want to use and then write each one on a separate file card. Here's what a card for "How Well Do You Know Genesis?" might look like:

What was Jacob's name changed to when he wrestled with an angel?
Genesis 32:28

When you are ready to do the review, spread all the cards face down on a table. Let the children take turns picking up one of the cards and reading aloud the question that is on it. If they can answer the question correctly, they keep the card. If not, they must return it face down on the table. When a question is missed, other students will want to pay close attention to where the card is placed. If they know the answer, they may pick it up when their turn comes around. The number of cards a student keeps is their score for the game.

The game is adaptable. It can be used with children of many ages. Question cards can be used over and over, and more cards can be added as time goes on. Using many cards makes the game quite challenging. A focused review, on the other hand, can be done with fewer cards. For example, if you want to review the life of Jacob and not the entire book of Genesis, simply use the Jacob cards.

Another fun review game²

This game uses an easy to make game board. Draw a Lesson/Question grid on a piece of Bristol board or cardstock. Laminate the board to protect it. Children will be writing on the board, so have them use an erasable marker.

Letters across the top stand for the lessons you want to review. Numbers down the side represent individual review questions. Prepare your review questions and let the game begin.

Lesson Question	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								

Children take turns calling for questions. For example, Rachel's turn comes around and she calls for question C-4. You read the corresponding question, and if she answers it correctly she gets to put her initial in box C-4 on the grid. To earn a point, Rachel has to get her R in three consecutive boxes: horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

Meanwhile, other students may have other ideas. Like Tic Tac Toe or Connect Four, they may try to block each other's progress when their turn comes around. It can make for an interesting game.

The Mystery of ...!³

In this game, your students become detectives. Working together, their job is to accurately recreate a Bible story — the mystery — from a given set of clues. Clues relate to details of the story:

- 1) the main characters,
- 2) the scene of the story,
- 3) story facts, and
- 4) lessons for us.

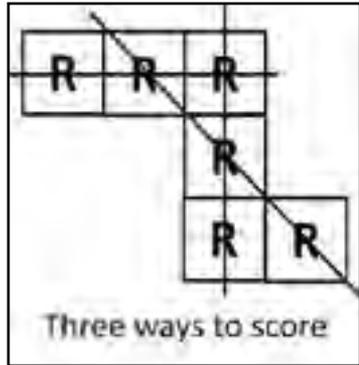
Begin by writing clues of each kind on slips of paper and placing them in separate, unmarked envelopes. When you are ready to play, give the envelopes to the students and explain what they contain without divulging anything about the story. Students then open the envelopes one at a time, examine the clue each contains, and decide if the clue relates to a character in the story, the scene of the story, a story fact, or a lesson for us. Have them organize the clues accordingly. Once all the clues are known, have them retell the story, being careful to account for every detail. Don't let them omit anything. Finally, have them read the story in the Bible and spot the "clues" as they are reading. Be sure to talk about the lessons for us.

This game can be adapted for a wide range of ages: more detailed clues for older children, fewer and simpler ones for younger children. If you want to be adventuresome and add some pop to the game, seal the clues in inflated balloons instead of envelopes. Needless to say, popping balloons to get clues will liven things up a bit.

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(Meriden, CT)

Notes:

1. A Vernon B.C. Sunday School Teacher, "How Well Do You Know Genesis?", *The Joy of Sunday Schooling*, Vol.5, No.1, 1995, pp.13-15
2. A Vernon B.C. Sunday School Teacher, "Run a Fun Review Game", *The Joy of Sunday Schooling*, Vol.5, No.1, 1995, p.16.
3. Adapted from Melinda Flatley, "The Mystery of the Narrow Escape", *The Joy of Sunday Schooling*, Vol.5, No.1, 1995, pp.20-21.



Dogs

Dogs in the Bible

Dogs are wonderful creatures. Many of us have one or two, maybe more, or have had one as a pet at one point or another. And even if we haven't, we have seen someone who has a furry friend, or who posts about them on social media. We see dogs as companions, as work animals on farms, or as guards for property. There are movies dedicated to their fictional adventures, books about what it is like to be a dog, and doctors specifically trained to take care of them. After all, they are "man's best friend."

One must wonder, with such an animal being such an important part of many people's lives, if there were some lessons to be learned from them, ones which can advance our knowledge and love of God and help us in our walk in the truth.

Of course, we must ask, are dogs mentioned in the Bible?

Dogs are often mentioned in Scripture, usually in a metaphorical sense, and almost always in a negative light. We are familiar with such verses as:

"As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly" (Prov 26:11).

"His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber" (Isa 56:10).

"Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter" (Isa 56:11).

To be compared to a dog, was, and still is, somewhat of an insult. (As an example, the Hebrew word for a dog is used for a male prostitute in Deut 23:18: see NIV!). Dogs were nasty creatures, capable of and often demonstrating some less than savory habits. To compare someone to such an animal was saying that they were or are, less than human, controlled by base instincts. The important thing to consider is that in ancient days, dogs were not the cuddly friends that they are known as today. At best, they were work animals, much the way that a cow or a horse might be on a farm. They served a purpose. And that purpose would range, as it does today, between guard animal or cleanup crew. And that second part, the clearing of trash, is where they get their nasty reputation.

Dogs will eat almost anything. Primarily, they like meat, and can easily hunt down prey when in a pack. They are strong and full of tools that allow them to smell and hear their quarry efficiently. But, as said, they will eat anything. That includes food that is not safe for human consumption, i.e. garbage. Their bodies are specially designed to handle food that many other animals cannot.

And while this seems a complete contrast with the loveable pooches we know today, dogs throughout the world still carry this reputation, especially in cultures

where domesticated dogs are not a standard. So we have creatures that are portrayed throughout history with a dark, gritty nature that is very animalistic.

God's creation

1. Dogs are a creation of God and display his understanding of the world and our needs.

“And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good” (Gen 1:24-25).

Dogs fall into the sixth day of creation, the formation of all land beasts. As with all his creation, God cares deeply for all that he has made.

“Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” (Matt 6:26).

And beyond simply caring, God made each animal, each plant, to work together to allow the world to function as he saw fit. Once death became a reality, he had beasts prepared to take care of the remains. This cleanup crew, while detestable in the eyes of man, is actually a beautiful representation of God's perfect planning.

We see an example of this:

“And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window.

And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master? And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot. And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter. And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands. Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This is the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel” (2Kgs 9:30-36).



This is a miracle because it had been prophesied beforehand. And any who saw the end result would think of it as such. Jezebel disappeared, destroyed so badly that her body could not be found. But this was not some supernatural beast or magical spell, just the world God had created, functioning as he intended.

God knows his creation. Yes, he performs miracles, but he does so within the realm of nature. Dogs are one of many examples of God's perfect design.

The same thing can be said about us. God knows us intimately, our flaws and our needs. He knows how we can fit in with his grand scheme. He knows how much we can take and how far we can go. This is not a god blind to our nature, but a god who is fully aware at all times as to who we are.

We see dogs who take on roles as service animals, we have studies showing dogs relieve stress, examples of dogs being able to detect disease. And these are not modern developments in the animal, but things God put in place for when there would be a need, showing He knows His creations from when they are first formed, to the end of time.

2. Dogs can be taught to be useful, and sometimes the training is hard.

As was mentioned before, dogs' base instincts are less than desirable. No better example of this is than when a puppy is taken into a new home. Where does it relieve itself? Base instincts tell it that anywhere will do. What can it chew on? Whatever fits in its mouth. What should it do when scared? If relieving itself doesn't work, it has a mouth full of sharp teeth that may drive the scary things away. It is only through training and discipline that good behavior is taught to the dog.

Most dogs and wild animals are like this. If they are to be good pets or work animals, they must be shown how they are expected to live and behave.

This has been going on throughout history

"And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods" (1Sam 17:43).

A staff would have been, and has been used to correct (not abuse) a dog's behavior throughout history, all the way up to a modern version of a newspaper, or flicking a nose. And while this is not the most socially acceptable training method in modern day dog whispering, it has been an effective tool of instruction.

And dogs, being wonderful learners, are able to apply this to their daily lives, adjusting to an acceptable manner of how they conduct themselves.

There are many ways to train dogs, some less pleasant than others, but the fact remains that dogs can be trained by their masters to put off old, natural mannerisms in favor of ones that are pleasing.

Of course, this is similar to how we are trained in the path towards the kingdom.

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1Cor 13:11).

When we are outside of God's word, learning, developing, we are still ruled over by nature, just as a dog in the wild is in survival mode. We too, without God's direction, are simply trying to survive, like children who don't know better.

God, in an effort to train us in a better way of life, uses various methods, until we decide to put off nature, and adapt a way of life that is pleasing to God, the same way a dog learns to please his master. And as God knows us, His creations, He in turn knows what we have left to learn and how best to guide us to this path.

Some of the lessons are difficult, what some might consider cruel, like a staff that leaves metaphorical welts in an effort to redirect our paths. Other lessons are kind, like treats or pats on the head to indicate that the behavior was pleasing to our all wise master.

It is important to remember that these lessons, or trials, are not meant as punishments, but as redirecting.

"For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hos 6:6).

God wants us to know Him and understand His will and purpose. He wants us to be willing servants to Him and is willing to train us to be what He desires.

3. Dogs can feel genuine love for their masters.

There is nothing quite like seeing a dog wag their tail in joy at seeing their loved ones return home. Dogs are one of the few animals that know and experience an emotional attachment to others, equal to love. In fact, dogs are ranked as the most intelligent non-ape creature for their ability to learn commands and respond to behavior to creatures that are not dogs (i.e. humans).

Part of this is learned behavior. Dogs are able to learn, over time, that their masters (good ones) care for them. They know that it is from said masters that food is provided, that shelter is given, and that love is reciprocated. Dogs in turn view this master as a leader, someone that is good to be around, and are fiercely loyal to that master. This is not unlike our relationship with God.

"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt 6:26-33).

God, in addition to knowing our usefulness, knows our needs and will meet them. He will make sure that we receive the things we need in the time that they are needed. We do not truly have a say in when we receive such things, as to when or where these gifts will be provided, no more than a dog begging for dinner can control when the master gives it to him.

A dog can ask, just as we can pray, and just like a master who cares for their pet, God will deliver us the sustenance when we need it. We should in turn love Him, and be loyal to Him.

Yet we sometimes forget from whom all has been given.

“And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:16-21).

No, God does not reach down and hand us our food, or our clothes, but He does provide opportunities for us to get such things. He makes sure that there is enough food for the land to eat, makes sure that rain comes down at the appropriate moments. We can never take credit for all God has and does take care of for our needs to be met.

This understanding, this comprehension that it is God who provides, and not our own hand, comes only from the knowledge of His nature. Through our own training in life and the understanding of who God is, we can appreciate and love Him for all he is and all He does.

4. We are not dogs

A metaphor is a comparison of two things that are similar. In this case, we have been comparing some, not all, of the aspects of dogs to our walks in the truth. Their base nature, which not only is a representation of God’s full understanding of His creation, can represent us without God: surviving, but aimless. Searching for sustenance with no knowledge of the source of it.

Training a dog is like the trials of our own lives, the struggles and rewards of our walk in the truth. God knows what we can handle, knows when to use the rod and when to use the reward. He understands what it will take to bring us to realize how much better our lives will be with Him in them.

And through this perhaps somewhat similar training, a dog’s love and loyalty is a beautiful picture of how our relationship with God should be, full of faithfulness and devotion to our provider.

But...

A metaphor compares two similar things, not two exact things. And in the end, it is important to remember that we are not dogs.

As smart as they are, a dog's love is based on a pack mentality and is that of master and servant.

And while our relationship with God is similar to that of a dog and human, it is so much deeper than that. Our God gives life, provides us with physical nourishment, but also strength and comfort from the stressors in our lives. His love is so much more than that of a master to a servant, more even than that of a parent to a child.

God loved us so much that He was willing to sacrifice His only son, so that we might be able to be brought into a covenant relationship with Him. This is not the kind of love that one gives to a beast, but to one with whom a real relationship exists. God knows that we have the ability to reason and make this choice of our own accord, something no animal is able to do.

God does not train us so that we will obey for treats or to avoid a mild punishment, He trains us so that we can be part of something grand, to bring us into His plan and purpose. He guides us so that we might be brought closer to Him, to build our love for Him. He is not seeking pets, He is seeking children who can join in His plan and purpose for this world.

It is this plan and that purpose that brings us together each week, more than that. Not as dogs but as brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, having put off natural instincts to be better and to have purpose. To remember the power of God's love and the length He is willing to go to bring us to Him. To adopt us from a wilderness of sin, into a house of righteousness. To show us a better path, and the love that follows will bring us to an everlasting kingdom.

Ethan Bearden (Austin Leander, TX)

Have an exhortation, devotion or article you would like posted in the Tidings Youth? Email Ethan Bearden at ejbearden1988@gmail.com, or find him on Facebook.

Joseph dreamed that the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down to him; and who should they bow to save the sun? Joshua, too, is the sun. For he is the son of Nûn, and does not Nûn, being interpreted, mean fish? and does not the sun at the spring equinox issue from the constellation of Pisces? What could be more conclusive? Besides, does it not amply explain why Joshua's companion is Caleb? Now Caleb is Kaleb, and Kaleb is Kelb, and Kelb is a dog. So, of course, Caleb is clearly put for the dog-star Sirius.

The Christadelphian, 1907, p. 499.

The 1866 Statement of Faith

Necessity for the negative.

Bro. Roberts, in 1866, wrote a series of statements, including what the “Christadelphians Do Not Believe”, to be placed on tablets at the entry to the Athenaeum Hall, the “Christadelphian Synagogue” where the Birmingham Ecclesia met at the time. He explained the inclusion of this section in the following words:

“At first sight, it might appear superfluous, and even unwarrantable, to set forth points of non-belief as a basis of faith, but a moment’s reflection will dissipate this impression, and reveal the negative side of faith to be of equal value with the positive. Every affirmative proposition has a converse. Every ‘yes’ has a ‘no;’ and if a man is not prepared to boldly accept that ‘no’, it shews his ‘yes’ is not worth much. For instance, if a man profess to believe in the God of Israel, he is bound to be able to say that he does not believe in the gods of the heathen. If he were to be timorous about affirming the latter, would it not show that his belief in the God of Israel was no belief in the real sense, but merely a fragment of ancient polytheism, which recognized different gods for different nations? Is it not part of a true profession of faith in Jehovah to be able to say boldly that we do not believe in any of the deities of heathen imagination? Would any even ‘Christian’ community recognize the faith of a man who hesitated to commit himself to this negative? Does not the acceptance of any truth involve the repudiation of everything opposite to it? And would not hesitancy to repudiate the opposites, show uncertainty and indecision with regard to the positives?”

“There is but one rational answer to these questions, and that answer falls in with Paul’s exhortation, that in maintaining the truth, we must ‘Refuse profane and old wives’ fables.’ Now, in the present day, there are many profane and old wives’ fables abroad in the earth in the name of the gospel. Paul predicted that such would be the case — that the time would come when men, professing the name of Christ, would turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned aside unto fables. (2Tim: 4:3-4.) Now, is it not of the first importance that these fables should be repudiated? Can anyone hold the truth without rejecting them? Is it not a part of a true profession of faith in our time to reject the traditions that make the Word of God of none effect? Common sense will supply the answer. There is a negative as well as a positive side to the faith in our day, for the simple reason that there is a spurious faith to be destroyed before the true faith can enter the mind.”

“In the apostles’ days, the work was simpler. There was no counterfeit Christianity to obstruct the operations of the truth. The apostles had only to propound their doctrines constructively. There was no necessity to go out of the way and deal with the dogmas of Paganism. Paganism was Paganism, and the gospel was the gospel. They did not stand on the same ground. There was no competition between them. If Christ was received Paganism was rejected, as a matter of course, but it is a different thing now. We have to deal with Paganism in the garb of Christianity.

“We have to deal with another gospel preached in the name of Christ and His apostles; and it therefore forms one of the first duties of intelligent and faithful testimony to protest against and expose the imposture. One of the first acts of a valid profession of the truth is to repudiate ‘the profane and old wives’ fables’ which abound in the guise of truth. In fact, in times like these, the repudiation of false doctrine is almost a criterion of the reception of the truth. If a man shrink from the rejection of the fictions of so-called Christendom, it is a sure sign that his apprehension of the verities of the gospel is very weak, if it is not altogether non-existent. Positive belief — (that is full assurance of faith) — on one side, necessitates and produces positive nonbelief on the other. A man heartily believing the truth will heartily reject error; and if he does not heartily do the latter, it is an infallible proof that he is incapable of heartily doing the former. Hence the propriety and necessity of exacting the nonbelief of truth-nullifying fables as a corollary to the reception of the truth in its positive form. On this foundation, the Birmingham ecclesia take their stand, and will have fellowship with none who are not prepared with themselves to maintain the purity of the truth.”¹

The negative statements were as follows:

Christadelphians Do Not Believe

In the Trinity,

In the Co-equality and Co-eternity of Jesus with the Deity,

In the Existence of Jesus before his Conception at Nazareth,

In the Personality of the Holy Spirit,

In the Personality of the DEVIL,

In the Immortality of the Soul,

In the post-mortem Transportation of Saints to Heaven and Sinners to Hell,

In Eternal Torments,

In Baby Sprinkling and Infant Salvation,

In Sabbatarianism,

In Salvation by Good Works apart from the Gospel,

In Salvation without Baptism,

In the validity of Baptism where the Gospel was not understood and believed at the time of its administration,

In "Conversion" apart from the intelligent apprehension of the Word,

In the "conversion of the world" by the preaching of the gospel.

They do not believe that the Old Testament has been set aside by the New, but on the contrary, they base their faith on the writings of Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles, comprehensively viewed, and reject everything contrary to their teaching.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. *The Christadelphian*, 1866, p. 180.

The Positive Statements

Christadelphians believe in the one God revealed to Israel, in Jesus of Nazareth as a man, born of the Holy Spirit by Mary, put to death as a sin-offering, raised from the dead, exalted to the heavens, and declared to be son of God;

In the divine origin of the words spoken by Jesus, the prophets and the apostles. In the absolute necessity of understanding the Old Testament, in order to come to a correct New Testament faith. In the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the covenant made with David, and therefore in the second (personal) coming of Jesus to earth to restore the Jews from dispersion, re-establish the kingdom of David, possess the holy land, subdue all kingdoms on earth, and reign universally for 1,000 years, at the end of which, having put down all enemies, including death itself. He will give up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all.

They further believe.

That mankind in Adam is under a just condemnation of death, that the Christ, as a second Adam, brought immortality to light by death and resurrection. That in order to obtain a title to this immortality, men must:

Believe in the foregoing "things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ."

Be immersed in water for a union with his name.

And continue in the steadfast service of him till the end.

That Christ at his appearing will judge his servants, living and dead, and

Give eternal life to those who are worthy, and appoint them rulers in his kingdom on earth; and

Condemn to second death those who are unworthy.

The New Testament Church (13) Festival Days and Fasting

Festival days

The first day of the week was observed as Remembrance Day — the remembrance of the Lord. Luke records: *“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight”* (Acts 20:7). This is a simple reference, among others, that establishes this fact. The Jewish church probably continued for a time to observe some of the annual feasts of the Law— the Passover, Unleavened bread, and Pentecost were all Jewish feasts, and they all find mention in the Acts of the Apostles. You will notice in Acts 12:4 we get, in the KJV, the word “Easter”, uniquely in the Bible. Of course it should not be translated Easter: the word is “pascha”, Passover, and all modern versions so translate it. It was the Authorized Version translators who called it Easter, so do not be misled by people who say the Authorized Version is the pure truth, because here we have “Easter” in the Authorized Version, and it ought never to be there.

It is an interesting fact that the date of “Easter” became the subject of controversy very early in the history of the church¹. The church was riven apart and torn asunder by arguments about this trifling matter. (The Eastern Church and the Western church fail to agree on it even to this day.) The Christian Jews in New Testament times would appear to have still observed some of these Jewish feasts and fast days. It was not very long before they were taken over, adapted, adopted, and developed by the church, and by the second century you have got all kinds of arguments blowing up, as, for example, the particular day on which Easter ought to be observed.

Other special days were clearly being introduced in apostolic times — in Paul’s own lifetime. *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ”* (Col 2.16). Here again Paul is establishing the principles. These things he said are shadows. They do not mean very much at all. The substance is Christ, as Christ is the substance of everything in the Old Testament, as Christ is the substance of everything in the Law; the substance is Christ, but do not let a man judge you in respect of these things. In other words Paul was willing to accept people’s scruples, their little foibles, and their difficulties. They found it difficult to extricate themselves from their Jewish background and they still felt they ought to observe some of these Jewish feasts and fast days, and as far as Paul was concerned that was all right as long as they remembered that Christ was *“the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”* (Rom 10:4).

So also in Galatians, because they had now tried to establish some of these days as being binding upon the Church, we find him fighting against it:

“But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain” (Gal 4:9-11).

They were observing these feast days, and festival days; and he says he is afraid of what is going to happen. He does not like what is taking place. He does not like to see these things growing up in their midst. The new churches obviously adopted some of the Jewish feast days, and just as obviously adopted others from the pagan festivals. And it was not very long before the calendar became full of festivals and fasts which helped to “sell” Christianity to the pagan world. Thus, what began as a sensible compromise ended in a corruption of the simplicity which is in Christ. And that is why we should spend time considering these things. They were, after all, sensible compromises. Paul allowed for them. They were not to judge one another in respect of “days.” If one man wanted to esteem a day let him esteem it. If another did not want to esteem it then let him not esteem it. This man esteemed it to the Lord, and this man did not esteem it to the Lord, and God was glorified. It was a sensible, realistic compromise if you like. An adaptation to the situation. But there were dangers in it, and these grew very quickly, until the fast days and feast days and festival days riddled the year for the Christian church, and became a source of argument and strife and debate; and almost took over as the important thing of their religion.²

Fasting

What about fasting? We do not fast today, do we?³ They used to in New Testament times, and we are “apostolic Christianity revived.” When do we do our fasting and the laying on of hands? For they are generally associated, in fact, in New Testament times, along with prayer. Prayer, and fasting, and the laying on of hands — often as a means of dedication to a particular task. Now I wonder if again this was one of these transitional things, or whether it was a permanent institution which we ought to practise today. We must not say of any of these things, because we do not do them, that they are not necessary. We must be taught by the Word. We claim that we follow the apostolic practice. Now clearly the apostolic practice was to pray and fast and lay their hands on somebody, as a means of dedicating him to the task he had to do for the Lord.

You will remember how Jesus himself, when the disciples were all at sixes and sevens over the man whose son we would think was epileptic (“possessed with devils”) said, *“This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting” (Mark 9:29).* I wonder why fasting, as well as prayer? And: *“when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:3).* That was Paul and Barnabas, ordained for the work of the ministry, sent out on their missionary journey: *“So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.”* They fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them.

There is another interesting verse (I do not know what you make of this one, because it seems to be one of the “first principles” — what about this for a first principle then?) “*Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*” (Heb 6:1-2). There are those (e.g. Bro. John Carter) who interpret this verse as being the principles of the Law for the Jews, and not for Christians, and it could well be that they are right.⁴ All the same, I have heard this verse used a good many times as an evidence of the first principles, because it mentions baptism and resurrection and judgment — but it also mentions laying on of hands as one of the first principles.

Today, we all acknowledge the need for prayer, though I suspect not many of us acknowledge it so directly and purposefully as they did in New Testament times. I do not think as a community we are very good at prayer. This may sound an awful thing to say, but I do not think we are, and I do not think we believe in prayer anything like we should, or anything like they did in New Testament times. So, before we too easily congratulate ourselves on being “apostolic Christianity revived,” or the New Testament church in the 20th century, let us be prepared to compare ourselves with them. We do not give the value and power and importance to prayer that they did in New Testament times, and we certainly do not do much about fasting, at least I do not.

We do not fast in the New Testament sense at all, nor do we lay hands on anybody. It is fair to point out that there is no specific command to do these things. There is nowhere in the New Testament, so far as I am aware, that specifically says we should fast. We are told to pray. “*Pray without ceasing*” (1Thess 5:17), “*be constant in prayer*” (Rom 12:2 ESV). Prayer is given tremendous prominence and importance, and is commanded, but fasting and laying on of hands are not. But it clearly does seem to have been a common practice of the first century church. And again, of course, it was later on developed in the Catholic and in the Protestant systems as a ritual.

The Catholic fast days and ordination ceremonies and the Protestant ordination ceremonies as well have frightened us off. We have been frightened off a good many things because “they” do it. Because they do it we must not! Of course, it is reasonable to be frightened when you see how these things grew, and how they developed. It is reasonable to be aware of the dangers, but that should not frighten us off if they are right to be done. We ought, if we are sensible Christian men and women, to be able to see that this is right, as it was practiced in New Testament times, and wrong as it developed in the Catholic system in later times.

We do not, as I see it, have any counterpart to the New Testament formula of prayer and fasting and of laying on of hands. Bro. J B Norris in his book, *The First Century Ecclesia*, takes up this point. Perhaps he does not belabor it quite as much as I have been doing, but he suggests that we should at least have public prayers for brethren commencing a term of office, or before embarking on any special project, and we should say “Amen” to that!

In other words, we may say we do not like the idea of fasting, but it might be good for our souls. We may say we do not like the idea of laying on of hands because look what happened in the church, how it became a ritual and a ceremony. Very well, but one cannot say anything against the idea that we ought to publicly commend our brethren to the service of God when, for example — they are elected to office; or when a brother is going abroad, perhaps on mission work; or when we are going to have a special effort in the ecclesia; or anything of that kind. The very least we ought to do, not the most, but the least, is to have a public acknowledgment of our need for God in prayer on such occasions, and send our brethren off with the prayers of the whole church strengthening their hearts for their work.

Summary

Let me then try to summarize. The church at the end of the first century was organized very differently from its inception in the early chapters of Acts. That seems to me to be axiomatic. When we come towards the end of the first century, when we come even to 35-40 years after the inception of the church, from those early primitive enthusiastic men and women of Acts 4, we have a different set-up. Numbers have been tremendously increased and the Gentile churches were flourishing, and these things were bringing inevitable changes with them. There was an adaptability and a flexibility about their arrangement to accommodate the new situation. Organization and administration developed in New Testament times under the guidance of the Apostles. Increasing numbers required suitable housing and church buildings became a necessity.

Christian worship necessarily became more formalized. Christian hymns took their place alongside Jewish psalms. Regular breaking of bread meetings became a feature of their weekly life. Collections took the place of communistic living. Outside influences crept in from the pagan world. Jewish and even heathen feast days and festivals began to be adapted for Christian uses. The seeds for future hierarchy and apostasy were being sown. The church of Jerusalem was on the way to Rome.

Len Richardson

Notes:

1. The Council of Nicea, famous for the Nicene Creed, also decided to change the date for the Remembrance of the death of Jesus from that of the Jewish Passover.
2. And still for us in our days: what to do about Christmas is still a matter of dispute among Christadelphians.
3. The use of Fasting in these days was discussed in *The Tidings*, 2010, p 293.
4. John Carter, in his “Epistle to the Hebrews” on this section.

Fasting is humbling oneself,
Fasting is acknowledging that we are but dust,
Fasting reminds us that “in me dwells no good thing”,
Fasting reminds us of self-denial,
Fasting reminds us that we depend on God for everything!
Steve Cheetham, *The Tidings*, 2010, p. 294.

Bible Mission

Parfait, Guyana Outreach Sunday School

This Sunday school of 15-30 students was started about three years ago by Sis. Candace Harrycharran. Sis. Candace, her husband, Bro. Charles and her daughter, Caroline, relocated across the Demerara River from Eccles, their home ecclesia.



Early Sunday mornings she invited neighbor children to come to her house to learn about the Bible. They met under a tarp at the side of their house. The Sunday school has grown through God's blessing and the dedicated efforts of brethren. The Eccles Ecclesia holds a Gospel Proclamation meeting there every other Sunday when some of the parents attend to hear the Bible talks. Since the school has become too big for Sis. Candace to manage alone, two young sisters from Eccles come faithfully every Sunday to teach the children. They are Sis. Joanna Porte and Sis. Faida N'Djelekulu. Please remember this group of Sunday school children and their parents in prayer. This is a very poor neighborhood and the Gospel can bring hope to these children and their families.

Eccles supports another outreach Sunday school at the Ruimveldt Children's Center. Sis. Maudlin December has been the fire behind this for several years but due to her son's stroke last year she has had to pull back. Others have stepped in to try to keep it going. Eccles also supports an outreach CYC about 45 minutes drive away in a place called Linden. Originally it was a Sunday school but now that the children are older it is a CYC. I believe they meet fortnightly.

The Eccles Ecclesia also provides support to the other Guyana ecclesias as they have the greatest number of "platform" brethren who can exhort. They have four experienced brothers and three newly baptized brothers. It is amazing

that such a small group of brothers dedicated to serving our Lord can do all that they do. May God strengthen their hands for the tasks before them. Eccles gets some support from other Demerara ecclesias when they are off serving in other ecclesias. Thankfully the three Demerara ecclesias are within fairly close proximity with bus service usually available and some brethren with their own vehicles to do all of this.

*Written by Dolores Sleeper, Link Couple
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity*

Four Baptisms in Mexico

We are very pleased to announce the four new baptisms in Mexico: Maria Guadalupe (Lupe) Hernandez Casillas, Victor Geraldo (Gera) Cortez Hernandez, Maria Reyna Vargas Vazquez, and Maria Guadalupe (Lupe) Frutos Paz.

Lupe and Gera were baptized March 30, 2016, and Reyna was baptized March 29, 2016, and are all members of the newest ecclesia in Ocotlan, Jalisco, Mexico. Lupe Hernandez came to know of the Christadelphians through Sister Cinthya Alvarez who lives in the same small town of Santa Cruz de Grande, Jalisco, Mexico which is located about 15 miles outside of Ocotlan. Sister Cinthya, who is a member of the Ocotlan ecclesia, began sharing her enthusiasm for the truth with Lupe and Gera her son even before she was baptized last August. Lupe began having formal classes with Sister Cynthia Paiva in February 2015. Lupe is an eager Bible student and often had, and continues to have classes three days a week. Gera her son, a few months after Lupe began, wanted to join the Bible study classes after having his mom teach him everything she was learning along the way. So the classes were switched to Lupe and Geras home as it is difficult for Gera to be in another location. Three days a week they and others diligently studied and continue to study the Bible with Sister Cynthia Paiva and/or Gabriel Lopez, either in person or by Skype, and with Sister Cinthya Alvarez. Our new Sister Reyna also joined those study groups in June of 2015. Sister Reyna also is an enthusiastic Bible student who often does much study on her own outside of the regular classes. There continues to be several others studying in that small town of Santa Cruz de Grande.



Sis. Lupe and Bro. Gera

Lupe Frutos was baptized April 10, 2016 in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. Lupe Frutos began attending Sunday classes at the Bible Center in December of 2013. She has always been a very diligent and attentive student with great enthusiasm



Sis. Reyna with Bro. Luis Miguel and Bro. Manuel from Ocotlan. Outside the pool are Bro. Victorino from Guadalajara and his son Victor Saul.

*Written by David Lloyd Colinkman to Mexico
Submitted by Jan Berneau,
CBMA/CBMC Publicity*

**Sis. Lupe Frutos with
Bro. Jullio and Bro
Teodoro from
Guadalajara Ecclesia.**



for what she was learning. She completed much coursework on the side with Sis Cynthia Paiva and Bro. Victorino Ramirez over the past two years in addition to her faithful attendance on Sundays. The Sunday classes, which covered First Principles and Genesis given by Bro Gabriel Lopez, were instrumental in laying a firm foundation of understanding for Lupe. In the last six months she had attended the more advanced classes on Wednesday and began a class for baptismal preparation guided by Bro. Michael Conner.

May Weekend Bible Camp in La Paz

The annual Bible Camp was held from May 26th - 29th about 45 minutes from Bolivia's capital at a recreation area — 'Casa de Campo Achocalla'. It is a very quiet location, consisting of a number of buildings with multiple bedrooms and bathrooms, plus several meeting rooms and a dining area. There were only 10 of us this year. Brother Shimon and Sister Joanna Spina (missionaries here for about three years) are now back in Australia as of early this year, and several other members and friends were unable to attend for various reason. Nevertheless, we enjoyed a number of studies on various aspects of our life in Christ, for example — 'I made a covenant with mine eyes' (Job 31:1 — regarding faithfulness in marriage, in particular), 'How to make decisions that are Biblical and not emotional', 'Where will we be when Christ returns?' and 'Our Speech'. We enjoyed nine classes and a Remembrance Service together. The two young ladies present (daughters of members) — Carla and Camila — did an excellent job

of organizing the evening Bible-based games. One activity involved drawing on a white board or acting out (silently) a Bible incident or character — somehow a ‘silent’ game created a lot of noise and good fun!

There is an ample outdoor area for recreational activity, like Frisbee and volleyball (although to our own rules!) under the very intense afternoon sun at about 12,000 feet altitude. It is never too hot in this zone, and at night the temperature drops to almost freezing — 5 blankets and no heat — chilly! The physical food provided was more than adequate as well.

Back in La Paz after the weekend, there were talks scheduled for Monday and Tuesday evenings at the ecclesial hall — one each time. There were several regular attendees with us on both occasions — one man is studying intently for baptism. On the Tuesday afternoon I was taken for a first-time ride on the two-



year old Austrian built cable car system. It’s called ‘El Tereférico’ — it spans in different directions atop this traffic-filled ‘city-in-a-crater’, and also up the steep slope to a station in ‘El Alto’ — another large city on the plateau where the airport is located. The cable car provides a fascinating aerial-view of this unique city, as well as the snow-capped mountains surrounding it, like ‘Illimani’. Thankfully the government has made it inexpensive to use, so the cars are generally full.

Although few in number, the 5 active members, as well as a number of friends, treated me with ‘large’ hospitality during my stay.

Written by CBMA Bolivia linkman, Don Luff



Bible Camp at ‘Casa de Campo Achocalla’ – Sunday School scholars preparing Bible character game – left to right - Carla Rojas, Camila Prado & Sis. Magaly Borja



Bible Class at La Paz Ecclesial hall, Tues, May 31st

Barbados Bible School — 2016

For Joan and I this was our second wonderful opportunity since 2009 to share in the Barbados Annual Easter Bible School hosted by the Bank Hall Ecclesia.

We left Guyana, March 23rd in the throes of El Nino drought conditions only to find that this beautiful West Indian island was experiencing virtually similar conditions. The grass everywhere were dry and faded, but happily, the hearts of our beloved Brethren were willing and eager to share in the living Word of God and this reflected very much so in their attendance and fellowship we shared in the several days of Bible study that lay ahead.

On Sunday, Memorial Service at 10:30 AM was presided over by Bro Anthony Hunte and we considered the exhortation “Return to me” — the heart-wrenching relationship between Bre. Onesimus and Philemon and the wisdom of the Spirit working through Bro. Paul to bring them together again. The hall was filled to capacity and the fellowship was sweetly intense.

Gospel Proclamation immediately followed at 2:00 PM during which we considered “The Middle East Crisis and You”. Here we tried to find Biblical groundings with the current crisis particularly in Syria and traced the moulding of history, from the early fractures in Israel which will eventually culminate at the pinnacle of time when “the Lord shall roar from Zion and utter His voice from Jerusalem...!”

The theme chosen for this Bible School was — “Shew Me Thy Glory” which was divided into six sessions, namely:

- 1) Shew me Thy glory (our desire for the spectacular)
- 2) Reflecting God’s glory (the reason we were created)
- 3) God’s fading glory (our faulty vessels)
- 4) Leaving God’s presence (why do we leave?)

- 5) Redeeming the time, (now is the accepted time)
- 6) Entering His glory (holding to the vision)

Classes were divided into 2 sessions each day: the first being from 2:00–3:00 PM; a break of half-an-hour; and later from 3:30–4:30. This gave participants the opportunity to complete their individual domestic assignments as well as having lunch before attending the day’s sessions. Overall attendance ranged from 20 to a high of 46 at the Memorial Service on Sunday morning.

We were happy to meet with Bro Phil Weatherall from Rugby, England who was visiting the island along with several members of his family, as well as Bro Andre George from St Lucia.

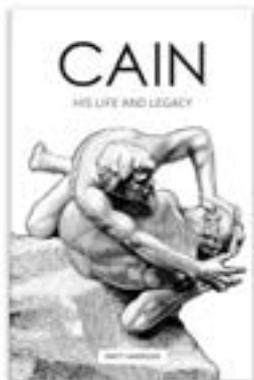
Tuesday March 29th seemed to have run around so quickly to find us preparing to board our aircraft for Guyana. Barbados was indeed a joyous experience for both me and Joan. May it please our loving Father in heaven to cause His Holy Word which was planted to bear good fruit unto His most Holy Name and that of our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus.



We express our unreserved thanks and appreciation to CBMC and Bro. Rod Ghent for this wonderful opportunity to share in the work in this part of our Lord’s vineyard. Our hope is that we would again be given the opportunity to return to our Barbados Brethren whenever and as often as circumstances allow.

*Written by God’s grace, David & Joan Andrews, full-time Caribbean Fieldworkers
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity*

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NEW! CAIN — His Life and Legacy Matt Harrison

Today's world dismisses Cain and Abel as mere myth, legend and literary archetypes. Yet they and their descendants were real people who lived in a unique historical context that is relevant even now. This study probes the lessons of the period before the Flood and explores questions Bible students have long asked. Find out why he was so significant to the early ecclesia.

Published: August 2016 - 106 pages. \$5.00 USD (plus S&H)

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News and Notices

Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.
Word files or e-mail in text-only format are preferred.

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.

CAMBRIDGE, ON

The Cambridge ecclesial study day was held April 30-May 1, 2016, and was led by Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA) on the subject, "The First Gospel". The study day was very well attended and the encouragement, exposition and exhortation was much appreciated by all.

We thank our Bro. Joe Abel (Collingwood, ON) for providing words of exhortation and leading our afternoon Bible class on June 26, 2016. We have welcomed by transfer Sis. Naomi Pitcher from Australia and we pray that she will be strengthened together with us as we walk toward the kingdom of God.

Caleb Lawrence

HONESDALE, PA

Bro. Steve and Sis. Chris Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ) visited us on June 12, 2016. Bro. Steve gave us a stirring exhortation and they shared fellowship with us. Our sisters made a wonderful luncheon for us all.

Three brethren and two children attended the July Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School at Shippensburg University, PA. It was a very edifying experience, especially for Rachel and Brian Kowal. Bro. Brian Goodman went on a Christadelphian Meal-A-Day fund mission to Nicaragua in July. The team of Christadelphians worked a week long shift building a house for a person in need.

Stephen J. DeMarco

NORTHERN VIRGINIA, VA

We must report that Bro. Andrew Amis and Sis. Erin Amis have decided to leave fellowship with the Christadelphians.

David Fertig

ORLANDO, FL

Our ecclesia welcomed many brothers and sisters over the last few months: including: Phil and Jean Hale (Castleford, UK); Julie Dawes (Toronto East, ON); Edgar and Erica Rodriguez, with Arianna and Armando (Gainesville, FL); Ezra Link (Baltimore, MD); Cindy Ross (Apopka, FL); Ken and Bonnie Burcaw (Ann Arbor, MI); Julian and Sandra Baseley (Guilford, UK); Tom and Vivian Thorp (Mississauga West, ON). Many thanks to all visiting brothers who exhorted.

Bro. Matthew and Sis. Pamela Ross (Casselberry, FL), formerly CGAF, have recently joined our meeting. We are both delighted and blessed to have them be a part of our small ecclesia.

On April 14, 2016, Sis. Annette Powell and her husband, Robert, welcomed a baby girl, Ivy Rose. Sadly for us, the family relocated to Michigan in May. Their children Robert and Mara were in our Sunday school class. We will miss them very much and wish them God's blessings in their new home.

Bro. Chris Blanchfield travelled to South Africa on March 17, 2016. He spent two months helping at the Christadelphian Bible Mission along with other young missionaries. He gave a great presentation of his travels when he returned in May.

We sadly said goodbye to Bro. Aaron and Sis. Rhonda Markwith and their two boys, Shiloh and Gabe. They are relocating to Greenville, SC at the end of this month. Bro. Dan and Sis. Dawn Garan hosted a barbeque for them on May 29, 2016. We enjoyed the fellowship and good food provided by the brothers and sisters. We wish the Markwith family God's blessings in their new home. They will be greatly missed.

Deborah Fenn

PRINCE GEORGE, BC

We are saddened by the falling asleep of Bro. David Lawrence on June 13, 2016, but rejoice in the hope that we all share in the resurrection. Bro. David was baptised in Vancouver, BC on Apr 8, 1967 and worked faithfully in that ecclesia and in Prince George, where he moved in 1980, until the week before he fell asleep. Bro. David leaves behind his wife, Sis. Lois, and his four children, Sarah, Bro. Caleb, Bro. Peter and Bro. Jonathan Lawrence. We are very thankful for the encouragement we have received over the last few months from our Bro. Jesse Fletcher and our Bro. Jim Cowie.

Bro. David Jennings was our fraternal speaker this year and we are very thankful for all of the efforts of our brethren on our behalf. If anyone wishes to visit northern British Columbia please feel free to contact us at pgchristadelphians@hotmail.com. We would love to have you. Meetings will be held at 10:30 for the months of July and August at the North Edge Ice Sports store in the Hart Mall.

Jonathan Lawrence

ROGUE VALLEY, OR

We are happy to announce the baptism of JOEL SHARP into the saving name of Christ. He is presently an associate member of our ecclesia. Bro. Matt Hatcher has transferred his membership from the Thousand Oaks, CA ecclesia to this ecclesia. Bro. Randy and Sis. Susanna Yoshida have transferred their membership to the Jackson County Ecclesia in Central Point, OR. On a sad note, Sis. Phyllis Backus and Sis. Alice Nash have fallen asleep in Christ, and now await the resurrection when our Lord returns.

We had many brothers and sisters visiting with us including: Steve Pursell and Tony and Amy Ball (Seattle-Monroe, WA); Becky Mullins (Verdugo Hills, CA); Graeme and Rachel Osborne (Vernon-Okanagan, BC); Tom and Sarah Muniz, Adam and Denise Ward, Jim Albrecht, Larry and Kathleen King, Harold and Jeanette Larson, and Randy and Susanna Yoshida (Jackson County, OR); Neal and Emmie Caplan (Reseda, CA); Mike and Rose Hatcher (Thousand Oaks, CA); Robbie and Liz Posey, Jason Mullins, Terah Horvath and Marie Cooper (Seattle, WA); Marcia Cleveland (Portland, OR); Shirley Stickney (Santa Barbara, CA); Jim Cowie (Moreton Bay, Aust.).

We would like to thank Bre.: Graeme Osborne, Neal Caplan, Jim Albrecht, Tom Muniz, Robbie Posey, Jim Cowie, Randy Yoshida, and Tony Ball for their words of exhortation.

On April 2-3, 2016, we had our study weekend with Bro. Jim Cowie, speaking on, "The Spirit of Christ in the Psalms". On May 7-8, 2016, we had our CYC study weekend on, "Exploring Humanism", with attendees from the San Francisco Bay, Sacramento, Rogue Valley, Seattle, and Seattle-Monroe ecclesias. On June 12, 2016, we enjoyed our Sunday school breakfast and awards. On July 31-August 6, 2016, we had the Rogue River Bible School. Our speakers were: Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Aust.) on, "The Life of Noah;" Bro. David Wisniewski (Brant County, ON) speaking on, "Parables in the Gospels;" and Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI) speaking on, "Forgiveness".

Monthly we are having joint Memorial Services with the Jackson County Ecclesia. For information on any of the above, contact Bro. Henry Wisniewski, Recording Brother, at: 541 956-5829 or by email at: henrywisniewski@hotmail.com.

Henry Wisniewski

SARASOTA, FL

The sympathy of the Sarasota ecclesia is extended to the family of Bro. Bob Deakin, who fell asleep in the Lord on August 6, 2016. Bro. Bob took on the saving name of Christ at an early age, and remained stalwart in His service for many years. He served this ecclesia in a number of positions including recording brother.

This ecclesia owes a great deal to Bro. Bob. Words cannot begin to express our appreciation for everything that he and his family have done for the Sarasota Ecclesia and the truth worldwide.

Bob has had his many ailments lifted from him, and now awaits that great call from his Master. We, along with his sister wife Jean, and family, look forward to seeing him and the other faithful on that wonderful resurrection morn.

James L. Wilkinson

SIMI HILLS, CA

The Simi Hills Ecclesia has a number of items to report on since we last checked in back in 2014. We have been blessed with several fraternal gatherings, new preaching activities, three marriages and a large number of additions to our ecclesia.

We've hosted three study days since late 2014. Bro. Brian Luke (Aust.) led our study day in December 2014, on the subject "Family Life in the Lord". Bro. Allen Laben taught us in June 2015, on "James: the Testing of Our Faith", and Bro. John Billington (Brantford, ON) spoke to us on "Events Leading to the Return of Israel's King, Understanding our Time" in December 2015. This last study day was both a fraternal and preaching activity as we invited all our seminar students to attend and had a nice turnout.

After several years' hiatus, we began a new seminar series in Fall 2015, and are now in our second round of reaching out to the people around us. We thank God for the number of interested visitors at the seminars. Our ecclesia also sponsors a booth at the Simi Valley Street Fair each year in the spring, where we advertise our Annual Bible Reading Marathon. The Marathon is held at our hall with many in our own ecclesia, as well as surrounding ecclesias, helping read out-loud the entire Bible over four days time. The event is broadcast on the internet.

The additions to our ecclesia have come by way of transfer, baptism and birth. Transferring in were Sis. Karen Washeck from the Denver, CO Ecclesia and Sis. Tricia

McLeod from Canada in 2014; and Bro. Mark and Sis. Robin Kelso, Bro. Andrew and Sis. Carly Culver, and Bro. Michael and Sis. Alisa Jennings in 2015.

MICHAEL SESMA was baptized on April 20, 2014, LIZ SANCHEZ on April 24, 2014; CORINNE REICH on July 31, 2014; LIZ MCCORMACK on September 2, 2014; ABBEY SNOBELLEN on April 7, 2015; CORAL REICH on July 30, 2015; MICHAEL STERNAD in September 2015; and KYLE DE CAUSSIN on January 28, 2016.

We were excited to witness the uniting in marriage of Bro. Michael Sesma and Sis. Cher Bucknam on October 4, 2014, Bro. Jared Patterson and Sis. Liz Sanchez on May 2, 2015, and Bro. Michael Sternad and Sis. Karen Washeck on March 12, 2016.

We were also thrilled to welcome many future Sunday school students to our ecclesia during this time. Two boys, Caiden Elijah Gelineau, born April 16, 2014, and Zane Isaiah Gelineau, born November 4, 2015 to Bro. Luke and Sis. Heather Gelineau; Sarah Annalise Hensley, a daughter, born to Bro. Jason and Sis. Ruth Hensley on July 2, 2014; two daughters, Riley Lynn Wheeler, born August 1, 2014, and Skyler Ann Wheeler born February 3, 2016, to Bro. Colton and Sis. Rachel Wheeler; Andreen Pixie Levy, a daughter, born to Bro. Oniel and Sis. Kelsey Levy on January 1, 2015; and Evan Andrew Clubb, a son, born January 11, 2016, to Bro. David and Sis. Erin Clubb.

We enjoyed having Bro. Steven and Sis. Julie Snobelen and family with us on an extended visit in 2014-2015, as they had returned to Nova Scotia in June 2015. We also had to say goodbye to Bro. Matt and Sis. Leah Elton and family who after an extended stay here moved back to Australia. Bro. Nolan and Sis. Kelly Patterson and family moved to the San Diego area in 2014. Bro. Geoff and Sis. Brenda Lee Smith and Bro. Aidan Smith moved to San Diego in September 2015. Also in September 2015, Bro. Vaughn Smith moved to Wales to attend college.

Jeff Gelineau

VICTORIA, BC

We continued to be blessed with numerous visitors during the past year, coming from near and far. We welcomed them all to meet with us. Bro. Ben Wheeler has been transferred to us from the Comox Ecclesia.

Our annual Fraternal Gathering will be held one week earlier this year: August 27-28, 2016. Bro. Roger Long will be our speaker. Bro. Mark Carr will be with us this year on the weekend of November 18-20, 2016. His topic will be, "Samson-My strength made perfect in weakness". God willing, Bro. Stephen Macfarlane will be speaking at our CYC Conference to be held April 13-16, 2017. The subject will be, "Samuel-Strengthening Relationships."

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

Clyde Snobelen

Thoughts on the Way

The Order of the Four Gospels: Or, Why Does John Come Last?

Quite possibly, the gospels are arranged in their current order for a very real purpose, and I have some ideas, at least, about all that.

Matthew: Matthew comes first, having numerous references to the Old Testament. It is in Matthew that we have the characteristic phrase: “that it might be fulfilled as was spoken in the prophets”. Matthew is the “bridge” with the Old Testament — and especially written for the Jews, who were well versed in the Old Testament. If you stand at the end of the Old Testament, he seems to say: ‘Here’s the next logical step: Christ!’

Mark: Mark is the briefest of the four gospels, probably written first (according to many scholars, anyway). In Mark, Jesus is the man of action, the servant who is always *doing* — performing miracles, helping people, confronting the leaders of Israel. It has very little emphasis on what Jesus said, and much more on what he did.

Luke: Luke was a Gentile (some think he was a Samaritan), and he has written a gospel especially suited to the needs of Gentiles. Many of Christ’s encounters with Gentiles are reported by Luke. Luke was a physician, a companion of the apostle Paul, and spent much time preaching the gospel to Gentiles. An interesting suggestion has been made by certain commentators; it is this: The gospel of Luke might have been a sort of legal brief, or petition, prepared by the scholarly Luke to present to the Roman authorities on behalf of Paul and the Christian cause. This could explain, from one point of view, the abundance of reference to Gentiles, as if Luke (and Paul) wanted everyone to know that this “new religion” was for the whole world and not exclusively for Jews.

John: And then comes John, probably written later, and evidently written to supplement the other three. This Gospel has many actions of Jesus reported by John, and many discourses of Jesus reported by John, which are not recorded in the other three gospels. But more than that, John is on another level. This gospel was intended to present a spiritual, idealistic, universal picture of the life of Jesus. The point here is: *John’s gospel is not supposed to be easy*. It is intended to be read as an extended, and elevated, statement of the gospel, *after* the other three gospels are mastered. And it is intended to be interpreted, when it has difficult language, from the vantage point of the more concrete statements of the other three. None of which helps us to understand it better — only to appreciate *why* it can be so difficult to understand.

An example:

Matthew and Luke tell us about the birth of Jesus, more or less as an ordinary,

straightforward (although miracle-filled) factual story. An angel appears to a young engaged woman, and she conceives a child by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As a result, Jesus is born (the Son of God Himself, and the son of Mary), first as a human fetus in the womb, then a fully human baby, a child, and a young man. An extraordinary human being, a human being with the stamp of divinity upon him, a prophet and more than a prophet, the very Messiah, the anointed one of God. But still, for all this, a human being born and living among other human beings, tempted in all points like his fellow humans.

And then comes John:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word was made flesh” (John 1:1,14).

This is extravagant, heavenly language; the language of eternity — but also true, on a cosmic, universal level. The point is: If we want a simple statement of who Jesus was and is, we don’t go to John first. We go to Matthew and Luke. After we are sure our understanding is grounded in the facts of the case, and only then, do we read and begin to appreciate John’s statement.

John’s statement will never be easy; it isn’t supposed to be easy. Doing it the other way round (taking John first) is a perfect prescription for confusion. So John is this “heaven’s eye-view” of who Jesus is. Everything that concerns him, everything he says in John, everything he does in John, is seen from God’s perspective. It’s like a study class of angels looking down from heaven and studying these peculiar creatures called men. Peter tells us that even the angels are still seeking to learn more about God’s plan, and especially more about the One who came directly from God in Heaven (1Pet 1:10-12).

We can imagine the angels’ questions:

‘What does this really mean, from God’s point of view?’

‘What is the universal aspect?’

‘What is the timeless, eternal lesson?’

John’s Gospel is certainly the most profound of the four. Ironically, John’s Gospel also has by far the simplest language. John’s favorite words are simple words: life, death, love, hate, dark, light, truth, word, faith. In English, you could almost tell the whole story in one-syllable words:

- God is the Word.
- The Word is light.
- The Word is life.
- That life is a light for men.
- God gave us light through Christ His Son.
- God is love too.
- God’s Son will show us the light and the love of God.
- God so loved the world that He gave His Son, to die for our sins.
- Since he did not sin, God raised him from the dead.

- He is the Son of God; do what he says.
- One day, Christ will come back to rule on this earth.

Simple? Yes, but enormously profound.

So, let's say that you've been reading the Gospel of John for 30 or 40 years, off and on, and you are still not sure what some passages mean, and you think it could have been stated more clearly. Quite possibly, angels in heaven are still feeling the same as you.

Well, I would say: that's about par for the course. Give it another 10 or 20 years, and, if Christ hasn't come yet, I can imagine a great-grandpa or a great-granny in a rocking chair whispering, 'Now I think I understand!'

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

NEW from the Christadelphian Tidings

CAIN — His Life and Legacy

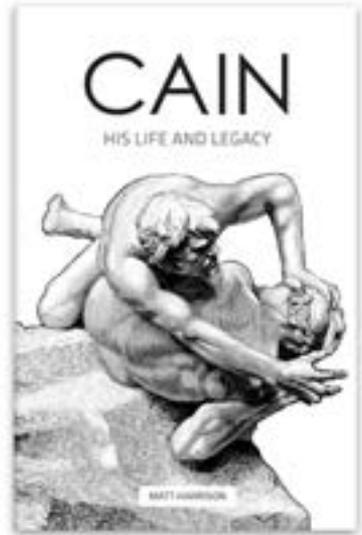
Matt Harrison

Today's world dismisses Cain and Abel as mere myth, legend and literary archetypes. Yet they and their descendants were real people who lived in a unique historical context that is relevant even now. This study probes the lessons of the period before the Flood and explores questions Bible students have long asked, such as:

- What was the mark of Cain?
- Did Enoch die like every other mortal?
- Who were the Nephilim?

Cain is named several times in the New Testament, although the Old Testament mentions him only in Genesis 4. Find out why he was so significant to the early ecclesia.

Published: August 2016 - 106 pages. \$5.00 USD (plus S&H)



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

SEPTEMBER, 2016

- 10 Hamilton Greenaway, ON** Fraternal at the Copetown Community Centre, 1950 Governors Rd., Copetown, ON. Bro. Alan Giordano (Schooley's Mountain, NJ) to lead us on the topic: "Looking unto Jesus' Hebrews 12". Begins at 1:30 pm, please bring a picnic dinner. Drinks and dessert provided. Contact: Bro. Mark Jennings 905-578-1038 or jenningsmark@rogers.com and website www.greenawaychristadelphians.com.
- 16-18 Baltimore, MD** Young People's Gathering and Frisbee Challenge, 6311 Loudon Ave. ElkrIDGE, MD. Classes on the theme "Things Eternal" by Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT). Contact: Bro. Gideon Hewitson 301-676-9424 or gideonhewitson@gmail.com.
- 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.
- 17-18 Chicago, IL** Fall Gathering, 15438 Highland, Lombard, IL. Topic "Faith in Action". Speaking will be Bro. Tano Tekka (Kenya), Bro. Milad Bahadorzadeh (Iran), Bro. Bruce Parker (Vermont), Bro. Ramazani Emena (Congo) and Bro. Oliver Ruboneza (Congo). Children's classes will be provided Saturday and Sunday morning. Please contact Sis. Sue Johnson for housing at 847-438-4890 or tarthurjo@juno.com.
- 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.

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.
- 7-9 Norfolk, VA** CYC Study Weekend. Speaker: Bro. Jeff Lange (Norfolk, VA). Theme: "Ancient Principles for Modern Life". Registration is still only \$35! For more details and/or to register: norfolkchristadelphians.com/norfolk-cyc-study-weekend, or contact Sis. Amy Lagasse: 757-222-6726 or amyandniq@hotmail.com.
- 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 Calgary, AB** Fraternal hosted in Rolling Hills, Alberta at the Community Hall. The speaker is Bro. David Snobelen (Victoria, BC), and the topic is 'Reflections on Acts'. Accommodation is available in local homes and there is an RV campground next to the hall. Please register or inquire for more info by emailing dana.kohlman@grasslands.ab.ca, or by texting/calling Sis. Cherri-Lynn Kohlman at 403-793-4389.
- 8-9 Sussex, NB** Thanksgiving Study weekend will be held at the ecclesial hall. Our speaker will be Bro. Ben Link on the topic "God's Creation in Isaiah". All ages are welcome.

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

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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 pamelat721@shaw.ca or 604 881 4733 for a program and accommodation

NOVEMBER, 2016

4-6 Pittsburgh, PA CYC Study Weekend. Our speaker will be Bro. Jesse Adair (Hamilton Book Road, ON). His subject will be "Jonah". Travelers' lunch will be provided at noon and classes will begin at 1:00pm. Please contact Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Vanessa Schwieger at schwiegs@aol.com or (412) 781-1826 for more information.

4-6 Women at the Well Retreat, Palm Springs, CA. Sis. Maritta Terrell (Austin Leander, TX) will be leading our classes on the topic of 'Renewing Your Heart and Mind'. Sponsored by the Simi Hills, CA Ecclesia. For information regarding the weekend contact Sisters Sandy McLeod sandrarmcleod@gmail.com or Denise Sisco denisesisco@outlook.com. For registration contact Sis Bonnie Sommerville kenandbonnie@simihills.org.

11-13 Ontario Brothers' Weekend Hidden Acres Camp, New Hamburg, ON. Speaker and Topic TBA soon. Please contact Bro. Nathan Badger for further details (natejbadger@gmail.com), or view our website: <http://christadelphianbroswknd.org/>.

18-20 Washington, D.C. Family Bible Study weekend at Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. Bro. Dennis Bevans (Baltimore, MD) is scheduled to be the teacher. The topic for the weekend is "1 Peter: Love Learned by Experience". Contact Ken Green, 443-497-3497 or e-mail Ken at Hashawha@gmail.com for additional information. Forms available at hopeofthekingdom.com. **Please note this is a week earlier than previous years when it was the Thanksgiving weekend.**

18-20 Victoria, BC Fall Study Weekend Bro. Mark Carr will be our speaker. His topic will be "Samson — My strength made perfect in weakness." Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen at victoria@csl.ca .

DECEMBER, 2016

24-30 Ontario Winter Bible School, The Best Western Highland Inn & Conference Center, Midland (ON). Speakers: Bro. Matt Davies (Nottingham, UK) Adults: "Moses the man of God" and young people "Inspirational young people"; Bro. Ron Cowie (East Torrens, South Australia) Adults "Walking with God in Challenging Times" and young people "Why We are Different"; and Bro. Matt Colby (Hamilton Book Rd, ON): adults "The Sons of Korah" and young people "Reasons to Believe". Registration information and other details are available from our website (www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com). Discount offered on registration until Oct. 31st.

APRIL, 2017

13-16 Victoria, BC CYC Conference Bro. Stephen Macfarlane will be speaking. The subject will be "Samuel — Strengthening Relationships". Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen at victoria@csl.ca .

JULY, 2017

1-8 Great Lakes Bible School at Lakeland University in Plymouth WI, located near Sheboygan, WI. The website for registration is glcbs.org. The teachers and theme verse have not yet been finalized. Registrar: Sis. Lydia Johnson at lydia.johnson@glcbs.org.