Editorial

The Lord’s Supper

In the beginning

If you were to ask most Christadelphians today what a Christian meeting was like in the days of the apostles, you would probably get different answers. Some would probably answer that it consisted primarily of preaching and singing. Some might reply that it principally centered around the Memorial i.e. partaking of the bread and wine. Of course, both of these responses are partially right. However, a rather dominant part of apostolic worship that few Christians would think of today is that it actually centered around a meal.

That’s right — a meal! The early Christians referred to this meal as the agape. Even after the death of the apostles, the pre-Nicene Church continued to practice the agape or love feast. Yet, within a century or so after Constantine’s conversion in AD 312, this important part of apostolic worship totally disappeared.

For the origin of the love feast, we need to look no further than the Last Supper. “As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body’ ” (Matt. 26:26). So the very first Memorial was instituted in the context of a meal. A meal continued to be the normal setting in which Christians met together for fellowship and worship. Acts 2:46 tells us: “Continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.” The expression, “breaking bread,” no doubt includes the celebration of the Memorial. However, the phrase, “they ate their food with gladness” would also indicate that this was more than a memorial: it was also a meal.

Nowhere is this practice more clearly confirmed than in the well-known passage of 1Cor 11:20-34. Paul begins that passage by saying, “Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.” Now, this is obviously talking about more than just the Memorial. Nobody gets drunk from the small amount of wine taken in the service, nor is it credible that various persons would receive communion before others because they were hungry. No, Paul is obviously describing a meal — the love feast — that preceded the actual Memorial.

A love feast

Yet, that the Memorial was celebrated at the end of the love feast (or, as part of it) is quite clear from verses 23-30 of the passage from the Corinthians passage. In those verses, Paul expressly mentions Jesus taking bread and saying, “Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you” (1Cor. 11:24).

Another place in Scripture that describes eating as an integral part of a New Testament worship service is Acts 20:11, where it mentions: “When he had come
up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.” So Paul didn’t just preach; he also ate!

And, then, of course, there is the well-known reference in Jude, where Jude refers to those who are “spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves” (Jude 12). Here Jude uses the Greek word *agape* to refer to the “love feast”. It is clear that eating was a significant of what occurred, which was almost certainly what we would call a memorial service.

Jesus said: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another” (John 13:34). But to love was not a new commandment! The whole of the divine law was comprehended in the concept of love for God, and for one’s neighbor. So what was the new commandment? Could it be that he was saying, “Keep the agape (the love feast) with one another, for by this, men will know that you are my disciples”? This was the new commandment!

Peter writes that “love (agape) shall cover a multitude of sins” (I Pet 4:8). What is it that covers sins? Forgiveness. Because of our love for one another we can forgive another’s wrong; but is not Peter saying, “Be fervent in your love-feast (agape), for your love-feast shall cover a multitude of sins”? It is here, at the love-feast, that we have the opportunity to examine ourselves before our Savior, as at no other time. Even though God’s forgiveness is always available to the repentant sinner, it is at the Memorial Table, above all, that we are moved freely to confess these faults and seek the forgiveness that we sorely need. And in the early church this was a community meal as well as a communion.

The disappearance of the love feast

It is noticeable that nearly all Biblical scholars and early Christian writers are agreed on this matter: that New Testament worship consisted of the love feast, followed by preaching and the Memorial. Here is just one sample:

“In the opinion of the great majority of scholars, the agape was a meal at which not only bread and wine, but all kinds of viands were used, a meal which had the double purpose of satisfying hunger and thirst and giving expression to the sense of Christian brotherhood. At the end of this feast, bread and wine were taken according to the Lord’s command, and after thanksgiving to God were eaten and drunk in remembrance of Christ, and as a special means of communion with the Lord himself and through him with one another. The agape was thus related to the Memorial as Christ’s last Passover [was] to the Christian rite which he grafted upon it. It preceded and led up to the Memorial, and was quite distinct from it.”

What happened to the love feast?

If the love feast was such an integral part of apostolic worship, why is it not still around today? The answer is that the apostolic pattern was eventually altered. Even though Jesus and his apostles handed down the model of having a common meal before the Memorial, some churches began changing this after the apostles died. During the second and third centuries, the agape was eventually separated
from the Memorial. Churches began celebrating the Memorial in the morning and hosting the love feast in the evening.

Nevertheless, even though the agape and communion went their separate ways, the church continued to practice both of them until sometime after the time of Constantine. Perhaps the love feast would have continued on down to our times if the original apostolic pattern (holding the love feast and the Memorial together) had not been broken.

When we come to Justin Martyr (ca. A.D. 150), we find that in his account of church worship he does not mention the agape at all, but speaks of the Memorial as following a service which consisted of the reading of Scripture, prayers, and exhortation. Tertullian (ca. A.D. 200) testifies to the continued existence of the agape, but shows clearly that in the church of the West, the Memorial was no longer associated with it. In the East, the connection appears to have been longer maintained, but by and by the severance became universal; and though the agape continued for a long time to maintain itself as a social function of the Church, it gradually passed out of existence.

And what of the twentieth century? Since the early days of the gospel, fellowship has found its highest expression in the sharing of a meal — a meal characterized neither by grim austerity nor by convivial jollity, but by religious sincerity, wholesome talk, and cheerful friendliness; and since neither human nature nor the gospel have changed over the years, it would seem that present-day life in Christ can gain much from a similar activity.

And it does! For it can hardly be accident that a feature of Christadelphian fellowship meetings (“Fraternal Gatherings” or more commonly in North America “Study Weekends”) is shared meals. Yet how much more could that meal bring blessing to all if only it had become traditional to consecrate meal-time conversation to the Lord instead of to the gods of health, holidays, shopping, or gossip. But the early church’s Agape was a Love Feast only by virtue of its climax and conclusion — the poignant yet confident remembering of Jesus in Bread and Wine “until he come.” The Love Feast was the Holy Place by which access might be had to the Mercy Seat beyond the veil.

In our day

Looking back, I have experienced what I can, in retrospect, call a “Love Feast”. On a few occasions, I have shared a meal with a few other brethren, spent quite a long time discussing matters of the Truth, and concluded with a Memorial. These were indeed deeply spiritual occasions.

So how much is being lost in these days by the omission of the Love Feast? It is impossible to say. To make it a weekly function would probably be undesirable, even if it were possible. But to convene a meeting on such lines once or twice a year, with the ecclesia forewarned and suitably prepared, could hardly fail to bring a rich spiritual reward. Those who have been members of some small ecclesia where local circumstances have dictated the holding of a simple communal meal between Sunday services will know how much can be gained...
from good table-talk about Holy Scripture and the suffering and glory of Christ. From such a practice to the Agape itself is only a short step. In the Love Feast neither time nor place nor form are commanded, only unanimity of spirit. All that is forbidden is unseemliness; and its rules and regulations are summed up in its very name “Love”.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

Love or Love Feast?

The name of the Love Feast — Greek: Agapē—may conceivably occur in the New Testament more often than has been generally realized, because Agapō is also the ordinary New Testament word for “love”. So it may well be that in a number of passages where reference to the virtue “love” has been understood there was originally an allusion to the church’s Love Feast. These may be worth considering, in the light of the well-established principle of Bible interpretation that where there is a choice between a general or abstract interpretation and one which is particular, concrete or special, the latter is more likely to be the true one.

a. “When Jesus knew that his hour was come . . . having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end” (John 13:1)

b. There is now possible a startling and impressive re-interpretation of other familiar words: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another” (John 13:34-35)

What is now usually taken as a perfectly general description of Christian living may originally have been applied to its clearest and most characteristic expression, the meal of fellowship. “Love one another” was a commandment of the Old Testament (Lev 19:18). But “Have a meal of fellowship together culminating in remembrance of Me in Bread and Wine” was an altogether new commandment. And it was this practice by which the disciples of Jesus were most readily identifiable, as Pliny’s letters to Trajan clearly show. “Ye do show forth the Lord’s death till he come”, wrote Paul.

c. There is support for the foregoing suggestion in 2John 5-7: “And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another . . . For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.”

— Harry Whittaker
“Studies in the Breaking of Bread” The Christadelphian 1964
Exhortation

Barnabas: The Apostle

“And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 4:36-37).

Joseph or Barnabas

How many people here today have ever known someone named Barnabas? I have only met one in my lifetime. I think that is such a shame, after took a brief look at this man and what little we are told about his life. In fact, I have never heard an exhortation about him. I guess that is why I chose Barnabas as a person to talk about on this Sunday morning.

Barnabas seem to be one of those kind of people that we don’t notice at first, like a wall flower, and then all the sudden we see him blossom right before our eyes. What I would like to do this morning is to consider the few verses that are recorded about Barnabas and watch how he matures spiritually, and then see if we can find the exhortation God reveals to us through His faithfulness.

The name given to Joseph by the Apostles was “Barnabas”. In relation to things Jewish, when a name was given to anyone, it illustrated precisely who they were. And so Luke states that “Joses . . . was surnamed Barnabas, which is, being interpreted, The Son of Consolation” (R.V., Son of Exhortation). Bar means son and Nabas means prophet, so Barnabas means the son of prophecy. But Luke interprets the word as meaning the son of paraclesis. The difference is the same as that obtaining in the translation of the word paraclete. In John 15:26 the Lord uses the word “Comforter”; the same word paraclete is translated “advocate” in 1John 2:1. The meaning of the word paraclete is one called to the side of another, either to plead their cause or to bring comfort. Two statements made by the Lord in connection with the coming of the Paraclete link up with this two-fold definition: “I will not leave you comfortless” (John 14:18), and “he shall teach you all things” (John 12:26). It is evident from this that both exhortation and consolation were in his mind as he used the word “Paraclete”. Here in Acts is the same word, the son of paraclesis, the son of exhortation or consolation.

The apostles surnamed him thus because of what he was; a man gifted in speech, apt to teach, able to exhort others, yet at the same time a man who by his words and actions brought comfort to others. His history as revealed by Luke bears out his name, a man who came alongside to aid and comfort his fellows. And it was these qualities that were used by God to further his purposes in relation to Paul.

So here is a man that who was obviously moved by observing the Power of God working in the lives of the Apostles. In fact, he was so moved, that he sold a Field that he owned and laid the money at the feet of the Apostles with
complete confidence that they would use it wisely to help others. Because of this act of generosity the Apostles change his name from Joseph to Barnabas, Son of Encouragement.

In the Bible, when a person’s name is changed we should make a note of it. I think that the Apostles changed his name because of some virtue he displayed as well as his overall character. We shall see that he was rightly named “Son of Encouragement”

**Paul's friend**

We meet Barnabas next when he presents Paul to the Apostles:

“And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem” (Acts 9:26-28).

A study of Paul’s life will show that he made many enemies — in the circumstances it was inevitable — but, at the same time, he made many friends. He had, for want of a better term, a genius for friendship, a capacity for making friends who loved him and were loyal and true to him. Among them was a man who played a decisive part in certain crises in the life of the Apostle. It was the divine intention that Paul should be the great apostle to the Gentiles, but it was through human instruments that God worked to achieve that purpose. There was, then, someone associated with the Apostle who by his actions — speaking after the manner of men — made possible the great work that Paul was to perform for the church and the world. Luke introduces him early in his record in the Acts; a sure indication of the important part he had to play in Luke’s story. First there is the reference to the Edenic conditions prevailing in the church before sin entered in. Luke speaks of the fellowship one with another, of the breaking of bread and of prayers, and how they had all things in common. At the beginning of Acts 5 he describes the introduction of sin into the church in the falling away of Ananias and Sapphira. But between these two pictures, he refers to the man who in himself revealed the conditions of fellowship spoken of in relation to the church, the man who subsequently was to play an important role in Paul’s life. His name was Joseph; he was a Cypriot — a native of Cyprus, a landowner and obviously wealthy. With him there was no keeping back part of the price. He was used to wealth; nevertheless he sold all that he had and gave it to the church, afterwards working with his own hands to provide for himself. Though he was rich, he became poor that others, through his poverty, might become rich; in this he followed his Lord.

We should all be so fortunate to have a brother/friend like Barnabas. I can only imagine how the members of the Jerusalem Ecclesia must have felt. They were scared to Death. This is where Barnabas steps in and lives up to his name. Not
only does he encourage Paul to come to the meeting but he has to encourage
the members of the ecclesia to accept him. Barnabas is a true Peace Maker, a
Spiritual Dignitary. In the words of Jesus: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they
shall be called the children of God” (Matt 5:9).

Preaching to the Gentiles

Next we hear about Barnabas traveling to Antioch to Preach to the Gentiles
(Acts 11:22-30). He leaves Antioch and Travels to Tarsus looking for Saul and
when he finds him they go back to Antioch to Preach there for another year,
before leaving to take the Relief Fund money to Judea. Another side note: Paul
and Barnabas were actively involved with the ecclesia where the disciples were
first called Christians. I get tired just thinking about these two men’s lives. Keep
in mind, travel in those days cannot even compare to modern day travel. There
were no cruise ship, no aircraft, not even horses for most travelers. Just one’s
poor tired feet.

For the sake of time I am going to just mention some of the high points and the
verses that relate to Barnabas and Paul working together.

- “And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their
  ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark” (Acts 12:25). So
  John Mark is introduced to us.

- “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me
  Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2)
  So Barnabas and Paul were knit together because of the Gospel message.

- “And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices,
saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness
of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he
was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city,
brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice
with the people. Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they
rent their clothes, and ran in among the people…” (Acts 14:11-14). Barnabas
and Paul have such a dramatic impact on the people they call them gods.
Barnabas they call Jupiter and Paul they call Mecurius. Here Paul and
Barnabas are declared to be Apostles: it is actually the only time Barnabas
is so designated.

Enter Mark

Then we get to Acts 15. After reviewing the time that Barnabas and Paul had
spent together, I imagine that they had worked together in the mission field
over 10 years. These two men knew each other quite well and had been able
to work through all kinds of problems. Both of these men had dedicated their
lives to serving God and the Lord Jesus Christ. They had demonstrated many
different Christ like characteristics such as humility, long suffering, patience,
esteeming others better than themselves, attending to the needs of others: the
list goes on and on.
They also both clearly played a major part at the council of Jerusalem, which endorsed the work that Paul and Barnabas had been doing the past decade in preaching to the Gentiles.

“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question” (Acts 15:1-2).

So what happens at the end of Acts 15? This reading always baffles me. How could these two brothers work together so long and then all the sudden split. Let us consider the passage, try to make some sense out of it, and furthermore draw out our exhortation.

“And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches” (Acts 15: 36-41).

From this reading we can see that Mark (John/Mark) was at the root of the problem. Paul absolutely refused to take Mark with them on this missionary journey, because the first time they took Mark with them he had dropped out. Paul felt that they could not depend on him and that was his final word. The disagreement was so sharp that they went separate ways. Barnabas took Mark and went to Cyprus (his home), and Paul took Silas and went to Syria. This situation always disturbs me when I read it. Why? Because of the intensity of the disagreement that appears to be handle quite badly. Do you think that “Iron was sharpening Iron” on this day?

What I have concluded is that Barnabas was in the right. What I mean is that he demonstrated the more Christ like Spirit in this situation. He may have argued with Paul about taking his nephew Mark with them, but he gave in and esteemed his brother (Paul) better than himself. The unfortunate thing about this relationship is that I don’t think that Paul and Barnabas every saw each other again. This is the last recorded information that we have about Barnabas. Some feel that Paul and Barnabas had reconciled before Barnabas fell asleep in Christ. I hope so. I have come to the conclusion that Paul coined the expression at the end of some of his letters “Greet one another with an Holy Kiss”, because of what happened between Barnabas and Paul in this situation.
Reconciliation

But this is not the end of the story, is it? Remember, Mark was the one who root of the problem. I think that Paul had to learn a strong exhortation about what had just happened here. He too “learned obedience by the things that he suffered.” I wonder if because of this situation Paul wrote how important it is to be reconciled one to another.

Even though the Scripture is silent about Barnabas after this point it shares something very encouraging about the relationship between Mark and Paul.

“Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry” (2Tim 4:11).

One thing that we can be sure of, Barnabas left an indelible mark on the mind of Paul and Mark. This is the Silver Lining to end of this story.

When I look at the lives of Barnabas, Paul, and Mark, I see something very special. These men all loved God and the Lord Jesus Christ. They all worked in the missionary field together and every one of them brought something different to the Table. One very important Lesson that Barnabas brought to Table is he was called the “Son of Encouragement”. It is hard to focus on encouragement when we focus on the differences. If we continue to focus on our Differences it will divide a community, family, or church. Barnabas like our Lord Jesus Christ, focused on Encouragement, building each other up, not tearing each other down.

The exhortation that I have learned from Barnabas is at the very least two pronged.

- We need to encourage one another!
- Because we have been reconciled to God

Randy Davenport (Orlando, FL)

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Barnabas was a caring man, a giving man, ready to give up all he had in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we see much of this nature displayed as we continue. Bro. W. H. Boulton suggests that Paul and Barnabas might have been students together in Tarsus (Paul the Apostle, PP. 27-28).
Hope, (10) The Kingdom of God

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10).

Hope will be fulfilled in God’s Kingdom

There is a place that is so special that grown people become like children. Families sacrifice for months, or years, to save money in order to enjoy their time there. Little children have the time of their lives. Happiness is the simple goal for all involved. People experience things that they can normally only dream about. It’s a pretend world where animals take on human forms, and entertain both young and old. Even superstar football players talk of going there at the end of the Super bowl. That is — to Disney’s Magic Kingdom, the most visited theme park in the world. This man-made “kingdom” may be a dream world to some people, but mortality limits the amount of enjoyment that anyone can have there. Ironically, Walt Disney, dreamer extraordinaire, died five years before Disney World was complete. He never saw his dream fulfilled as his life ended in 1966, and Walt Disney World opened in 1971.

The Kingdom of God will be different, and vastly superior, to any kingdom ever known. The Bible describes the Kingdom in the past tense as the Kingdom of Israel, which had a literal King (2Chron 13:8; Isa 43:15). It is also described in the present tense, in a limited manner, as applied to the Christian church. Jesus taught that in a small sense “the kingdom of God is in your midst” (Luke 17:21). He told the people of his day that the Kingdom had come near to them. Both of these were mere shadows of the main event yet to come. Jesus spoke about a wonderful, future, worldwide Kingdom when “the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed” (Dan 2:44). His future Kingdom on earth is where Jesus chose to focus (Matt 8:11; 13:44-46; 16:19; 19:23-24).

When Jesus began his ministry, the first thing he did was to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt 4:17). This shows the priority that Jesus applied to this vital subject of hope. The four gospel writers mentioned the Kingdom 88 times, which confirms that Jesus continued to talk about it often. “I must
proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent" (Luke 4:43). When Jesus sent his disciples out to preach, he commanded that they teach about the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:2). Even after his resurrection, Jesus showed himself for forty days to his disciples with a loud-and-clear message about the Kingdom (Acts 1:3). Jesus also spoke about the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven no less than twelve times in parables.

**Kingdom of God or Heaven?**

Jesus used the term ‘Kingdom of God’ 57 times and ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ 31 times in the four gospels. Nowhere is the term ‘Kingdom in Heaven’ used in Scripture. The Kingdom will be heavenly, and of God, but not located in heaven. Jesus repeatedly talks about the Kingdom on earth (Matt 5:5; 6:10; Mark 11:10). These two terms are used interchangeably as ‘heaven’ is often used in place of ‘God’ in this connection (Matt 21:25; Luke 15:18; John 3:27). Jesus gave an explicit example when he spoke about a rich young ruler. “Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God’” (Matt 19:23-24). This confirms that Jesus’ message about the Kingdom is perfectly in tune with the promises to Abraham and David. God plans to re-establish the Kingdom of Israel, only this time as a glorified, heavenly Kingdom on earth.

**What will Jesus do in his Kingdom?**

Jesus will, first of all, raise the dead and judge those whom he chooses (2Tim 4:1; John 5:28-29; Acts 10:42). The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 is but one example where Jesus described the process of how people will be judged by him. This parable is not meant to be taken literally, but does give disciples something serious to think about. The faithful will be given their reward of eternal life and the unfaithful will receive their penalty of punishment and death (Matt 25:23-30; 25:34-46; 11:24). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2Cor 5:10). After that the Bible gives many clues regarding what will happen, but without a timeline. We know that Jesus will appoint his followers as judges to help rule the land (Matt 19:28-29; 1Cor 6:2; Dan 7:18-27). Those who are counted as worthy will also act as kings and priests to the remaining mortals in the Kingdom (Exod 19:6; Rev 1:6; 5:10). Eventually every person and every nation will come to recognize Jesus as Messiah and King (Heb 8:8-12; Ezek 39:7). Jesus will judge and teach the nations from Jerusalem. Every nation must worship Jesus as King, or they will suffer plagues and drought (Zech 14:16-18; Isa 66:18-21).

The earth will need to be cleansed and this will be a gradual process. From the final battle of Armageddon, it will take seven months just to bury the dead (Ezek 39:12). It will also take seven years to rid the earth of weapons by fire (Ezek 39:9-10). Somehow Jesus will execute judgment by fire on the earth, in order to burn up the sinful works (Isa 66:15-16; 2Pet 3:7-13). The land of Israel, and the whole earth, will be renewed as the planet will receive a divine face-lift (Rev 21:2, 10).
Eventually a temple will be built in Jerusalem, but unlike any house of God ever seen (Zech 6:12-15). Jesus will be the focal point as God’s perfect representative. “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil 2:9-10). Jesus will oversee sacrifices in the Kingdom, but not like those in former days. “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise — the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (Heb 13:15-16).

What is the Millennium?

Y2K opened people’s eyes to the impact of a millennial change. In the years prior to the year 2000, computer experts warned of cataclysmal effects due to a subtle flaw that affected all computers. Due to fear of the potential consequences, millions of companies and governments worldwide took action to upgrade systems and prevent any problems. Fortunately, negative effects were minimal and there were no significant problems when January 1, 2000 arrived.

The Millennium is different: it is a 1,000-year Kingdom concept that originates in the last book of the Bible. It is understood by many Christians to be a literal time period because the Bible states: “They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years” (Rev 20:4-6). Combined with Peter’s writings (2Pet 3:8), an explicit case can be made for such a literal Kingdom time period.
In addition, there is significant rationale for a millennial time period in the Bible. There are many examples of events in the Kingdom that require a gradual time period to accommodate changes. Jesus told us that the primary reward for faithful believers is eternal life, yet we also read that people will still die in the Kingdom (Isa 65:20). He said that believers who are given immortality would become like angels and not marry (Matt 22:30), yet we read elsewhere that babies will still be born (Isa 65:23). Though joy and peace are promised on earth (Isa 35:10; Rev 21:4), there will still be war (Ezek 38; Joel 3:9-11) and disputes to settle (Isa 2:4). How do these conflicting statements fit together? Why won’t God change everything all at once?

The answer seems to be that the first time period of God’s Kingdom will last 1,000 years, or a millennium. It will be a gradual cleansing of the earth and, ultimately, a return of man to God. Mortal people who are alive during the Kingdom age will die and await the second resurrection. Since the fall of Adam, mankind has been separated from God’s presence due to our sin (Isa 59:2), but God’s intention has always been to reward faithful followers with His eternal glory. Jesus will be king in God’s Kingdom, leading his followers back to oneness with his Father. “Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (1Cor 15:24-25).

The Bible hope is to gain eternal life in God’s Kingdom with Jesus as king. It is to return to our Creator and see the face of God (Matt 5:8; Exod 33:18-22). It is to live in a sinless state, in a glorified body (1Cor 15:42-44). It is to live in the presence of God and be with Him always. “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1John 3:2).

“God’s Kingdom is present in its beginnings, but still future in its fullness” Timothy Keller.

“The doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, which was the main teaching of Jesus, is certainly one of the most revolutionary doctrines that ever stirred and changed human thought” H. G. Wells.

“They tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations” (Psa 145:11-13).

**The Bible says:**

- Mankind’s great hope is to enter the Kingdom of God. Acts 8:12; Matt 6:10; Luke 6:20.
- Jesus will be King in the Kingdom on earth. Matt 25:31-34; Rev 11:15; Matt 19:28-29.
- The Millennium will usher in eternity with God. 1Cor 15:24-26; Rev 21:2-4; 2Pet 3:7-13.

*Chicago, IL Ecclesia*
Doctrines to Be Rejected, (7) Free Life

Doctrine to Be Rejected # 4: “That Christ was born with a ‘free life’ ”.

Introduction
We now come to the first of the numbered doctrines that was added by Robert Roberts after the first statement, as written sometime before 1871. The Doctrine to be rejected is #4 in the 1883 edition: That Christ was born with a “free life”. It is also the first of several statements that are hard to understand in the 21st Century, removed as we are by almost 150 years from the controversy that gave rise to it.

The fact that a definition is not immediately understood is insufficient reason to discard it. If it describes a false belief rejected by those who uphold the truth of the Scriptures it should be included. The doctrine “that Christ was born with a ‘free life’ ” is the counterpart to the essential teaching about the Lord’s nature defined in Clause 8 — that “he also himself likewise took part” of the nature we bear, a nature related to death and producing temptations to sin (Heb 2:14). Had he chosen not to offer himself so that we could have hope of life, death would still have claimed him; his own salvation from death was inextricably bound up with ours. In other words, his life was not “free” from the condemnation placed upon Adam and all his descendants, as has been claimed by those who allege that, unlike us, Jesus received his life direct from God and it was never forfeit.1

So the Doctrine can be restated in a positive way:

The phrase a “free life” signifies that Christ’s nature was not under Adamic condemnation as is that of all other members of the human race, and that therefore his sacrifice was a substitute for the “lives” of others. It denies that Christ could have been claimed by death, and needed saving from that fate.

Edward Turney
He was the individual most closely associated with the false doctrine of “free life”. In 1873, two years after the death of John Thomas, Edward Turney and Robert Roberts fell out over their understanding of the theological significance of the death of Christ, as Turney held to the “free life” view: Roberts, strongly disagreeing, announced in The Christadelphian that he “withdrew fellowship” from Turney and all who held his beliefs. This resulted in a division: only a minority in Birmingham, but the majority of the Nottingham Ecclesia followed Turney. (Nottingham at the time was probably the equal on Birmingham in size, and almost equal in influence.) Turney started a magazine, initially called The Christadelphian Lamp, but in 1875 this was changed to “The Christian Lamp”. By early 1877, under the effect of illness, he withdrew as editor, and he died a few days before his 44th birthday in 1879. Initially many ecclesias sent in intelligence, including a number from North America, but by the time volume 9 came to a close in 1883, only the Nottingham and Leicester groups appeared to be of any size, although there were a few others scattered about England. (There does not
appear to have been any later issues.) So this controversy dwindled away, only to be revived in the 1950’s: some will have come across the Nazarene Fellowship, a tiny group that promotes Turney’s views to this day.

Much more could be said about this dispute², but we will focus instead on the doctrinal aspects as related to “free life”.

Free life — the doctrines

Renunciationism is defined as follows by Robert Roberts:

“That the body of Jesus did not inherit the curse of Adam, though derived from him through Mary; and was therefore not mortal; that his natural life was ‘free’; that in this ‘free’ natural life, he ‘earned eternal life,’ and might, if he had so chosen, have avoided death, or even refused to die upon the cross, and entered into eternal life alone; his death being the act of his own free will, and not in any sense necessary for his own salvation; that his sacrifice consisted in the offering up of an unforfeited life, in payment of the penalty incurred by Adam and his posterity, which was eternal death; that his unforfeited life was slain in the room and stead of the forfeited lives of all believers of the races of Adam.”³

Thus, essentially if one believed in “free life” applied to Christ it would be equivalent to making him a God (i.e., not sharing our human nature). This is the same as the doctrine of the Trinity voiced in slightly different words. This false doctrine is the counterpart to the essential teaching about the Lord’s nature defined in “Truth to be received” # 8:

VIII.—That these promises had reference to Jesus Christ, who was to be raised up in the condemned line of Abraham and David, and who, though wearing their condemned nature, was to obtain a title to resurrection by perfect obedience, and, by dying, abrogate the law of condemnation for himself and all who should believe and obey him (1Cor 15:45; Heb 2:14-16; Rom 1:3; Heb 5:8-9, 1:9; Rom 5:19-21; Gal 4:4-5; Rom 8:3-4; Heb 2:15; 9:26; Gal 1:4; Heb 7:27; 5:3-7; 2:17; Rom 6:10; 6:9)

It should be noted that this statement was accepted by Edward Turney and his affiliates, but twisted as described by Roberts in the quote above.

The traditional view of Christadelphians is that Christ, like a High Priest, under the Law of Moses, sacrificed first for himself, then for the people — not that he had committed actual sin, but that, being human, he possessed a sin-prone nature — and that Christ died as an example to his followers both of how to follow God’s commands, and of what the weaknesses of human nature merited, namely annihilation. “He also himself likewise took part” of the nature we bear, a nature related to death and producing temptations to sin (Heb 2:14). Had he chosen not to offer himself so that we could have hope of life, death would still have claimed him; his own salvation from death could not be considered apart from ours. Hence Jesus’ life was not “free” from the condemnation placed upon Adam and all his descendants, as has been claimed by those who allege that, unlike us, Jesus received his life direct from God, and it was never possible for him to die as a result of his own sin.
This whole area (i.e., of the precise nature of Christ and his relationship to his own sacrifice) is not a topic to be dealt with lightly. It has caused, and is still causing, controversy within our community, and to go further than the relatively simple statements of the Bible and our pioneer brethren is no an arena to enter without an acknowledgement that the ways of our Heavenly Father are almost, it not totally, beyond our human comprehension.

References to Jesus shared our same nature

“Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom 1:3-4).

“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight” (Col 1:21-22).

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1Pet 2:24).

“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one” Job 14:4

“How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” (Job 25:4)

A sinless man made subject to the consequence of sin” (Law of Moses, R. Roberts).

“The statement that that he did these things ‘for us’ has blinded many to the fact that he did them ‘for himself’ first — without which he could not have done them for us; for it was by doing them for himself that he did them for us. He did them for us only as we may become part of him, in merging our individualities in him by taking part in his death, and putting on his name and sharing his life afterwards” — Law of Moses, R. Roberts

“It was a sacrifice operative on himself first of all; for he is the beginning of the new creation, the firstfruits of the new harvest, the foundation of the new temple...As such, it was needful that he should himself be subject of the process and the reaper of the results. Hence the testimony (Heb 13:20)...that by his own blood, entering into the holy place he obtained (middle, or self-subjective, state of the verb) eternal redemption (“for us” is interpolated) Heb 9:12. The Father saved him from death for his obedience unto death.” (Law of Moses, R. Roberts).

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

Notes:
3. *The Christadelphian* October 1873: p. 460
The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Easy-To-Make Musical Instruments

The angels rejoiced at Creation (Job 38:4-7). They sang again at the birth of Christ (Luke 2:13-14). From earliest Bible times music played an important role in the life of man as well. It is recorded that Jubal, in the eighth generation from Adam, “was the father of all such as handle the harp and pipe” (Gen 4:21). Music in Bible times was sometimes joyful and sometimes meditative, but always it was meaningful.

David was an accomplished harpist who wrote many psalms, and four thousand praised the Lord with and for him (1Chron 23:5). As king, he organized the music which would be used in the temple, and designated the leaders: “David, together with the commanders of the army, set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals” (1Chron 25:1) In addition to vocalists who sang psalms and dancers who praised God in the dance, there were instrumentalists who played harps, flutes, pipes, drums, and other percussion instruments. The trumpet was also an important instrument that was used on many special occasions.

Here are some musical instruments that your Sunday schoolers will have fun making. Once they are ready to go, the children can use them over and over to act out Bible stories and play their favorite Bible songs.

Kazoo trumpet

1) Cut an eight-inch diameter circle from card stock. Cut a slit to the center.
2) Overlap the edges of the slit to form a cone and fasten.
3) Place a paper towel tube over the top of the cone and use it to draw a pencil line around the outside of the cone. Cut a few slits from the top of the cone to the pencil line and bend them out to form tabs.
4) Tape a piece of waxed paper firmly over one end of the paper towel tube to create a diaphragm.
5) Insert the diaphragm end of the tube into the bell and tape down the tabs.
6) Decorate the trumpets and start making music. It won’t take the children long to master the technique of producing a melody through the vibrating diaphragm.
Jingle bells tambourine
  1) Punch several holes in the lip of a large plastic lid.
  2) Use a colorful ribbon to string jingle bells around
      the outside of the lid. Bells can be purchased by the
      bag at a craft store.

Decorate the surfaces of the tambourines and the
children are ready to add rhythm and joy to their songs
and dances.

Drum
Coffee cans with lids make good drums. Decorate the
cans with spray paint or fabric, and the children have
another rhythm instrument to add to the growing
collection. A spoon makes a good drumstick, or they may just want to beat the
drum with their hands.

Button cymbals
  1) Two large buttons and two pieces of
      colorful yarn are all the children need
      to create this rhythm instrument.
  2) If using thumb and index finger is hard
      for the children, tie two or three buttons
      to fingers on each hand and let them
      clap the buttons together.

Shakers
Rectangular spice cans with lids make fun shakers. Decorate the cans, insert a
few pebbles, and start keeping time with the rhythm of a Bible song or dance.

Rhythm blocks
Two small pieces of two-by-four are all that is needed to create rhythm blocks.
The children can clap them together. For added effect, glue a piece of sandpaper
on each block and the children can clap or rub the blocks together.

Harp
A shoe box gets this instrument
started. Cut openings in the lid and
sides as shown in the picture. Stretch
three large rubber bands around the
box, elevating them slightly from the
lid with two pencils or small pieces
of wood. Rubber bands of different
thicknesses and tensions produce
different pitches. The kids will have
fun making these harps twang.
A word of thanks is in order to Carol Linsenmeier and an unidentified contributor for the material of this article. Happy music making.

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;  
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!  
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;  
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!  
For the LORD is a great God,  
and a great King above all gods.  
(Psa 95:1-3).

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Youth Speaks

Jonathan the Faithful Prince, (19) A Comforter

In the previous article (The Tidings, December 2015), we discussed the lie David told when he was supposed to go attend a feast for the new moon with Saul (1Sam 20). David was clearly struggling. The distress of the last few hours had worn him down, and he didn’t know who he could trust or what to do next. He had a plan, and as we saw in the last article, it revolved Jonathan and his willingness to lie for his friend.

And yet at the same time, there was another issue with the plan — or at least, another issue that David perceived: what if he couldn’t trust Jonathan?

Mistrust

The statement seems so bizarre that it’s difficult to believe. Nevertheless, David’s mistrust of his friend is there in the record. Perhaps it was the suddenness of Saul’s mood swings, or perhaps it was Jonathan’s initial unbelief of the seriousness of David’s circumstance — somehow, David even began to question Jonathan’s love for him. Thus, after revealing the plan to Jonathan, David added a few remarks which would have cut Jonathan to the heart:

“Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the Lord with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself: for why shouldest thou bring me to thy father?” (1Sam 20:8).

In these two statements, David again showed the depths of his desperation. Grasping for Jonathan’s support, David reminded the prince that he was bound by an oath to God to treat him well, since the two of them had made a covenant!

And yet, adding to the insult of the first statement, David went even further, saying that regardless of the covenant, if he truly had committed any sin against Saul’s family, then Jonathan should simply kill him himself, and save Saul the time!

How these words would have affected Jonathan, immediately striking him with feelings of sadness and confusion! How could David have come to view him this way? Why would he even feel the need to remind Jonathan of the covenant and his vow of love — had not Jonathan been the one who initiated the oath in the first place, specifically because of his great love for David: “Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul” (1Sam 18:3)? Yet not only had David thought that he needed to force Jonathan’s love for him, but he had even implied that Jonathan might be in league with his father — seeking to kill David himself! Over and over, he constantly used the term “thy father” to refer to Saul, as though he kept emphasizing the connection that the two men had (1Sam 20:1, 3, 6, 8, 10). He did not call Saul “the king” nor did he refer to him as his father, though he was Saul’s son in law. Those little insinuations
culminated with the accusation: “if there be in me iniquity, slay m thyself; for why shouldest thou bring me to thy father?”

With what was likely a sober and gravely serious tone, Jonathan reaffirmed his love for God’s anointed:

“And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee?” (1Sam 20:9).

Jonathan could not believe what David had suggested! Never would he kill the one who was called to be king — he loved David, and he had been the one who had spoken on David’s behalf to his father the last time that this had happened! If he had truly known that Saul had planned on breaking his oath, he certainly would have told his dear friend. Nevertheless, David’s response to Jonathan’s remark was still filled with distrust — even if Jonathan went through with their plan, how would he know if Saul answered Jonathan harshly?

“Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly?” (1Sam 20:10).

Indeed, there was no way in David’s plan he would find out how Saul responded, except through Jonathan. And perhaps in David’s mind, that was part of the issue: because notice specifically what David asked. He did not ask how he would find out, but who would tell him. There’s an important distinction there, which helps to show that David’s question was likely not a literal question. Jonathan had just told David that he would somehow notify him about Saul’s response, and David’s curt reply was “who will tell me if you father answers me roughly?” (RSV, ESV), almost as though he did not believe that Jonathan truly would.

With this response from David, Jonathan realized how low his friend had really fallen. While he could have argued with him, or while he could simply left because of all of the accusations, Jonathan did something remarkable:

“And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field” (1Sam 20:11).

Out in the field: Jonathan’s love and encouragement

While it may not seem all that astonishing, Jonathan’s suggestion here truly displays his compassionate character. Recognizing the depth of David’s hurt, Jonathan suggested that the two of them go out into the field — a place where they could be sure that they were alone and could speak to one another in peace. Often throughout Scripture the field was a place where people would go in order to have some time to meditate or be by themselves (Gen 24:63; 1Kgs 11:29). Such was perhaps Jonathan’s motive — but there was may have been something even deeper. In the midst of David’s distrust, Jonathan brought him to a place that was perhaps familiar. Consider what had happened in “the field” earlier:

“But Jonathan Saul’s son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place,”
and hide thyself: and I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee” (1Sam 19:2-3).

Perhaps in an attempt to remind David of how he had previously risked his life for him, and how he had stood up to his father for David’s sake, Jonathan brought David out into the field — which was likely the same field (see also 1Sam 20:19, 35)! Surely this would help to reassure David of Jonathan’s love and faithfulness towards him! But Jonathan knew that David needed more than just to be in the same place. He needed solid proof that Jonathan’s friendship and loyalty still existed, and he needed to be spiritually lifted up. Thus, since David had seemed to doubt Jonathan’s allegiance to their previous covenant, Jonathan made a new covenant, but this time it was filled with references to David’s promised kingship:

“And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about tomorrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee; the LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father” (1Sam 20:12-13).

In the covenant, Jonathan agreed to meet with his father in the hopes of seeing Saul’s disposition towards David. When he learned of his father’s feelings, then he pledged that he would tell his friend. If it was the case that Saul had evil intentions towards David, Jonathan wished him well, and then turned his attention to the future — “the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father.” It was a powerful reminder of what David had temporarily forgotten. While David was fearing for his life, Jonathan told him that even though Saul may be seeking his life, David had been anointed as king over Israel — and that promise would be fulfilled regardless of Saul’s intentions. If Saul’s mind was set on killing David, Jonathan reminded his friend that it did not matter. He would be king — and Jonathan’s prayer was that Yahweh would be with David on that throne, just as He had earlier been with Saul. As Jonathan continued the words of the covenant, he continued to express his firm belief in David’s kingship:

“And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David’s enemies” (1Sam 20:14-16).
As Jonathan went on, the focus of his covenant shifted slightly — surely it was entirely focused upon David’s coming ascent to the throne, but at the same time, it was no longer about what Jonathan would do for David. Instead, it was about what Jonathan wanted David to do for him. With his trust firmly set on the fact that David would be king, Jonathan made David swear to him that he would continue to show steadfast love to both Jonathan and his family. When David had become king over all of the land, Jonathan wanted to be certain that David would not seek to kill off the survivors of the previous dynasty, despite what Saul had sought to do to him.

Just try to imagine what had happened here! David had run to Jonathan, almost certain that he would soon be killed. Even doubting Jonathan’s own loyalty and the covenant which the two of them had made previously, David invited Jonathan to kill him himself. Aware of David’s fragile spiritual state, Jonathan brought David out to the place where he had already pleaded with his father on David’s behalf. In that same field, Jonathan swore another covenant to David, and this time that covenant was focused on the future — all throughout it, Jonathan spoke confidently of David’s kingdom over Israel, as though David was already reigning on the throne! Not only so, but sought to change David’s entire outlook — it was not David who needed to be pleading for his life to Jonathan, but Jonathan needed to be pleading to him, the future king over God’s people!

What an impact these words would have had on the man whose faith was faltering. His spiritual friend took him out of his despair and reminded him that God would protect him — regardless of Saul’s intentions.

**What a friend**

On top of all of those reassurances, Jonathan sealed the covenant with words which would have assured David of Jonathan’s love and loyalty towards him. If he did not perform what he had sworn to perform, Jonathan stated, “*the LORD do so and much more to Jonathan...*” Often similar words to these were used when people throughout Bible times sought to show the seriousness of what they had just said. Eli said it when he wanted Samuel to tell him everything that God had spoken to him: “And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee” (*1Sam* 3:17). Saul even said it when he tried to kill Jonathan, after Jonathan had tased honey in violation of Saul’s command: “And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan” (*1Sam* 14:44). Nevertheless, there was only one other time previously in which someone specifically used God’s covenant name, and used these words to seal their vow of loyalty to someone else. This previous incident would have held a powerful significance for David:

> “And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me” (*Ruth* 1:16-17).
In Ruth’s beautiful vow of faithfulness and loyalty towards Naomi, she demonstrated her sincerity with the words, “the LORD do so to me, and more also...” — the only time before Jonathan’s oath in which this phrase was used to pledge faithfulness to the life of another. Those lines of devotion and promise would have been lines which were familiar to David, since they were the words which brought Ruth into the Promised Land, for she was his great-grandmother: “And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David” (Ruth 4:17). They were a vow of loyalty which she meant and to which she held for the rest of her life. Such was the same message which Jonathan sought to convey to David. Thus, as Jonathan spoke these words in a similar circumstance, it would seem likely that his mind was on the words of Ruth. At the same time, as David heard Jonathan’s oath, more than likely he remembered the mighty words which had been spoken by his great-grandmother on the day that she left Moab to live with Naomi.

Truly, Jonathan pledged to David the same type of love — he would do whatever he could for his friend, and he would do everything within his power to raise up David’s thoughts and help him to remember God’s plan.

What a friend!
If only we could be a friend like this — a friend who focuses on the future, and who sees it as though it has already come to pass! What if we could recite Scripture to one another when we’re in desperate circumstances — and really mean what we say!

And perhaps we can — perhaps today, or perhaps this week, we can make a concerted effort to keep Scripture in our mind and to speak it with others. Perhaps we can make a concerted effort to keep that vision strong and real!

And if we do, then indeed, we’ll be one step closer to being a friend like Jonathan — a man who truly shows what it means to give of ourselves, expecting nothing in return.

Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)
Racism and Prejudice: Reflections on 70 Years of Jewish Life in Berlin

(2) The future of Jews in Germany?

No doubt the Jewish community is thriving in Berlin and Germany. However, there is an increasing amount of anti-Semitism in Germany in both words and physical violence that is palpably felt by the Jewish community. How much this will affect the future of Jews in Germany is an open question. For now, Berlin remains a popular destination for Jews, especially Israeli and Russian Jews seeking a new life. Nevertheless, Israel as a home and an automatic Israeli passport remains a source of comfort and hope should darker days return.

What does the Scriptures say about racism and prejudice?

I used a bit of “crowdsourcing” for help here. I asked brothers and sisters on Facebook to suggest Scripture passages that discuss this topic, or perhaps incidents in Scripture that are examples of racism and prejudice? I was surprised by the enthusiastic response to discuss this issue and I would like to acknowledge their assistance before proceeding. Brother John Bilello also kindly provided an article on racism he had written for the Christadelphian Magazine.

That prejudice, racism and bigotry have no place in the life of a brother or sister of Christ is one of those self-evident truths. I don’t feel that I can add anything new here that is not already known, but a review of why prejudice and racism is a denial of our Faith can be helpful.

All have the same wages

As we have seen, prejudice begins with beliefs and attitudes. If we believe we are in anyway superior to those around us, then the cross of Christ should bring us down to reality. I struggled with how to dig down to the basic problem of prejudicial thinking. Brother John Main of Esslingen brought everything into focus for me during his exhortation, which was based on Matthew 20. In his discussion of the laborers in the vineyard, no matter how much work each laborer did, at the end of the day they were all paid the same. This seems quite unfair. Why? Our sense of fairness tells us that if we bore the burden of the heat of the day, then we should get a higher wage. Yet, each laborer started work having the same expectations of wages. The fault lay not with the paymaster but with the laborer. The Lord explained: “So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many shall be called but few chosen” (Matt 20:16). No matter what the effort, no matter might be achieved in life; the wages remain the same for all. “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:23).

Lowliness of mind

It is the same wage and the same gift. How then is it possible for anyone to feel
a sense of superiority over any person, group or race? This seems such a self-evident statement. Yet, prejudice and bigotry is very subtle and will ignore this truth. Yet it mattered a great deal to the Lord Jesus Christ because it underlined on of the major problems of accepting the Gospel, and for living it for those who did accept the Gospel message. The Apostle Paul addressed this problem to the Philippians:

“Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife of vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil 2:2-3).

I must admit I thought I understood this passage, yet in the light of trying to understand prejudice, I saw it more than “just getting along with others in Christ.” For instance, we know slavery and racism against African-Americans was a major problem for the United States. We also know that racism still runs deep there, as we have seen with the recent attack in against African-Americans in Charleston, South Carolina. Thinking of this incident and the problem with anti-Semitism in Germany shined a really clear light for me on what the Apostle was trying to say to the Philippian ecclesia:

“Philippian brother, do you have slaves in your ecclesia or do you own slaves? Do you think having the saving hope of the Gospel makes you a better man than a slave or even those heathens in the marketplace? It is true that the slave is the bottom of the Philippian social ladder, but not amongst the redeemed of the Lord. In Christ, the last shall be first and the first last. In fact, dear brother, Christ put himself on the bottom of the social ladder to save you, and therefore you ought to do the same with others. And just to make this point clear, everyone else is higher on the social ladder than you and you are there to serve them just as Christ serves you.”

Prejudice a sign of weakness and not strength

We are always deeply moved by those who have literally put themselves on the bottom of the social ladder to try to save the oppressed Jews during the darkest days of Holocaust. Oskar Schindler saved over 1,000 Jews in occupied Germany. Raoul Wallenberg of Sweden saved over 100,000 Hungarian Jews. These are people who were “like-minded” with these oppressed people. They literally “esteemed others better than themselves.” These examples show in a concrete way both the destructiveness of prejudice and the courage and humility that underlies the “lowliness of mind” that the Apostle described. During the Third Reich, to associate with a Jew or even express sympathy with Jews could result in the same fate as Jews during the Third Reich. The Apostle was not expressing some sort of high ideal but a genuine belief and attitude that in some circumstances could lead to death. Seen in this way, prejudice and racism are very cowardly attitudes. They are signs of personal weakness and not strength.

The Apostle Paul tells the Galatians that no matter what the race, gender, or social status of a brother or sister in Christ, everyone is the same before God — sinners in need of redemption. In fact, sin is the great leveler of all humanity.
whether in Christ or not. The Apostle, discussing the advantages the Jews had by being provided with the Law of Moses⁴, reminds the reader that although in Christ the mercies of God abounds, there is no real advantage over the Jew who observed the Law of Moses in all its details. Both Jew and Gentile are all under sin. “As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.” Paul concludes, “Where is boasting then? It is excluded.”

Prejudice has a long history

Perhaps the first recorded act of prejudice occurred when Cain killed Abel. God accepted Abel’s offering but not his own. Cain thought that God should have accepted his offering because it was good enough. This was the false belief that led to hostility towards Abel. Here is a probable sequence of events after the rejection of Cain’s offering. Cain started taunting Abel and saying humiliating jokes (allocation). He then moved his tent to a new area and did not speak to his brother (alienation). He then demanded that his children (if he had any at this point) and family not communicate with Abel (discrimination). No animals could be purchased from Cain. After some time, his wrath seething in him, made an attempt to harm his brother (physical attack) finally succeeding in killing him. Yet he felt no remorse. The belief was so powerful that he ignored a reality — he had eliminated the potential for an entirely new tribe of people, which would have been the Abelites (genocide). He then boasted of his “avenging” as if he was doing a good thing. Prejudice and racism is a deceitfulness of the heart at its worst.

Prejudice seeps up from the pages of Scripture as one group attempts to exclude other groups, such as the “Children of God” were discriminated against in the times before the Flood, or the Egyptians who attempted genocide of the Israelites during the time of Moses.

Even the Israelites could not escape prejudice when Miriam and Aaron complained about Moses’ wife Zipporah. She was a Cushite, who were probably black Ethiopians. Moses’ siblings respected the authority of Moses, but resented a non-Hebrew being so close to the leader of the Hebrews. Bro. John Bilello noted that because Miriam’s racism was against a black woman, God turned Miriam’s skin into a pure but rotten white skin in the form of leprosy. “Do you resent a black woman being part of the camp of Israel Miriam?” God seems to say. “Well, I will turn you into pure white and you will die until you seek forgiveness for your racist beliefs and attitudes towards my chosen mediator and his wife”. Later Yahweh encoded in the Law of Moses a proscription against having one law for the Israelite and one for the non-Israelite⁵. The Israeli was to be completely impartial and this fairness and justice formed the bedrock of the Law of Moses.

When the northern ten tribes split from the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, a prejudice against the House of David seems to be a part of their decision. The rebels cried “What have we to do with the House of David” (1Kgs 12:16). Actually they had everything to do with the House of David. It was of God’s choosing not theirs. They had chosen their own king which they believed was “better than” the
line of David. One wonders what jokes they must have made about the Judeans. And so they moved into an exclusive in-group that excluded their own brethren and sisters. True, Rehoboam made some stupid decisions, but the greater sin was by Jeroboam rejecting God’s chosen House and setting up as a rival king. In the end, the Jews, as they were to be known, were brought back to the land, while the remaining ten tribes became the mythical “Lost Ten Tribes of Israel”.

We could speak of the discrimination and prejudice the Samaritans faced by the Jews well into the time of Jesus. These were non-Jews who after being forced to live in the unoccupied land of the former northern ten tribes had adopted the “local god” of the Israelites and made some changes to the Law of Moses. By the time of Jesus, they were severely discriminated against. Jesus showed what lowliness of mind means in practice by associating himself with the Samaritans, even asking a Samaritan woman for a drink of water. Prejudice had isolated this people amongst God’s people, but Jesus showed his disciples how to overcome prejudice by simply reaching out to the “out-groups” in humility.

**Peter and the Gentiles**

Perhaps the best example in Scripture of the subtlety and dangers of prejudice is the Apostle Peter refusing to eat with the Gentiles when he came to Antioch. (Gal 2:11-16)

To be fair to Peter, it is hard to fault a man who walked with Christ and indeed lived a life of lowliness and humility. He learned a hard lesson about prejudice from the Lord himself when he was given a vision of the clean and unclean animals. In the end Peter “perceived that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). And so Peter baptized Gentiles into Christ, which formed the first shift from a Jewish-centered community to a worldwide community of peoples of all nations.

Yet, soon the Jerusalem church of which Peter was a member seemed to have forgotten the lesson of Joppa. The Jewish converts began insisting on a return to elements of the Law of Moses, especially in the matter of circumcision and dietary restrictions. And this had a detrimental effect on Peter.

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?” (Gal 2:11-14).

Here Paul reprimanded Peter for his fear of the Jewish converts and the resultant discrimination against the Gentile converts. This goes to the root of the problem. Fear is often the beginning of prejudice. It is often fear of the “other”, the fear
of an “out-group” that starts a false belief that works itself out in prejudicial attitudes. How often have we heard it said, “These minorities are going to take over our country”; “These people don’t know our ways and customs. They just won’t adopt our ways.” “We need to protect our way of life, our way of doing things. These people are going to come in and change everything.” “Why won’t they dress like we do? They are always wearing black clothes and funny hats. The just won’t fit in.”

And so out of fear of those who held wrong beliefs about Gentiles, Peter himself got carried away with it and separated himself from the gentile converts. This is often what happens. Prejudice is like a virus spreading from person to person and with the numbers it becomes harder and harder to stop. If Peter, a man of incredible faith and a dear friend of the Lord Jesus, succumbed to prejudice, what hope is there for the rest of us!

**The challenge of racism**

This is the great challenge of prejudice and racism. It is persistent, subtle and can often work at the core of our identity. We naturally categorize everything because we almost have to do so to make sense of the world. Our identity revolves around our home, our family, our country, our language, our ecclesia, and many other elements. It is natural that we categorize the world around us. However, when we begin to develop a hostile attitude towards a person who belongs to a group that we believe has objectionable qualities, we are moving into prejudice and bigotry. It is true the world is full of evil and sin. Most people are ignorant of the Hope of Israel. Yet, this did not stop Jesus from sitting at a well and asking a Samaritan woman for a drink of water.

Jesus indeed esteemed others better than himself. What if we encounter some member of an ecclesia, which may have a simple understanding of the Hope of Israel, and not understand all the details we expect of others? What if we enter an ecclesia that expresses their joy of salvation in unique or uncomfortable ways in which we are not used to? Consider Jesus and his acceptance of the Samaritan woman.

What if we hear someone making tasteless jokes about another race or group of people? What if we see discrimination against a brother or sister simply because of the ecclesia to which they belong? What do we do about prejudice when it occurs in our own community? This is where the challenge made to the Apostle Peter by Paul can help us. We need not “withstand one another to their face” but at least we can start by working on ourselves and see ourselves as Jesus saw others.

If our Lord is too high an achievable example, consider Oscar Schindler, who himself was a great failure for his Nazi connections, but in the end became the only Nazi ever buried on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. He overcame prejudice, bigotry and racism of the worse kind and associated himself with the lowliest people in Europe who were set apart for destruction.

The Apostle Paul concluded his thoughts about humility and lowliness of mind
to the Philippians this way:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil 2:5-8).

We all want a great reputation. Imagine what Oscar Schindler gave up in his Nazi career to save those Jews? Yet, in the end he was given the highest honor the Jews could bestow on anyone. Paul continued,

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9-11).

We do not compare Schindler to Jesus, of course, but the pattern is clear. Humility, kindness, fairness, graciousness, and lowliness of mind all go together. Prejudice is the exact opposite and is completely hostile to the mind of Christ, which we are all trying to develop. The first shall be last — “pride goeth before a fall” while the last shall be first — “wherefore God hath highly exalted him above every name.”

How then can we overcome prejudice? Paul answers this even before we ask the question:

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil 2:12-13).

We can overcome prejudice, bigotry and racism through the efforts of the God of our salvation because He wants us to share in the Hope of Israel with both the brethren who were lowliest of slaves to the great King David who sat on the Throne of Israel. And what is the connection between those two? They saw others better than themselves. One was a literal servant. The other was a king who saw himself as a servant.

Prejudice is a denial of the Faith and has no place amongst brothers and sister of Christ.

Glenn Lea (Berlin, Germany)

Notes:
5. Exod 12:49.
6. Not all of the Ten were lost: Anna (Luke 2:26) was of the tribe of Asher, and many of the northern tribes settled in Judah: 2Chron 30:11.
Bible Study

The New Testament Church
(7) Jews and Gentiles

Jews and Gentiles

Paul, accompanied by Barnabas, in the synagogue, at Antioch in Pisidia, gives a recital of Israel’s history right down to the time of David. The Jews said “Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak” (Acts 13:15). So Paul stands up and gives the main outline of their own history that they knew so well, culled from their own Scriptures. And then he leads them on, in the 23rd verse, to the resurrection of Jesus (“Of this man’s seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus”); to the word of salvation, (“Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent” vs 26); to the crucifixion, of which they had been guilty nationally, (“And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain” vs 28); to the resurrection (vs 30-37) and to the forgiveness of sins made possible through this crucified Savior that was foretold. This was always the point of his preaching in the synagogue — the crucified Savior, who had been foretold in their own Scriptures.

However, when we go over to Acts 16 we find Paul and Silas in prison at Philippi presented with an opportunity to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. There the message seems very much simpler. Briefly, this is what happened. There was an earthquake. All prisoners were set free including Paul and Silas and the jailor was afraid that they would escape. Paul said, “Don’t worry they are all here.” The jailor brings them out and he said:

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway” (Acts 16:30-33).

Now that is a remarkable statement. They preached the gospel to him in the middle of the night! We usually take about six months for indoctrination before we have got anybody to be what we call “ready for baptism.” They preached to him in the middle of the night the word of the Lord and he accepted it, he believed it, and himself and all his household were baptized “that same hour of the night.”

The jailor could not possibly learn all the details of our statement of faith at that time of night in the shocked condition in which he found himself. It would be impossible to take him back and to teach him the history of the kings of Israel, and how it was all developed, how the promises to Abraham will be fulfilled in a certain way, and the background of Old Testament times leading up to the Messiahship of Jesus. All this, I submit, could not be taught in the middle of the night, and the man and all his household be made ready for a Christadelphian
“examination”; but they were ready for baptism, and the message that he preached to them was: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” And they believed; and I submit that it would be a very elementary doctrine that the Philippian jailor would have received in the middle of the night. The simple basic truths. And he was so impressed by the power of God that had been manifested on behalf of these men that his heart was opened to receive it, and he believed and was baptized.

**Different emphasis**

If we go from Acts over to the epistles of Paul, there is, inferentially, a slight difference between the gospel that Peter and the other apostles preached to the Jews and the gospel which Paul preached to the Gentiles. It comes out particularly in the letter to the Galatians. I am making this point for a reason that you will see in a moment. Now it was not a different gospel; the basic facts were the same, but the emphasis was different. So we read: “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal 1:6-7).

Who were these that were troubling the Galatian churches? They were the Judaisers, as is clear from the rest of the Epistle. They were those who said, “It is all very well to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, but you have still got to have circumcision and the keeping of the Law.” They wanted to bring the Church back again to the old Mosaic institutions, but Paul would have none of it. He said, this is “another gospel.” This is something that is taking you away from the grace of Christ and bringing you back to the enslavement of the Law. So he says: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:8). He stood by this gospel of grace, and for the Gentiles he would have none of their circumcision, none of their law, “I say unto you,” he said, “If any man be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing.” He did not mean, of course, that if any man had been circumcised as a child at the whim of his mother or father he was outside the pale of salvation. He meant that if you start trusting again in circumcision then you are lost to Christ.

Salvation by grace was the gospel preached, and this was not the travesty of the gospel that was being introduced by the Judaising element. We read, “And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles” (Gal 2:2). Notice this: “That gospel which I preach among the Gentiles,” and then later on: “But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles)” (Gal 2:7-8). You will find this idea running through the Letter to the Galatians. They were not preaching two different gospels, it was a different emphasis.

Go back to Acts 15 which we looked at briefly previously. Here the church was saying that they wanted to not offend the Jewish element among them. There
were those who had certain genuine problems, because they found it extremely
difficult to turn their thinking away from the old Jewish customs and prejudices
in which they had been brought up. And Paul is always sympathetic to this. In
his epistles he says to the new converts from among the Gentiles who felt that
“all things are lawful to me,” and had no inhibitions over legal scruples, “Ah, you
may not have scruples, but these brethren of Judea do. They have been brought
up on the Jewish faith and you must respect their scruples and difficulties of
conscience.” (Though he maintained all the time, of course, that for a Gentile
convert, for any convert, these things had no bearing. It did not make a man
better if he ate meat offered to idols, or worse if he did not eat, the thing had no
relevance to salvation.)

In all his preaching we see how he tried, as he himself said, to the Jew to become
a Jew, that he might win the Jews; and to the Gentiles to become a Gentile, that
he might win the Gentiles; to them that were under the Law as under the Law
etc. He “took and circumcised Timothy” so that it should be seen that the report
that he was a law-breaker was quite untrue. For the same reason he associated
himself with men who were under a Jewish vow, in order to show the Jews that
he had respect for the Law, but not as a means of salvation. In this I see a change
of emphasis. To the Jews, an understanding of their difficulties; to the Gentiles
preaching of salvation by grace, in which Law played no part whatsoever.

Now I think this is important, because it shows a certain flexibility in the
preaching of the gospel. It suggests that truth is not a golden casket, immutable
and unchanging, but a living organism adaptable to the needs of each generation,
or different men in one generation. Not that the basic facts ever change. The
simple doctrinal content of the gospel remains immutable, but there may be a
change of emphasis, in order that men may be able to see and understand the
central core of revealed truth.

“Examining Brethren”

What the church taught as required faith in the first century, in Acts of the
Apostles, was quite simple and dogmatic. There is no evidence here of any
interrogation of candidates for baptism, or what we call examination. If we go
back to the previous study, when we are thinking of the offices and officers of
the New Testament church, we never read of “examining brethren.” They did not
have examining brethren; and they did not give a Bible knowledge quiz, going
back to an understanding of all the kings of Israel before you could be baptized!
A simple affirmation of faith in the gospel, which was a simple gospel, was all
that was required. “If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest be baptized,”
Philip said to the Ethiopian eunuch. “And he said I believe that Jesus Christ is the
Son of God, and he baptized him” (Acts 8:37).

The point is, that they went out into the Roman world, confronting the paganism
of their times, and they preached to them Jesus as a living being — that “Jesus
Christ is alive today.” It is a wonderful message, and we ought to preach it more.
They preached repentance for real sins, not for some kind of inherited sin, but for
personal sins. They repented, and were converted, and their lives were turned
inside out and upside down; and they started out to be disciples in the very real sense of the word.

This was the content of apostolic preaching, and it was more important than the preaching of the signs of the times, or political prophecy, which we indulge in so much in our own times. We do not read anything in the preaching of the apostles about the signs of the times, though clearly there were signs. Their times were running out, the judgments of AD 70 were on the doorstep, but we do not read of them preaching these things. They were preaching salvation by Jesus Christ; acceptance of his message and his leadership; and the conversion of men’s lives to the Christian faith. That is not to say, of course, that we should not preach about Israel or the signs of the times or prophecies of the Old Testament. I am not saying that at all. All I am saying is that it clearly is a different type of preaching in many respects from the preaching of the New Testament preachers.

In the 19th century when our forebears came along, reviving the Truth and preaching the Gospel, this preaching of prophecy had a marked effect. Perhaps it was then a legitimate change of emphasis. Perhaps in a world in which men generally accepted the Bible, generally accepted some form of religion, it was very proper and right that they should direct attention to some aspects of the Bible which men had over-looked or forgotten, or disregarded. Interpretations of prophecy and dogma were the religious coinage of the time, and it was in this context that this kind of preaching developed, in which our own community grew up.

A new emphasis today!

All I am suggesting is that it may need a new emphasis today. Perhaps a return to the more basic Christian message is required for the new paganism of these times, because men are not religious any longer, and they do not know the Bible any longer, and they are pretty well as godless, although perhaps not quite so pagan as the nations to which the Apostles went. How they managed to get their message across to men who were worshipping idols, in idols' temples, I do not know, but they did it. They got their basic Christian faith across to pagans. And they were converted and became Christians, and served the Lord and worshipped him. I suppose to some degree the same kind of thing happens in the mission field, in the Bible Mission of our own community. I have never been abroad on Bible Mission work, but I understand that the message is quite simple, quite positive, constructive, and certain.

Simple dogmatic Christian faith is the message which is taken to simpler souls than our own. I do not suppose many of us today would want to go back to the intensive kind of interviewing of candidates for baptism in detailed Biblical (which usually meant Old Testament) knowledge, that perhaps 50 years ago was the order of the day. Of course we still have “interviews” and discussions — most of us (in the UK) have long since dropped the word “examination.” It is not an examination, but a discussion; and the discussion should concern simple basic Christian faith, especially revolving round the desire to serve God, and to follow Christ Jesus. And it may be, that in view of the increasing paganism of
our times, and the increasing lack of knowledge of the Bible and of the things of the Christian faith we should think in terms, not of increasing the multiplicity of clauses in our statement of doctrine, but rather in trying to rediscover the simplicity of the New Testament.

Len Richardson

Letters

Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?

Comment by Bro. Bromet

I was glad to read the spirited discussion that ensued from my entry “Did God Abandon Jesus” article in The Tidings of November, 2015. We tend to spend our energies on things we truly care about and this topic holds great value in our search for the truth. My reaction to the brothers that have commented on this topic is this:

We Christadelphians hold great value in doctrinal issues in support of our beliefs as we indeed should. The brothers that responded to my letter have expressed some of these doctrinal points. What they’ve neglected to consider is that our Lord Jesus uttered the statement in question in Aramaic. All one has to do is read the English version of the Gospels and find it clearly made in Aramaic: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” which carries the meaning of (1) to reserve (2) to keep (3) to spare (4) to forgive. Whether one believes this passage to have been first penned in Aramaic or Greek, it was in Aramaic that Jesus spoke these words, else why was it necessary for the Gospel text to point that out even in our English version. One can argue for one doctrine or against another, but what cannot be argued is the language and the meaning of the words that were uttered. I thoroughly researched these words and indicated the meaning they held. I also pointed out that the root word “sabach” was also uttered by him when he spoke: “Father, forgive [sabach] them, for they do not know what they are doing.” It would be ludicrous to suggest that Jesus meant for God to forsake those for whom he died. Don’t forget that the word “forsaken” in the Psalms uses an entirely different word “azbatani” which unlike “sabachtani” has an exclusive meaning of forsaken.

Kim Bromet (Sacramento, CA)

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.
Our beloved Brother Bob Lloyd fell asleep in Christ on December 14th 2015, just a few days after his 89th birthday. Bro. Bob was a wonderful blessing to all of us throughout his life in many ways. Some of his points and illustrations will stay with us forever. Most of us have had opportunities to hear Bob exhort and lecture and teach Bible classes. He had the unique ability to communicate effectively with everyone in the room, young and old, scholar and student. He was a diligent Bible student and he also worked very hard on learning how to present his messages in ways that everyone could relate to and remember. Who can forget his “Round Tuit” — a wooden disc he handed out with great enthusiasm. The stories we all can tell of his talks!

He shared his love for the Bible with brethren and sisters around the world. And many of them have communicated with the family over the last few days sharing loving memories and loving wishes for the family’s well-being during this difficult time.

Bro. Bob was the editor of *The Tidings* magazine from 1958 until 1988, a period of 30 years. He took over from Bro. Carl Wolfe at that point. The predecessor for *The Tidings* was a publication called “*The Junior Christadelphian*”. Bro. Bob actually wrote his first article for that publication in February 1942 during World War II entitled “Fear and War.” He was around 13 years old.

From 1988 on, Bob wrote a brief article that appeared in the last pages of every magazine (except the special issues) called “Minute Meditations”. He had previously written similar articles as editorials starting with the second issue of his editorship, and they were subsequently collected in a book called “Minute Meditations”, which is now in its tenth edition. We highly recommend it: reading one a day will prove very rewarding. He continued doing this all his life as the editorship was passed forward from Bro. Don Styles, Bro. George Booker and now to Bro. Peter Hemingray. In fact his last article was submitted before his death and appears in this edition. “Minute Meditations” are brief exhortational thoughts for the day that literally take a minute or two to read.
I was Bob’s business partner for 40 years as well as his brother in Christ. All of us on Sunday morning are on our best behavior and we are all in what will probably be our spiritual high point for the week. Our guest speakers at Bible Schools know that they are teaching by their words and in their example as they discuss Scriptures with the brethren and sisters during the week. Daily life is a bit different. When you are in business together day in and day out and trying to come to grips with situations that are difficult and do not present clear black or white alternatives the decisions you take manifest who you are. Bob never drove the car too close to the edge of the cliff. He was upright in all his dealings. Bob always made sure our client knew what wasn’t covered as well as what was covered. The underwriting information he submitted to the companies was the whole picture. The Bob you saw on Sunday was the Bob I had the privilege of working with every day.

Bob was only conscious for a few hours after his stroke. We are thankful he did not suffer. His health was never good and over the years he had already experienced the frailties of this mortal existence. His confident belief in the promise of the coming Kingdom always filled him with hope and kept him going. His next conscious moment will be at his resurrection. We pray that he, and all of us, will find grace in that day and be granted immortality.

Ken Sommerville

As mentioned above, Bro. Bob Lloyd was actively involved in the Tidings magazine for over 60 years, including being Editor for 30 years. His Minute Meditations are timeless exhortations that will make Bro. Bob’s wisdom available to us for years to come. At a time like this, Bro. Bob would encourage us to remember these words, “Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope... For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first... Therefore encourage one another with these words.” “Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

— The Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee
St. Lucia Report — A Link Visit 2015

Some wonder what is involved in being a link brother/couple. Bro. Martin (linkman) and Sis. Lois Webster visited St. Lucia at the end of September and into October last year and this describes their activities while there.

Passport expiration is now an issue, whenever traveling out of the US or Canada. Their old passports expired six weeks after their departure date, but the minimum is now three months! We were told by the Air Canada check in agent that had we been allowed to travel on that day we would have been turned away by St. Lucia immigration and Air Canada would have been fined!

At the first memorial service Bro. Eddie presided and Bro. Martin exhorted on Ezekiel. In the announcements, Bro. Eddie indicated that his mother, sister and cousin were interested in being baptised. This was delightful news. Later Eddie came to the apartment and we gave him “Preparing for Baptism” to share with them. We provided lunch here at the apartment afterwards for those able to come back.

Almost immediately on our arrival we started to prepare contact labels for the “Ten Bible Questions and Ten Bible Answers” leaflets that we brought down. We brought down about 1,200 for distribution here. So far we have handed out about half of the quantity we brought. On Monday we, with Bro. Andre visited Bro. George Rock. He keeps going, but as he said, at 83 it is challenging, he cannot see or hear very well! Driving days are over and he has sold his car.

The Bible Enrichment classes have been presented with the topic of Jonah and the fascinating points that his story has. God willing the story will be completed on Thursday with consideration of the “forty days”. The 1,200 “Ten Bible Questions and Ten Bible Answers” leaflet have been handed out and we pray that there will be some who contact us for discussions.

We met the landlord of our rented hall and were able to sort out several issues regarding maintenance etc. It is a fine, bright room on the third story with lovely cross breezes.

Yesterday’s memorial service was started more or less on time, by Caribbean standards! Our interested friend Anthony Maurice came too. All came back to the apartment for some lunch. During the afternoon Bro. Benji came by between shifts for readings and breaking of bread. The week has been busy! Eddie’s cousin, Jessica came for the first session of instruction for baptism. His mother was not able to come, but we are pleased that Jessica came and we hope to continue the discussions this coming week.

We have had some excellent Bible discussions with members and friends around the small kitchen table in the apartment. Our friend Julian Jackson was at one of them and we gave him our baptismal instruction sheet. A lecture is
planned for this coming Wednesday on the topic of “Resurrection, Judgment and Reward”.

Although this doesn’t cover the whole trip, as you can see by the bolded words being a link brother includes preaching, exhorting, teaching and welfare of the ecclesias including the mundane but important logistics as well as seeing to the member’s needs.

The ecclesia in St. Lucia needs all the bolded resources to be supplemented by more volunteer missionaries. Thus, the St. Lucia link needs volunteers that are “jacks of all the spiritual trades”. Please contact Bro. Phil Snobelen if you can help.

Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMA Publicity

Guadalajara and ‘The Sower’

Over the last decade, there have been about 30 baptisms in the Guadalajara Ecclesia, in Mexico. Some have fallen asleep in the Lord; others have left the meeting due to circumstances in life and some have stopped attending due to personal matters. Nevertheless a core group of brothers and sisters remain faithful to their calling. At this time, we are also pleased to report that a number of members who stopped attending during the last year or so, have recently returned! Brother Victorino (ecclesial secretary) is at the Mission Centre Monday thru Saturday — arriving at about 9:30 am and staying until 6 pm. During the course of the day, people passing by will stop to look at the sidewalk displays and sometimes enter the Centre to talk, or contacts will drop off answered lessons. Other members will be there at different times of the day as well, and daily Bible readings take place in the afternoon at 3 pm.

Over the October 31st/November 1st weekend, I was able to spend six days with the ecclesia in this city, staying at the Mission Centre. The Ecclesia held special activities over a three day period. Attendance varied from seven Friday evening (since many work long days) — to 20 on the Sunday. Members take turns bringing food for the meal on these special weekends, and we were served a delicious display of hot food, with warm tortillas.

The arranging brothers are in the process of working on two main projects — reaching out to members who stopped attending and searching for a better rental location for the Mission Centre. Most of the shops and little restaurants in the area have closed, so pedestrian traffic has decreased, which also encourages vandalism and break-ins. We appeal for your prayers to our Heavenly Father to help the ecclesia grow stronger, so
that the seed sown in good ground will continue to bring forth fruit with patience.

A unique event that happens once a year in Latin America, and is a big event in Mexico, is El Día de Los Muertos (The Day of the Dead), and it took place on Monday, November 2nd. It’s a vacation day for most and is also known as Festival para Los Muertos (Festival for the Dead). The Mexican Day of the Dead celebration is similar to other observances, including the Spanish tradition in which festivals and parades are frequently held, and people often gather at cemeteries and pray for their deceased loved ones at the end of the day. It is a mix of indigenous observance, Spanish Tradition and the Catholic Church. Needless to say it involves false believes, food and parties. If you google it, there is lots of information available — and once again, we realize how blessed we are to be in the Truth!

Written by Donald Luff, CBMA representative
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMA Publicity
Ecuador – August 2015 Visit

In the end of August, Sister Naomi and I had the wonderful and refreshing opportunity to meet with our brethren, sisters, and young people in Quito, Ecuador. It was hard to believe that about five years had passed since we last lived there, and we had a lot of catching up to do. We were received at the airport by Brother Cesar and Sister Mariana at midnight and spent the next day and night at their home. It was wonderful to catch up with them and see their spiritual growth over the years.

We hit the ground running, spending the first day making calls and sending off emails, filling up our schedule, and preparing for the following day’s public Bible study. One of the sisters met us for lunch that first day. From there on, every day was spent enjoying fellowship with members in homes, discussing their questions, holding Bible studies in the hall, and preparing for the following day’s activities.

On the Thursday, one of the brethren kindly offered to take us to visit Sister Fanny in an old-age home. Those familiar with previous articles about the ecclesia here may remember reading about Bro. Augusto who fell asleep a few years ago. His wife, Fanny, has been placed in the various old-age homes across the sprawling city by her children. Her own children don’t visit her often, so she always appreciates the visits that the brethren and sisters have been able to make. Although she is in her eighties and in pain from severe arthritis, her mind is clear. This was demonstrated to us in her recollection of the members of the ecclesia, the missionaries, and especially her ability to recall verses and passages. We read passages such as Psalm 23, the Beatitudes of Matthew 5, and Isaiah 2 while our sister not only listened, but finished many of the verses before we did, reciting a few chapters from memory. She cried as she told us that she hadn’t been able to read her Bible since the time she read it with her husband.

We were able to meet up with all of the brethren and sisters except one. Unfortunately, an erupting volcano was spewing ash across the highway and it made travel south of the city very challenging.
There were lively discussions about the women that followed Jesus in his ministry, the faithful Benaiah who was always ready to serve his master, the principles of service in the ecclesia, and many discussions about the return of Christ and the work of the saints in the Millennium.

Our week flew by. We were uplifted by all the time we were able to spend with the members of Christ’s body in Ecuador and encouraged by their growth. In our discussions there was one thing that stuck out: often the members told us of the need for more Christadelphians resources in Spanish. It made us realize how blessed we are as a community to have whole libraries of studies prepared by the community over the past 150+ years.

We pray that our God will continue to bless our brethren and sisters all around the world as we grow in knowledge and the fear of God, watching, waiting, and praying for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ to the earth.

Written by Paul and Naomi Osborn, former Missionary couple  
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity
Caribbean Youth Camp — August 2015

The 13th Triennial Christadelphian Caribbean Bible Youth Camp was held at the Cyril Potter College of Education, in Georgetown, Guyana, under the theme: “Youths at the Crossroads”, from the 8th to 15th of August, 2015.

There were approximately 120 attendees from five different territories, namely: Guyana; Trinidad and Tobago; Jamaica; Canada; and the United States of America. The talks were led by Bro. Tyrone Smartt of the USA, and Bro. Ian Macfarlane of Canada. The camp was mostly a fun means of gathering around God’s Word while getting to know other Youth Circlers from various parts of the globe. The Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) is the national institution for training of teachers and is located just outside the capital city of Georgetown.

Each day began with physical exercises which were spearheaded by Eccles youth circler, Phibian Joseph and Bro. David Smartt of New York. This was followed by a session of Bible devotion, breakfast, registration, and then addresses by Bro. Tyrone and Bro. Ian. Classes were divided into seniors and juniors and held simultaneously. Addresses were delivered during the morning period only. Afternoon sessions therefore were designed with activities which stimulated both mind and body, keeping us focused on the things of God.

At the close of day there would be an assessment exercise involving everyone. One of the camp leaders would call out the ‘Question for the Day’ which was selected from the talks given earlier that day. This was followed by the ‘Verse of the Day’ which campers were asked to recite and which was indicated earlier after our morning devotion, thus giving some time to be committed to memory.

Very importantly, a significant proportion of time was given each day to creating several elaborately designed table-model art works, each depicting the concept of ‘Youth at the Crossroads’, our camp theme. Four such models were beautifully done, again, by way of the friendly competitive team spirit, and presented for open viewing at the end of the camp.

The camp activities were designed to be lively and foster bonds of fellowship among campers. A significant feature of this was the placing of campers into mixed teams that lasted throughout the camp. This meant no groupings according to family, friends, and nationality. All organized games such as cook-outs, barn-yard hunts, scavenger hunts, Bible competitions etc., and even kitchen work and general cleaning duties, were undertaken as per the prescribed teams.

According to feed-back the camp had a very positive effect on the lives of the young unbaptized campers. It helped them to really contemplate their future and eternal salvation. What a joy it was to hear the good news that as a result of this camp there has been so far one baptism from Jamaica, Alvarie Johns, who put on the Saving Name of our Lord on the 7th September, 2015. Thanks to everyone who came and participated and especially to the CBMC for all their support.

Yours in Christ Jesus, Abigail Semple, Georgetown, Guyana
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity
Books from The Christadelphian Tidings

Observations Along the Way
A Bible Journal
by George Booker

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

$9.00 US (soft cover, 305 pages, illustrated)

On the Way: Bible Studies, Exhortations, Meditations and Musings,
by George Booker
Insights, reflections, practical issues, difficult passages, personal observations and more to uplift and encourage all those “on the Way” whether young or old in the Truth.
$9.00 US (309 pages).

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

Bible Guidelines for a Happy Marriage, by John C. Bilello
Sound, proactive, Biblical advice on how to build and maintain a happy marriage.
$6.00 US (soft cover, 127 pages).

The Creation Text: Studies in Early Genesis, by David Levin
Forty-nine studies offer fresh insights into early Genesis by examining the text and structure of the first five chapters. $12.00 US (364 pages).

My Journey in Faith, by Ronald Hicks
A brother shares his life experience in the Truth with Christadelphians around the world, and the joy of mission work. Special price: Reduced from $10.00 to $5.00 US (372 pages).

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

The Whole Armor of God, by Ryan Mutter
This story takes place nearly 3,000 years ago, but the spiritual challenges are familiar to today’s young people. $6.00 US (110 pages).

HOW TO ORDER:
• Online – www.tidings.org (Go to ‘Books’)  E-mail – books@tidings.org
• Telephone – Karen Guist, 440-227-0212
• Mail – Tidings Books, 11659 Caves Rd., Chesterland, OH 44026

Shipping and handling extra. Make checks payable to The Christadelphian Tidings.
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.

COLLINGWOOD, ON

It is with great joy that we announce the formation of a new lampstand in Collingwood, Ontario.

There is a long and storied history of Christadelphians in Collingwood, but it started again in 1997 when the Bible Seminars were held and over 50 people attended the first week. Since then weekly midweek classes and seminars have been held attracting even more interest. From that initial group two women, and eventually their husbands and children, have formed the nucleus of what now is a viable ecclesia. In 2005, we began to have a Memorial Service the last Sunday of each month, and in the summer 2015 a service each Sunday.

The majority of new members have come from the Shelburne and Orangeville Ecclesias. The founding members of the Collingwood Ecclesia are Paul and Cindy Aback; Benjamin and Lydia Abel; Joe and Kate Abel; John and Darla Anderson; Perry and NancyLee Braux; Allan and Jessica Crandlemire; Gerhard and Carolyn Runge; Kurtis Runge; Lauren Runge; Chris and Martha Sales; Silas Sales; Verity Sales; Elaine Sales; and Bob and Heather Venton.

Further information and details can be obtained from Bro. Perry Braux or Sis. Nancylee Braux by phone at: 705-445-8883. Service starts at 10:00 am and is held in the Bistro Restaurant located in the Raglan Retirement Community, 89 Raglan Street, Collingwood, ON.

Collingwood is a popular all season tourist town and we would love to see anyone who is visiting the area at our Sunday or midweek meetings.

Perry Braux

KINGSTON, ON

Please note a change regarding the Recording Brother for our meeting. Replacing Bro. Jim Barton is Bro. Justin Keene, 5426 Battersea Road, Battersea, ON K0H 1H0, email: jackeene@hotmail.com, phone: 613-353-9970.

Jim Barton

KOUTS, IN

In September we enjoyed the fellowship of Bro. Matthew and Sis. Jodi Norton (Gosford NSW, Aust.). They spent a week with us and we are very grateful for the uplifting fellowship. Bro. Matt delivered several talks during the week on “Daniel”, and then did a study on “Revelation”, for our study day which was very well attended. We thank them for spending this time with us and encouraging us as we wait for our Lord’s return.
Our Bro. Matthew Bryan moved to the Detroit area and has transferred his membership to the Detroit Livonia, MI Ecclesia. We commend him to the care of the brothers and sisters of his new ecclesia.

We have received by transfer, Sis. Shirley Tottleben from the Troy, IL Ecclesia. Sis. Shirley’s daughter and son-in-law, Sis. Dorothy Asbury and Bro. Jerry Asbury, had transferred to our ecclesia last year. We are very happy to receive them into the Kouts ecclesial family.

Bro. Joe Bennett will now be assuming the duties as our Recording Brother. His email address is: jkb8275@comcast.net.

Paul Wilson

PRINCE GEORGE, BC
We are very thankful for the encouragement we have received over the last few months from a number of visiting families. Bre: Paul Osborn, Jesse Fletcher, Ken Loveridge and Terry Houghton have all visited and exhorted our ecclesia.

We have also had our prayers answered by our heavenly Father with the transfer of two families moving to the Prince George, BC Ecclesia. We welcome Bro. Jason and Sis. Leah Sargent and their son, Ezekiel, from North Battleford, SK, and Bro. Nathanael and Sis. Nicole Massey and their three children, Anna, Isaiah and Lily from Kamloops, BC. This brings the total membership of the Prince George Ecclesia to sixteen.

We would love the ecclesia in Prince George to continue to grow and shine brightly in this world of darkness so our prayers to our Father are never silent with thanksgiving and requests. If anyone is interested in visiting or moving to our area please do not hesitate to contact us by email at: pgchristadelphians@hotmail.com.

Jonathan Lawrence

ROGUE VALLEY, OR
Bro. Matt Hatcher has joined our ecclesia, transferring his membership from the Thousand Oaks, CA Ecclesia. Also, Sis. Donna Metcalfe has transferred here from the New Westminster, BC Ecclesia in Vancouver.

We have been blessed recently with an exhortation by Bro. Graeme Osborn (Vernon Okanagan, BC). And we look forward to a visit by our Bro. Neal Caplan (Reseda, CA) later this month. We still have a joint Memorial Service with our brothers and sisters of the Jackson County, OR Ecclesia once monthly.

For contact with our ecclesia for general matters, please email Bro. Henry Wisniewski, Recording Brother at: henrywisniewski@hotmail.com; for finances please email Bro. John Pursell at: jwpursell@localnet.com.

Henry Wisniewski

False Beginnings in Oregon
In 1874, one L. T. Nichols, moved to McMinnville, Oregon. For a while in the 1870’s the pages of The Christadelphian were replete with accounts of baptizing at least 70 into the Truth. McMinnville is a little town about 30 miles Southwest of Portland. Nichols left the Christadelphian community in 1880.
A Minute Meditation

Watch what you say

“Once a word has been allowed to escape, it cannot be recalled,” the Roman poet Horace observed. The importance of choosing the words we speak very carefully is recognized all over the world. For example, “Words are under your control until you speak them, but you come under their control once you have spoken them” is advice from Ali Ibn Abu Talib “Speak sweetly, so that if ever you have to eat your words they don’t taste bad,” appears on posters that encourage good behavior. Children are told, “We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak,” which is originally a quote from the Greek philosopher Epictetus.

Many think that being furious or under stress makes it all right to say things we know we should not. Not true. We are responsible for every word we speak, and we need to carefully consider what we say before we say it. Words prevented Moses from entering the Promised Land when he spoke inappropriately. We read in the Psalms, “It went ill for Moses because of them; for they provoked his spirit, and he spoke rashly with his lips.” Moses did not sanctify God to the Children of Israel when water was brought from the rock at Meribah. What Moses said and did on that one occasion cost him his lifetime’s dream of leading the Children of Israel into the land of promise.

Job, a man who suddenly lost his children, his property and his health, said, while covered with painful boils, “What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” The Scripture then comments, “In all this did not Job sin with his lips.” Job had more reason to be upset and angry than any of us has, and yet, he did not say anything wrong. We are not told if Job had any inappropriate thoughts. When he first heard the terrible news about the deaths of his precious children, the shock and sorrow of that moment could cause many to question God. Pulling them out of the rubble, hoping and praying that someone may have survived, burying them all; we don’t know the details except that, when it was all over, he was overcome with sorrow but did not sin by speaking evil of God.

If we say the wrong thing, we are responsible for it, no matter what the circumstances. Our words can do great damage and cause other men to do evil. Peter tells us about false teachers who “make proud and stupid statements, and use immoral bodily lusts to trap those who are just beginning to escape from among people who live in error.”

James warns about the power of our tongue. He explains, “behold we put bits in the horses mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth a great
things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind; But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”

The words we use affect our salvation. Jesus cautions us, “But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” We are responsible for what we say, and our words are heard even if said in secret. David tells us, “for there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo oh LORD thou knowest it altogether.” Solomon’s advice is, “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.”

It is so easy to blurt out words that we later regret. To think that every idle word we speak is known by God and that we will be held accountable for each of them is a scary thought. We can be thankful that if we confess our sins the Lord is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and will cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The words of popular wisdom, “Speak only when your words are better than your silence,” is good advice, but there are times when we should speak up. We need to look out for those opportunities and choose appropriate words that would please our Heavenly Father.

Paul tells the Thessalonians to comfort the feeble minded, to support the weak and to edify one another. God taught Jesus how to comfort others, as we learn in Isaiah, “The LORD God has taught me what to say, so that I can strengthen the weary.” We need to do the same. Paul speaks about how the God of all comfort comforts us, and that he hopes that “we may be able to comfort others in all their suffering, as we ourselves are being comforted by God.”

We are to encourage each other by reviewing the details of the soon return of Jesus. Paul says, “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

We need to share our hope of the return of Christ and the coming Kingdom of God with those we know in the world around us. The apostle Peter tells us, “Be ready always to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason of the hope in you, with meekness and fear.” Paul tells Timothy, “Preach the word; be
ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”

We want our conversation to reflect the godly standards of the Lord. We don’t want foul words, unkind comments, angry outbursts or any kind of dirt to come from our lips. Once we have let the wrong type of words escape we can never recall them — only regret them. May we carefully choose good words to say as we strive to serve our God acceptably. Our prayer is the prayer of David, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

JANUARY, 2016

16-17 Tampa Bay, FL Study Weekend at Largo Ecclesia, 12212 104th N Largo, FL 33773. Speaker will be Bro. Jim Cowie (Brisbane, AUS) on “The Quarrel of my Covenant at Gibeah of Saul”. Contact Bro. Stephen Lewis, numbers1421@gmail.com or 727-501-5777.

30-31 San Diego County, CA Annual study weekend. Classes start at 9:30am. Bro. Shane Kirkwood (Sydney, AUS) will be the speaker. “Encounters with the Master — How Jesus Changed Lives.” Contact Bro. Kurt Wickham at kwickham28@gmail.com or 760-728-7807.

FEBRUARY, 2016

6 Brantford, ON Annual Junior CYC and Little Disciples Winter Gathering at Camp Trillium. Workbooks will be posted toward the end of the year on www.brantfordchristadelphians.com. For information e-mail Bro. Peter and Sis. Karly Styles at peterandkarly@juno.com

21-26 Palm Springs Bible School will be held, Lord willing, at the Miracle Springs Resort in Desert Hot Springs, CA. The speakers for 2016 are Bro. Anthony Whitehorn (Maidenhead, UK): “Faith and Doubt” and Bro. Steve Davis (Boston, MA): “Moving on to Maturity”. The Bible School is held at a natural hot springs resort. The School offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God’s word and enjoy the fellowship of other brethren and sisters. To register, please contact Jeff Gelineau at jeffgelineau@gmail.com or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org for more details.

MARCH, 2016


APRIL, 2016

2-3 Rogue Valley, OR Study Weekend with Bro. Jim Cowie (Moreton Bay, Brisbane, AUS). His topic will be “The Spirit of Christ in the Psalms”. For information, contact Bro. Henry Wisniewski at 541 956-5829 or henrywisniewski@hotmail.com.
**MAY, 2016**

6-7 **Vancouver Island Sisters’ Weekend** in Victoria, BC. Study led by Sis. Maritta Terrel (Austin Leander, Texas). Topic: “Renew Your Mind”. Registration Fee: $50.00. For further information or to register contact Sis. Rosa Bailey, 3-1431 Simon Road, Victoria, BC, V8X 3G9 or rosabailey@shaw.ca.

**JULY, 2016**

2-10 **Mid-Atlantic Bible School**, Shippensburg, PA. The speakers are Bro. Frank Abel (Hamilton Book Road, ON): “The God of Peace” (Adults), and “The Answer of a Good Conscience” (Teens); Bro. Dafydd Jenkins (Cardiff – Museum Place, UK): “Prophets and Kings” (Adults) and “Getting to Know My Lord” (Teens); and Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch North, NZ): “Gabriel – Messiah’s Evening Angel” (Adults) and “The Spiritual Habits of the Saints of God” (Teens). This information will also be available on the MACBS website: www.MidAtlanticBibleSchool.com.

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

10-16 **Southwest Bible School** at Schreiner University in Kerrville, TX. The speakers this year are Bro. Roger Lewis: “The Four Faces of Christ in the Gospel” (Adults) and “The Spiritual Habits of the Saints of God” (Teens), Bro. Wilfred Alleyne: “The Book of Beginnings” (both), and Bro. David Jennings: “For Who hath Despised the Day of Small Things” (both). Registration forms will be available on the Bible School website, Lord willing, the beginning of 2016: www.swcbs.com.

16-24 **Midwest Bible School** held at Trine University, Angola, IN. The speakers are Bro. Jesse Adair (CA) and Bro. Matt Norton (AUS), and Bro. Tim Morgan (UK). For registration information, contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 44943 Yorkshire Drive, Novi, MI 48375, phone: 248-462-5740, email: mike.live@gmail.com or visit www.midwestbibleschool.com.

31-Aug 6 **Rogue River Bible School** Speakers: Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, AUS) on “The Life of Noah”; Bro. David Wisniewski (Brant County, ON) on “Parables in the Gospels”; and Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI) on “Forgiveness”. For registration information, contact Sis. Pat Posey at Pat1Posey@gmail.com.
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Our Message and Our Young People

Public lectures, Etc.
For the past few years, my ecclesia has, every month or so, put on public lectures at various venues in the area, in order to present the Gospel message to the local region. We have selected a variety of public locations in the nearby towns, mostly libraries or community centers, and promoted them by various means, but lately relying on both direct mail and notifying all our contacts.

Looking back on these efforts, and other public activities over the decades, some themes are fairly clear:

- Overall, the public’s response is quite limited.
- A topic like “Learn to Read the Bible” still has some appeal.
- Basic topics like “Does God still exist” etc. call forth almost no response.
- Significant interest has been shown in two areas
  - Prophecy – what does the Bible say about the current turmoil?
  - How archeology demonstrates the truth of the Bible.

However, even then the response has been limited — although we are spreading the true gospel message, this does not appear to resonate.

We have looked at preaching before, specifically in the Special Issue in 2011, and an editorial in May, 2013. It was clear some ecclesias and some individuals have seen quite a few who respond, but it is also obvious that many ecclesias see little response, even those that engage in major outreaches.

However, even though the response by the public to our message is not strong, our community in North America appears to be growing, if only very slowly. In this it differs from the situation in the UK, where the Christadelphian community is shrinking by about 100 (over 1%) per year. This is also true of most Christian denominations, in the USA, as shown alongside. So the question to us is to why this is happening, and what can we do to improve the situation?

Positive factors — our young
There is no doubt, at least to my mind, that the major reason for any growth of our community is our success in retaining our young, who grow up in our Sunday schools. We, as a community, have had little success in retaining those
who attend Sunday school simply because they are in the neighborhood, as can be seen by the limited success of several ecclesias who have made this outreach. The retention of our own young people is, I believe, due to several factors (in no particular order):

- We are fortunate, in that in most areas of North America, around 70% claim some sort of Christian affiliation. So, our communities are often generally supportive of Christianity, even though they might think some of our beliefs are unconventional and our lifestyles are too restrictive.
- The normal tendency of children to follow in the footsteps of their parents.
- The proliferation of Bible Schools throughout the continent.
- Likewise, weekends and special events for the youth of our community.
- The modern age with its ease of transportation, smart phones, video communication etc. has made the maintenance and development of relationships much easier.
- The strong message we promote to marry within our community.
- The emphasis on teaching our children from the Bible in our Sunday schools. Whether this is strong enough is another question.
- Very rarely do our young people seriously question their (or our community’s) fundamental doctrines. Although it is perhaps inevitable for sometimes difficult questions to be asked, rarely do our basic beliefs get seriously challenged.

**Negative factors**

This retention is also negatively impacted by several factors. Some of these are drawn from a recent survey on reasons for leaving our community, which was dominated by responses from Australia and the UK.

- Our internal doctrinal and fellowship disputes.
- Unfortunately, many in North America belong to fairly small ecclesias, which are often dominated by extended families. So, somewhat naturally, apparent cliques form, which are perhaps unknowingly off-putting to other members.
- Some ecclesias are positively hostile when our young form a relationship with anyone outside our community.
- We all acknowledge marriage within our community is the best prescription for a stable, Christ-filled relationship. But how we handle what happens when this ideal is not followed can lead to the individuals affected leaving our community.
- Sometimes our community can appear to be narrow, judgmental, self-centered and not at all Christ-like, at least to our young people.
- I was somewhat surprised, but the survey reported that over half of those who felt dissatisfied by our community believed we harbored racist attitudes.
- There is a tendency for some speakers to address areas outside their competence (e.g., physics, biology, and archeology) seemingly without
recognizing the limitations of their background. If the young hearing them have knowledge in these areas, this can lead to the questioning of other areas of our teachings.

**Potential improvements**

In order to improve our retention, perhaps we can focus on several areas

- We should be careful, in all our activities, to ensure we are inclusive in all our activities. Nothing is worse to the young than a feeling of being an outsider.
- All ecclesias should do their level best to ensure their young people get the opportunity to attend at least one Bible School and Youth Gathering. Cost or transportation problems should not be an impediment: there is generally someone else going in that direction, and ecclesias etc. should be happy to reasonably assist with costs involved.
- Even if we have internal disputes, we must all acknowledge the gulf between our beliefs and those of the larger communities around us. To expose or affect our young people, and especially their gatherings, to our problems should be unacceptable.
- We should be careful in our conversations and correspondence to reflect the spirit of Christ: we might disagree, but should always strive to reflect that spirit, especially when the young are involved or might hear us.
- Our attitude to everyone should reflect the universal appeal of the gospel to all races and socioeconomic classes, and we should be mindful to convey a message of inclusivity of all groups in our addresses, lectures, and activities (e.g., PowerPoint presentations can have pictures of people from different backgrounds).
- We should be aware of the complexities and temptations of youth and nurture an atmosphere where young people who are genuinely seeking to follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ can receive support and help with their struggles without fear of condemnation and rejection.
- In all things we should reflect the love and forgiveness or our Lord Jesus Christ, who healed the sick, comforted the poor, and dealt kindly with people like the Samaritan woman, who was of a race ostracized by the Jews, and also of an uncertain moral status.

So, until our Lord returns to cure the world of all its problems, we should ensure that our young people indeed grow up in our nurture and are encouraged to continue to seek after our Lord Jesus Christ with us.

“...put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience... Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (Col 3:10-14 NIV).

*Peter Hemingray*
I Will Never Leave Thee

We live in “Times of Trouble” and things are only getting worse. We live in a world full of evil and consumed by evil. We live in a world filled with man-made problems that can’t be solved. Our world is a mess.

The terrible things we see in the news, watch on TV, and read on the Internet remind us this is how the world would be just before Christ returns. Daniel said it would be “a time of trouble such as never was”. Jesus said “Men’s hearts would be failing them for fear”.

But... political turmoil, famines, disease, wars, droughts, global warming, water shortages, pollution, extinctions, etc... should not unduly concern us. As believers, what we should pay attention to are the words of the Bible written about the time in which we are now living.

Jesus said “When the son of man returns, shall he find faith on the earth”? How healthy are our ecclesias? Are they disappearing? Are our Bible classes empty? Are we preaching?

Are we “Forsaking the assembling of ourselves together”?

The word “Forsake” used in this passage means to “leave behind, to desert, to leave helpless, to leave in a lurch.” In my grandfather’s generation, they had huge presses that required four or more people to operate. If one person on the crew was missing, the machine could not run. Jesus said this is what the last day ecclesias would face. Perhaps we never realized that our leaving an ecclesia could cripple a part of Christ’s body. But our Lord saw our day and knew it could!

The danger I see is that when we become distressed by the problems outside, we forget we’re in God’s care and that we are witnessing God’s active hand. It is similar to being an Israelite watching the Father’s dealings with Pharaoh. But if our faith is already weak, if ecclesia problems are weighing us down, if we allow the outside world to collide with our ecclesial world, then the resulting despair can drive away disciples.

The first thing we need to remind ourselves is that God is in control. Everything in our world was described thousands of years ago. Seeing challenges in the world around us happen shouldn’t distress us but rather bring us confidence. They should re-assure us that Christ’s return is near! We stand with the Father, who will fix these things. We need to remember that the very hopelessness of the world will turn some outsiders to Christ in the end. At funerals, we sometimes quote Paul, who wrote: “We should not sorrow as others who lose a loved one, because those in Christ have Hope”. Using that mindset, we should not unduly sorrow over the condition of the world. Our hope is not grounded in this world but in the second coming of Christ.
We can’t lose confidence in God. God is clearly in control. When we look at all the prophecies written 2000-3000 years ago being fulfilled now, in our lifetimes, we should see God’s hand at work.

**Ahaz**

If we don’t believe the Father will see us through all difficulties, we are headed in a fatal direction. Think of King Ahaz. He was fearful. His mortal enemies were Rezin King of Assyria and Pekah, son of Remaliah (Isa 7:4). God told Ahaz he would deliver him from the troubles he faced from these two powers. God’s assurance can’t be any stronger than these words about the plans of Rezin and Pekah:

> “This is what the Lord Yahweh says: “It shall not stand, neither shall it happen” (Isa 7:7 WEB).

So what did happen? Ahaz refused to believe in God. Ahaz wanted nothing to do with God. Ahaz took matters into his own hands. Despite God’s warning, “If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established” (Isa 7:9 WEB).

Trust in God and live. Don’t believe and die. Ahaz’s worst fears came true. We can read for ourselves what happened and the cause:

> “Wherefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter. For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers” (2Chron 28:5-6).

Ahaz refused to turn to God. He deserted God. It is nearly the Hebrew equivalent to the Greek word “Forsake” that Paul used of believers forsaking the ecclesia and body of Christ!

We can learn from the mistake of Ahaz.

Another reason believers might turn from God again involves a lack of belief. This also can happen when we don’t think we’re worthy and when we don’t think we can be forgiven.

**The throne**

When Queen Esther went before King Ahasuerus to plead for her people, she was so fearful of approaching his throne that she asked all the Jews in Shushan to fast for three days and three nights. She knew if the king did not extend his scepter towards her, she would be killed. And this king loved Esther more than all the women that had been brought to him. Yet Ahasuerus reigned on a throne where he was greatly feared.

**Hebrews**

Now let’s turn to the book of Hebrews.
“Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace for help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).

Our Father rules on a throne of grace and mercy. It is approachable. At this place we find mercy and help when we need it most! God can and will forgive us. Why would we doubt this?

“But God commends his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

Even when we were sinners, God’s desire was and is to turn us around and bring us back.

Five times in Scripture God says “I will not leave thee nor forsake thee”. This may be the most important of the promises God made to us. These are the only 5 occurrences where this phrase occurs:

- Jacob running for his life from Esau towards the land of Haran.
- To Israel before entering the Promised Land.
- To Joshua after Moses died.
- To Solomon just before David died.
- To us; “I will never leave thee or forsake thee” (Heb 13:5).

The Greek used in bullet five is worthy of note. The literal translation is:

“I will never, never let go of your hand; I will never, never forsake you”.

The Father “doubles” the assurance made to us. It is established from the LORD to us!

Understanding this simple promise should give us confidence. How could we contemplate leaving Him to enter a world where we are all alone?

Tightly incorporated in this great promise is the lesson of being content with what we have. “Be free from the love of money and pleased with the things which you have;” (Heb 13:5 WEB). The implication is that the gathering and collecting of “Things, Possessions, Merchandise” of the world separates us from our trust in the Father. This “stuff” as Jesus puts it (Luke 17:31), weakens us. It clouds our vision of what is important, it keeps us joined to a world that is going away.

Jesus says to “Strive to enter in by the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter in, and will not be able…” (Luke 13:24 WEB). The word “strive” means “to contend, like a gymnast, to fight adversaries, to have a strenuous zeal.” We need to fight against all the things that pull us away from God’s service.

Are we clinging to God? Are we holding onto Him as much as He is holding onto us? Jude, the half-brother of Jesus writes:

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24).

If we dissect the beginning of Hebrew 12, it’s all there. The first three verses speak volumes;
“Therefore let us also, seeing we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1 WEB).

We are not alone. We are in this race together. We need to lay aside the distractions of the world and run towards God.

“looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising its shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2 WEB).

This word “Looking” means “to have your eyes fixed on just one thing.” It gives the sense of a bird of prey focused, locked onto just one thing.

“For consider him who has endured such contradiction of sinners against himself; that you don't grow weary, fainting in your souls” (Heb 12:3 WEB).

We must be persistent. We must never, never let go of our grip to the Father.

You may have seen one last connection between the previous passage in Jude and this passage in Heb 12:2

YOU are the Joy that allowed Jesus to endure the cross.

The vision he saw was presenting us to his Father blameless, without the spot of sin, without fault. This vision of saving us allowed him to endure.

The vision of us standing before our creator, standing next to His son on that great day, should keep us striving to keep ourselves strong, our brothers and sisters united, our ecclesias healthy.

Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ)

Notes:
1. WEB: World English Bible, is a Public Domain updated revision of the American Standard Version (1901).

Special Invitation

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

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

Bro. Kyle Tucker: "A Study in First-Century Christianity"
Bro. Todd Fazekas: "The Lord Saves"

Contact Bro. Brad Rek at 330-609-6957 or brad.rek@gmail.com.
Visit our website at www.abrahamicfaithgathering.org for more information and to view talks from last year.
First Principles

Hope, (11) Resurrection

Resurrection is the beginning of eternal life

The transformation of a caterpillar into a Monarch butterfly is nothing short of a miracle. God created caterpillars to live for just a few weeks as they eat constantly and grow stronger. The caterpillar then envelops itself in a self-made silk cocoon (pupa) and basically hibernates for 10-14 days as it undergoes a dramatic metamorphosis. Eventually a beautiful butterfly emerges, which is naturally immune to its main food — poisonous milkweed leaves. The Monarch varies in its life expectancy, with some butterflies migrating up to 2,000 miles in North America. Most interestingly, recent research has shown that some butterflies actually remember some parts of their life as a caterpillar, as measured by smelling tests! This may be our spiritual key to why God made these creatures and what we can learn from them.

Christians have correctly compared the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly as similar to death and resurrection. Like a caterpillar, disciples of Christ spend their entire lives working and living in preparation for a future life. The present time is temporal, short-term, and focused on a better life to come. Like a caterpillar in a cocoon, believers become “asleep in Christ” (1Cor 15:6, 18; 1Thess 4:13-15; 2Pet 3:4) at death and unconsciously wait for the resurrection (John 5:21-23; Phil 3:20-21). Their labors are finished and each awaits the next step in their life cycle. Upon awakening, Monarch butterflies get to work, only this time in a glorified body and with an innate mission. They faintly recall some aspects of their prior existence, but focus on their new life. In a similar way, people who are resurrected and glorified will find themselves in a new world, with a heightened focus on the things of God. Those who are counted as worthy will partake in all of the promises and blessings as new creatures (2Cor 5:17; Rom 6:4). May each of us live to be like a butterfly in the Kingdom of God. But first, we must understand what to expect with our own resurrection.

Bible examples of resurrection

During Jesus’ ministry, a group called the Sadducees ruled as priests. These leaders were known for their riches and corruption, as well as for their lack
of belief in angels or resurrection. They approached Jesus and challenged him with a hypothetical example intended to disprove the resurrection and Jesus’ teaching. They wanted Jesus to answer a trick question about resurrection and asked what would happen when one woman was married seven times. Which man would she be married to when resurrected? This turned out to be an easy test for Jesus as he said, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven” (Matt 22:29-30). Jesus knew their hearts and questions about resurrection, and he knows ours as well.

There are more than ten examples of people who were resurrected in Scripture. Elijah and Elisha both raised boys from the dead, and another dead man rose after touching Elisha’s bones (1Kgs 17:19-23; 2Kgs 4:32-35; 2Kgs 13:20-21). Peter raised faithful Tabitha (Acts 9:37-41) and Paul raised the young man, Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12). Jesus raised the most people from the dead. In mercy, he raised the daughter of Jairus, a desperate synagogue official (Luke 8:41-54). Another time, Jesus raised a young man being carried on the way to his burial (Luke 7:12-15). One famous example is when Jesus raised his friend, Lazarus, after he was in a tomb for four days (John 11). That’s when Jesus affirmed his teaching and authority regarding resurrection:

“Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world” (John 11:24-27).

Other examples of resurrection are the Lord himself and the “many saints” raised after his resurrection (Matt 27:52-53).

Who will be resurrected?
No one knows, specifically, who will be resurrected and judged by Jesus. But we do have enough Biblical evidence to have a good understanding. Every person since creation will not be resurrected. In the book of Daniel it says, “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). Jesus taught that the resurrection is something to which believers attain, and not something that is guaranteed for all (Luke 20:35; Rev 20:6). Many reasons why people will be resurrected and appear in judgement are provided in the Bible. Paul confirmed that all dead, faithful, baptized believers would be resurrected and after judgment given glorified bodies. We know others, but not all, will be resurrected and judged according to their beliefs and actions. We must seek after Jesus so as to become like him eternally.

What is a resurrected body like?
In the first century Christian church, people asked basic questions about resurrection. They didn’t know all of the answers. Some mistakenly thought
that the resurrection was already past tense and ended (2Tim 2:18). Some former priests still held to the false belief that there is no resurrection at all (1Cor 15:12; Acts 23:8; Acts 6:7). Paul spent considerable effort correcting wrong doctrine in what is known as the resurrection chapter (1Cor 15). He told the Corinthians that a resurrected body is a glorified body. “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body” (1Cor 15:44). “For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality” (1Cor 15:53).

When Jesus was resurrected, he was made a partaker of the Divine nature. Before he had ascended to his father (John 20:17), Jesus was able to supersede normal laws of time and space. When his disciples were in a closed room, Jesus appeared out of nowhere to be among them (John 20:19). He could disappear in front of people (Luke 24:31). His appearance seemed to change (Luke 24:31; John 21:4, 12). We know that Jesus also visibly ascended to heaven forty days after his resurrection. No longer was Jesus’ body perishable, but it was made immortal. Paul added that Jesus “will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Phil 3:21).

**Where and when will the resurrection occur?**

When Jesus returns to the earth, faithful and unfaithful saints will be gathered together from the four corners of the earth to meet him.

“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1Thess 4:16-17 NASV).

While the details are still fuzzy – Paul says we see in a mirror dimly (1Cor 13:12) — we’ve already established that the reward for all faithful is eternal life on earth. When Jesus died, the gospel of Matthew records that many dead people were resurrected. They walked out of their tombs and appeared to many people in Jerusalem. While these faithful people were not glorified with immortality, their resurrection is an example for the manner in which they were raised. They were resurrected in the location where they were buried. They were recognized by
others who had known them before. They were all resurrected at the same time. The timing coincided with Jesus’ glorious revival. This is our hope as well, that if we have fallen asleep (died), then we will be resurrected and given immortality by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

May we share the vision and hope that Paul expressed when he said, “that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection of the dead” (Phil 3:10-11).

“Let the resurrection joy lift us from loneliness and weakness and despair to strength and beauty and happiness.” Floyd W. Tomkins

“We live and die; Christ died and lived!” John Stott

“Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust awake and shout for joy” (Isa 26:19).

The Bible says:

- There will be a resurrection from the dead. 1Cor 15; Dan 12:2; Isa 26:19
- There are requirements to be resurrected. Rom 6:3-5; Luke 20:35; Mark 16:16
- Faithful resurrected people will be judged and given immortality. Matt 25:34-40; John 5:21-23; Col 3:4

Chicago, IL Ecclesia

Doctrines to Be Rejected

(8) Christ’s Nature

Doctrine to Be Rejected # 5: “That Christ’s nature was immaculate”.

Introduction

This is the second of the numbered doctrines that was added by Robert Roberts after the first statement, which was written sometime before 1871. The Doctrine to be rejected is #5 in the 1883 edition: That Christ’s nature was immaculate”. In common with #4, That Christ was born with a “free life”, it is also hard to understand in the 21st Century. Also in common with #4, it had its roots in the controversy generated by Edward Turney, as we discussed last month.

This doctrine to be rejected can be restated in a positive way:

Through his birth, Christ inherited a nature sin-affected, and destined to death, being mortal, as are all others

“Immaculate”

The major problem with this phrase is that, in normal usage, the word “immaculate” is largely used of a person’s dress or behavior. From a dictionary you find it defined in such terms as:

1. Completely clean; extremely tidy, such as “his clothes were immaculate”
2. Completely flawless, etc., such as “an immaculate rendering of the symphony”
3. Morally pure; free from sin or corruption, such as “immaculate conception”
4. Biology: of only one color, with no spots or markings

However, if you hunt through Christadelphian literature, it is almost always the third definition that applies.

Robert Roberts, during the heart of the dispute, wrote about one of the questions put to him by Edward Turney:

QUESTION 32. — If Jesus was neither a sinner by constitution nor an actual transgressor, in other words, if free from sin, was he not therefore immaculate?

Answer. — This question is founded on premises not conceded in the foregoing answers. Jesus certainly was not immaculate, if by that is meant incorruptible in nature; or, a nature free from impulses in a sinful direction. He was not an actual transgressor. All the desires of the Adamic nature, which he had in common with ourselves, were kept in absolute subordination to the Father’s will. But he partook of the flesh of sin (English version — sinful flesh); and if this is what is meant by “a sinner by constitution,” then he was a sinner by constitution. His mission required that he should be in the nature of the transgressing race. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, because they had nothing to do with the transgression. The nature of angels had nothing to do with the transgression. Therefore, ‘he took not on him the nature of angels;’ but the seed of Abraham was of a transgressing and condemned nature. Therefore, he took on him the seed of Abraham, and was made, in all things, like unto his brethren (Heb 2:17)”

In this he was only reflecting the views of John Thomas before him, for in 1856 Bro. Thomas wrote:

“But if the human nature of Christ were immaculate (excuse the phrase, O reader, for since the Fall we know not of an immaculate human nature) then God did not ‘send Jesus in the likeness of sinful flesh;’ he did not ‘take hold of the seed of Abraham,’ he did not ‘become sin for us;’ ‘sin’ was not ‘condemned in the flesh;’ and ‘our sins’ were not ‘borne in his body upon the tree’. These things could not have been accomplished in a nature destitute of that physical principle styled ‘sin in the flesh’. Decree the immaculateness of the body prepared for the Spirit, Psa 40:6, Heb 10:5, and the ‘Mystery of Christ’ is destroyed, and the gospel of the kingdom ceases to be the power of God for salvation to those that believe it.”

False teaching — its ancient origin

The false teaching about this matter goes back to the 5th century, to the Council of Chalcedon, which was a church council held from October 8 to November 1, AD 451, at Chalcedon (a city of Bithynia in Asia Minor). The judgements and definitions of divine nature issued by the council marked a significant turning
point in the Christological debates that led to the separate establishment of the church in the Western Roman Empire during this century.

Many Anglicans and most Protestants consider it to be the last ecumenical council. These churches, per Martin Luther, hold that both conscience and Scripture preempt doctrinal councils and generally agree that the conclusions of later councils were unsupported by or contradictory to Scripture. The Council of Chalcedon was convened by Emperor Marcian, with the reluctant approval of Pope Leo the Great, to set aside the 449 Second Council of Ephesus, which would become known as the “Latrocinium” or “Robber Council.”

The Council issued the ‘Chalcedonian Definition,’ which repudiated the notion of a single nature in Christ, and declared that he has two natures in one person and hypostasis; it also insisted on the completeness of his two natures: Godhead and manhood. His begettal by the power of the Holy Spirit gave Jesus qualities that can only be described as divine: thus, according to the Council, his nature was “immaculate”, i.e., he could not sin in any way.

The truth

Jesus was his Father’s Son, and shared many of His characteristics. He knew His Father’s will instinctively, where the rest of mankind needs to learn it, by laying “precept upon precept,” it was therefore due to his Sonship that Jesus repelled, with a ready recourse to his Father’s Word, each temptation as it arose. This unique quality that marks Jesus out as God’s Son was shown prophetically when Isaiah recorded about the Christ: “The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him ... and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord” (Isa 11:2 & 3).

Jesus had not only a closeness of relationship to his Father, born out of his unique Sonship, but “he took on him (the nature of) the seed of Abraham” (Heb 2:16). He was therefore both Son of God and Son of Man at one and the same time in the unity of his nature. His character displayed his unique relationship to God, but like all who are “made of a woman, (he was) made under the law” of sin and death (Gal 4:4). It is not helpful when attempting to understand Jesus’ nature to separate these two aspects of his being.

Jesus was a whole and complete character. He brought his closeness to God to bear upon the problems all human beings receive as sons of Adam, and overcame them. He could only do this if he truly shared these same characteristics. The established church’s view of Jesus as a divine being in an envelope of human flesh (what they define as the Incarnation) utterly fails to provide an answer to this need. Jesus’ compliance with God’s will could not have benefited the rest of mankind unless he had overcome in himself the temptation to sin, which he shared with all mankind, and which they struggle with every day of their lives.

Notes:
1. The Christadelphian, 1873, p. 322–323.
2. Herald of the Kingdom, 1856, p. 268.
Creativity Without Crafts:
Teaching Through Experience

Creative teachers do not have to be craft experts. In fact, you can be a creative person without ever coming near a craft. Creativity is the ability to be original or imaginative. You may think you are not creative, when in fact you really are but just don’t know it. You may ask, “How do I start those creative impulses flowing?” For me, creativity in the classroom stems from one basic principle: people remember experiences.

Therefore, if we can find something for our students to experience while they are learning, they will remember what they have learned better than if they have just heard it. When you experience something, you personally participate in it. Experience can take place through activity or through understanding something in a different way, in a different light.

Create experiences
So where does creativity come in?

We cannot take our children to the Middle East to cross the River Jordan as Joshua did. We need to create a way for our children to experience this without actually being there. Here is where creativity comes in. Children have great imaginations, so we can use fairly simple ideas. Here was my thought process when faced with teaching a group of energetic three-year olds about Joshua:

1. What do I want the children to learn?
   - Joshua loved God. God loved Joshua. God dried up part of a river so Joshua and the Israelites could cross to the other side. The name of the river was Jordan. Joshua and the Israelites crossed the river to attack Jericho, an evil city.

2. How can the children experience the love and power of God?
   - We can cross the River Jordan as the Israelites did.

3. What are the basic characteristic of this river and this Bible story?
   - A river is blue and long, and this river needs to come apart in the middle to show how God parted the river.

4. What do I have that I can use for this?
   - Blue towels and blue cloths.
It worked beautifully! We camped out on one side of the river, God parted the river (with a little help in this case), and we crossed over to attack Jericho. Weeks later I asked one of the three-year olds if he remembered what he had learned about the River Jordan. I threw some T-shirts and jeans on the floor in a line, and he very proudly showed how God divided the river and how the Israelites passed through.

For teens, too
Experiences can be used to teach teenagers also. One week my husband and I were teaching a class of 15- to 17-year olds about a parent’s responsibilities. We wanted the students to really understand what parents go through, so we decided to use an experience. We used the same thought process as outlined above.

1. What do I want the teenagers to learn?
   • Parenting is a lot of hard work. There is more to being a godly parent than we often realize.

2. How can the teens experience parenting?
   • Have them take care of children, keeping specific God-given goals in mind.

3. What basic characteristics of parenting do I want the teens to experience?
   • Parents teach their children about God. Parents use a lot of energy just keeping children under control.

4. What do I have that I can use for this?
   • Children from a younger class. The lesson plan and activity for the younger class.

The class we chose consisted of four- and five-year olds. They were learning about the book of Psalms, and their activity was an outdoor scavenger hunt for objects listed in a specific psalm. After discussing the responsibilities of parents, we had each teenager take two children and act as their temporary parent. They had to teach the children about the psalm, help the children find the objects in the psalm (e.g., a rock), and finally, keep them out of the mud while they went scavenging for the objects.

Afterwards we asked the teen class how it went. Many of them said that it was difficult to keep the children under control while trying to teach them.

Although some teens felt frustrated because they thought they were not able to teach the children anything, one young girl was excited because she taught a small child about Jesus being strong like a rock.

This experience helped them understand that good parenting is harder than it looks. Learning from a firsthand perspective also made learning about God’s word interesting and fun.

Teaching through experience can be enjoyable for both teachers and students. All it takes is a little bit of creativity to make a lasting impression on a student. So, be creative!

Laura Ross (Cleveland, OH)
Introduction

In those last twenty four hours, Jonathan’s help had been invaluable for David. The young shepherd had reached a point in his life where he was so worried and afraid of what might happen to him, that he had forgotten the future which God had promised. In those last few days, his entire world had crumbled. He had narrowly escaped being pinned to the wall with Saul’s javelin; he had been forced to leave his wife by climbing out of a window in his own home; and he had seen Saul and his troops chase him to the dwelling of Samuel the prophet, even attempting to take him in the seer’s presence. Running back to Gibeah, he went to one of the only other people whom he believed could bring him comfort.

Though the beginning of their interaction was rocky, Jonathan recognized David’s need for support. After being convinced of the seriousness of the situation, Jonathan pledged that he would do whatever David needed him to do in order to help. Not only so, but Jonathan also powerfully brought David’s mind back to God’s promise by making a covenant with him. He spoke of the day when David would be king over Israel and asked him to watch over Jonathan’s family when he became king. In this way, he showed David his confidence that the young man would one day reign. Though Saul sought his life, he would not be able to take it.

After the covenant was made, Jonathan and David finalized plans whereby Jonathan would be able to see Saul’s intentions towards David. From that point, once the plan had been enacted, the two men would try to decide David’s action based off of Saul’s feelings. If he still desired to kill David, then David would have to escape. But, if Saul had relaxed and had changed his mind, then David could stay in Gibeah.

Such was where the story left off. David and Jonathan had formulated their plan, made the covenant together, and David had been strengthened by his spiritual friend. His struggle was a reminder that that even men who are giants of faith — men who are willing to do amazing acts in the name of God — still have moments in which they simply aren’t sure what to do. David, though he almost consistently is an example of righteousness throughout Scripture, still had moments in which his faith wavered and he needed help. Though the characters of the Biblical record can sometimes seem to be so perfect and so much more righteous than us, David’s story is an example that God has always worked with flawed humanity — and that no matter how perfect a character may seem, bar the Lord Jesus Christ, they had moments when their faith was crumbling and when they couldn’t look to the future.
At the same time, Jonathan gave an excellent example of a truly spiritual friend. He lifted David’s mind to God’s promise and he was willing to give of himself to do whatever David needed.

As the story progresses in this article, Jonathan and David will put the plan into action, leaving David’s seat empty at Saul’s table during the feast of the new moon. Saul’s reaction to David’s absence will be exactly what David expected, and as a result, David and Jonathan will have to part ways. In a touching scene, David will go forth into the wilderness, Jonathan will go back to the city to be with his father and to selflessly spend his time with a madman, hoping to somehow have some type of influence for good.

Throughout all of this, Jonathan will once more come forth as a powerful example of a godly friend. Though Saul’s envy will force the two men to part company, Jonathan will again keep his mind on the future, reminding David of his eventual kingship — but even more, of the kingdom of God, in which the two of them, by God’s grace, will be together forever.

Requirements under the law

The two men had made their covenant and they had made their plan. Soon, it was time for the plan to be put into action:

“So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat” (1Sam 20:24).

Just as they had discussed, David went out and hid in the field. Jonathan, on the other hand, probably went back to his normal routine, and then prepared to eat with his father for the feast of the new moon. It was an important time of the month, and a few select individuals in Saul’s court were gathering to celebrate together.

Nevertheless, this mention of “the feast of the new moon” should raise some questions — because this feast isn’t one which is mentioned very often throughout the Bible. In fact, this chapter is the first place where the term “new moon” is ever used in all of Scripture; as such, the feast is likely fairly unfamiliar to many of us.

Unlike some of the other feasts celebrated throughout the year, this feast is fairly intriguing, because it wasn’t one of Israel’s major feasts. Throughout the year, Israel celebrated a number of extremely important feasts — and during those times, they were commanded by God to all journey to the place where He had set His name.

“Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty” (Deut 16:16).

During three major feasting seasons, all of the Israelite males were commanded to appear before God — during the feast of unleavened bread, which also included the Passover and the Firstfruits; during the Feast of Weeks; and during...
the Feast of Tabernacles, which also probably included the Day of Atonement. During these three periods of the Jewish year, major feasts took place and all of the males had to be present together in order to worship God as one. Interestingly enough, the feast of the new moon is not one of these feasts — it wasn’t a feast which required Israelites to travel together to a certain place and it wasn’t one of the major feasts.

Yet there was even more about this feast that was different from the major Israelite feasts. Unlike the major feasts, the feast of the new moon actually wasn’t just celebrated once a year. The Hebrew calendar was a lunar calendar; as such, it was based upon the cycles of the moon. Thus, each new month began with a “new moon” — meaning that the feast of the new moon was something that was celebrated much more than once a year, it was actually celebrated twelve times every year!

At the beginning of each month, Israel celebrated the new moon. Under the law, it was to be a special time of rededication to God — the old month having ended and the old moon disappearing, a new month had come and a new moon had appeared. During this time, the Israelites offered their daily offerings and also a special set of burnt offerings:

“And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the Lord ; two young bullocks, and one ram, seven lambs of the first year without spot” (Num 28:11).

Each of these burnt offerings, which symbolized total dedication to God (cp. Mark 12:33), was also offered with its accompanying meal offering (Numb 28:12-13) and drink offering (Numb 28:14). Finally, in addition to the burnt offering, a sin offering was also prepared:

“And one kid of the goats for a sin offering unto the Lord shall be offered, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering” (Num 28:15).

Thus, the feast of the new moon was a time for the nation to put away their sin and rededicate themselves to the Father; just as the old moon passed away and a new moon came, so the Israelites could put away their old ways and commit themselves to God anew.

However, as mentioned earlier, unlike those three major feasts, all Israel didn’t gather together in order to witness these sacrifices. Because of this, it would be easy for everyone in the nation to forget about this feast of rededication and renewal; thus, it would appear as though God declared that every new moon the silver trumpets would be blown:

“Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: am the Lord your God” (Num 10:10).
In blowing these special silver trumpets, the feast of the new moon would be a “memorial” for them before their God. As the trumpet blast passed throughout the land, all Israel would hear and recognize that the new moon offerings had been offered — reminding them to put away their past sins and start afresh. In the Psalms, this blowing of the trumpet is also mentioned, but another aspect of the new moon is brought out:

“Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob” (Psa 81:1-4).

This passage begins by encouraging the reader to sing and joyfully praise God; it paints a picture of music, gladness, and praising God together. All of this was to happen at the time of the new moon which was described as a “solemn feast day.” All of this rejoicing and all of this celebration was a “statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob.” In addition to all of the other aspects of the new moon that have already been seen, this time of the month was also a time for faithful Israelites to gather together with each other, to sing of God’s glory, and to think of His goodness as they share a meal.

This idea of the feast of the new moon being a day in which Israel was to set their minds on God’s glory is also backed up by the indication that it was similar to the Sabbath. During this feast, it would appear as though the people were commanded to rest from their work. In the Book of Amos, the prophet recorded some of the criticisms that hypocritical Israelites had towards the new moon — and those complaints were centered around not being able to sell their merchandise on that day, just as they couldn’t on the Sabbath.

“Here this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fall, saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?” (Amos 8:4-5).

For the hypocrites to whom Amos addressed his prophecy, the time of the new moon and Sabbaths were times in which they had to stop their monetary transactions and halt their business proceedings! They would celebrate this feast and this day, but they resented the restrictions that the “celebrations” placed upon them — which would indicate that just like the Sabbath, the feast of the new moon was a time for rest and remembering God’s greatness.
Such were the statutes of the new moon. Each month, a specific series of offerings would be offered — and when this took place, the silver trumpets would be blown, allowing the nation to know what had just taken place. In addition to those aspects of worship, the time of the new moon was also a time of feasting, of joy, and of praising God. It was a time when the Israelites would rest from their daily pursuits and set their minds on the things of the Father.

In addition, it is clear this pattern will persist into the Millennial age, for in the last chapter of Isaiah we read:

“And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD” (Isa 66:23).

The parting of David and Jonathan
Thus, in the story of David and Jonathan’s parting, the scene was set at the time of the new moon. It was a time of renewal, rest and praise to God, a time which should have especially encouraged the nation to lift its thoughts up to higher things. Sadly, it doesn’t appear as though this is how the feast was celebrated during the time of Saul — and such shouldn’t be surprising. Saul wasn’t a man of faith; he was a man who performed the works simply because he was told to do so, or because they were beneficial to him. He followed the statutes and ordinances, not because they truly meant something to him, but because following them advanced his goals. When he was fighting against the Philistines, he offered the burnt offering in Samuel’s place because the people were “scattered” from him and he wanted to bring them back together — not because he wanted to obey God’s commands or dedicate his army and their thoughts to God (1Sam 13:11-12). When he fought against the Amalekites, it was the same story. He was told to destroy everything — and yet he saved all of the best of the animals for a sacrifice (1Sam 15:21). Clearly, Saul didn’t understand the lesson that the sacrifices were meant to teach; instead, he followed the works of the Law — but even more so, he followed them when they suited him! Thus, such was likely the situation with the feast of the new moon. It was a feast which was celebrated in Saul’s court, but it wasn’t a feast that was celebrated for the glory and honor of Yahweh — instead, it was celebrated for the glory and honor of Saul.

It’s in this background that Jonathan will plead, once again, for his dear friend.

Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

Notes:
1. It is often hard to distinguish between a “new moon” and a month, for both use the same Hebrew word. As The Israelites used a lunar calendar, by definition a month started on a new moon, so the terms were often synonymous. Other translations use the term “new moon” more frequently than the KJV. For example, ESV of Numb 29:6 reads “besides the burnt offering of the new moon, and its grain offering, and the regular burnt offering and its grain offering, and their drink offering, according to the rule for them, for a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the Lord”. [Editor]
2. The word “Trumpet” in Numb 10:10 is the Hebrew for a silver trumpet, as opposed to a trumpet of ram’s horn, which is the one described in Psa 81:3. Hence the illustration. [Editor]
The New Testament Church
(8) The Ethos of The Church

In the previous article (#7, January Tidings), we considered the gospel message, and where the emphasis was then, and ought to be now. We now switch topics a little, to consider our relationship to those around us.

How do Christadelphians differ from other people? Have you ever been asked that question? I am sure we all have, at some time or another: “What’s the difference between you and other people?” And what do we reply? Generally I think most of us begin by saying, “Well you see we believe the Bible. We believe the Bible is wholly inspired and infallible. We do not believe you go to heaven when you die, we believe that man is mortal. We believe in the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the kingdom of God on earth, and baptism by immersion,” and so we go on. These are the points of difference, we say, between ourselves and other people. That is to say that we point, not to the quality of life as being the difference, but to the distinctiveness of our doctrine.

Manner of life

But, if you read any history of the very early church, when the great apologists were defending the Christian religion against their pagan detractors who were wanting to throw them to the lions, or burn them at the stake, you will find that they continually appealed not just to their religious dogmas as being the difference between themselves and their pagan neighbors, but to the manner of life of their converts as evidence of the truth of what they were teaching. They said over and over again, “Look at us, look at the Christians and see the differences for yourselves, and then ask yourselves if we are really the dangerous, demented maniacs that you think us to be.”

I had sent to me by a brother from the north of England the following quotation which I thought was interesting in this connection. It comes from a work called Science for the Citizen and was written by a man named Lancelot Hogben of whom I have not the slightest knowledge, but he makes the following citation from Simon’s authoritative work, English Sanitary Institutions:

“A conspicuous firstfruit of the Creed was that in all early Christian communities the giving of alms to the poor, of personal tending to the sick, of shelter to the homeless and generally of brotherly and sisterly help to persons in necessitous circumstances of mind, body or estate became, as it were, a characteristic ritual of the new faith.”

Now coming as it does from such a learned work as English Sanitary Institutions, I thought that was a very interesting tribute to the early church in its ethic and in the way it approached its fellows. What he is saying is that the very first thing that is noticed in the growth of Christianity, when the church of Christ
went out into the world with its doctrine, is the kindness and benevolence with which it approached its fellow men. I have another quotation from the same source, quoting Cadoux’s book, The Early Church and the World, and this is the paragraph which I am interested in:

“In the first place then it must be clear even to the most casual observer that in the work of the pre-Constantinian church, whatever else we may or may not have, we certainly have a moral reformatory movement on a scale and with a potency unparalleled at any other epoch before or since. Make whatever allowances you like for the exaggerations of Christian rhetoric, (and here he is referring to the Christian apologists who pointed to the good lives of their adherents as an evidence of their faith), for actual moral shortcomings of increasing prevalence and gravity, and for the lofty, ethical attainments of other reformers and their followers, yet it remains true that the achievements of the early church can defy comparison with those of any other religious or moral movement known to history.”

And that is what I mean in the title of this study The Ethos of the Church. Where it was getting them, what it was doing to them, how it was motivating them. There was nothing to equal the tremendous enthusiasm, and purity of life, and zeal for truth, and love for their neighbors, of these early Christians. And they were able to point to it and say, “If you want to know how we differ from our pagan neighbors look at our lives. Look at the kind of people we are.”

Dr. Blunt in his History of the Church of the first Three Centuries, maintains that the spread of the gospel was aided by three quite positive qualities in the Christian church.

- First of all, he says, “There were singular differences seen in Christian behavior.” The pagans were quite well able to see what was happening to these people who turned from idolatry to become Christians. They saw the mark in their lives. They saw immediately that it was making a difference to them. They no longer indulged in politics. They no longer joined the armed forces. These are facts of the early Christian church. It was something that distinguished them immediately as, indeed, it distinguishes Christadelphians today from their fellow men.

- Secondly, it was not just in the things they did not do. It was in the things they did, as well. Their persecutions, Blunt argues, drew attention to the sect and publicized their views. This helped to spread the gospel. The more they burnt them, the more they tossed them to the lions, the more people took notice of them. Here were men who would not relinquish their faith. Do what they liked to them, these men remained steadfast to their calling in Jesus Christ. And men took notice of them and said, “There is something in this. These people have something that the others have not got.”

- Thirdly, Blunt argues, their goodness and sincerity impressed even their opponents. What a lovely phrase that is: “Their goodness and sincerity impressed even their opponents.” Of Barnabas it was said: “For he was a
good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord” (Acts 11:24). Here seems to be the same kind of argument that Blunt is using for the spread of the Christian religion. This is what impressed people. “He was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith,” and why does the writer add, “And much people was added unto the Lord”? Because they took notice of men like this, and they said, “Their religion is doing something to them.”

Now we, I think, although one should not generalize about this, tend to say rather apologetically: “You do not have to judge Christianity by Christians”; or even, “You do not have to judge Christadelphianism by Christadelphians.” Our line may occasionally take something like this form: “Get back to the Bible. If they speak not according to this word, never mind about anything else, we have got the truth. If you have come across the odd Christadelphian who you thought did not behave like a Christian well forget it, this is the Truth.” This is the line we may feel compelled to take.

But it is not the line Jesus took. Jesus did not say, “Do not judge Christianity by Christians.” On the contrary, he said, “Judge Christianity by Christians.” He said, “By their fruits shall you know them.” “Men do not gather figs of brambles, or grapes or thorn bushes. You judge the quality of the tree by the quality of its fruit. Therefore by the quality of their fruits you shall know them.” “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one towards another.” “If there is this spontaneous bubbling up of true love for men, because you have known the love of God, then men will know that you are my disciples,” Jesus said. “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

The early church was able to advance this witness to the truth of what they proclaimed. Can we? Dare we? “I cannot hear your words for the noise of your deeds,” somebody has said. Or in another simple sentence — actions speak louder than words. And we ought to be this kind of people, if we have the truth, which we believe we have. If we have the right doctrine, which we maintain we have, then we should be able to say, “Look at those Christadelphians. See the kind of people they are. See the kind of lives they lead, and you will see Christianity in action.”

**Active social life**

The first picture we have of the apostolic church is one of active social life. We have to go back for this to the very beginning of the book of Acts. Although the organization of the church grew, this feature of kindness and benevolence, of true social life, of fellowship or “sharing,” remained constant. So that Paul in Gal 2:10 says of himself, that when he went up to see James; Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars of the church at that time in Jerusalem, they said in effect, “Well, you do the ministry to the Gentiles and Cephas (or Peter) will be the minister to the circumcision.” “Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.” Now that basic ethic remained with the church all the way through, “Only they would that we should remember
the poor.” And Paul said, “I have never forgotten that anyway: that has always been part of my Christianity, to remember the poor.”

Now, we go to Acts again and we find a passage we have already referred to in another connection. We now look at this aspect of their generosity, of their sharing together, of their social life in the true sense of the word. “And all that believed were together and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:43-47).

Here they are then “having all things common”. Here is the abandon of the early faith. No man counted anything he possessed as being his own. They handed it all over, and they shared and shared alike; and they had great joy in this fellowship of ministration. The responsibility for the ministration at that time clearly was in the hands of the Apostles. “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus — and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need” (Acts 4:32-35).

So there we have it, the “ethos,” (if you like the word) or the way of life (if you do not like the word) of the church in its budding infancy. Having all things common, sharing together, selling their possessions, bringing the price, giving it to the apostles, who saw that it was administered for the good of the whole community. But, of course, we know, as we have already seen in the study of the officers of the church, that it soon became necessary for the benevolence of the church to be administered in some other way. There had to be a sort of organized physical relief of needy members.

So the apostles delegated the work to the seven deacons, or the seven “ministers,” who were appointed to have the charge of this matter (Acts 6:3). They now became responsible in the church at Jerusalem for the administration to the needs of their poorer brethren. And then, later, we see collection being taken, where there was no compulsion except love for men and gratitude to God. So Paul writes: “Let every man lay by him according as God has prospered him. Now concerning the collection, for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God bath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1Cor 16:1-2). And he goes on to say how he, with approved brethren, appointed by themselves, will take their largess up to the poor saints at Jerusalem.

Len Richardson
Who is Jesus’ Beloved Disciple? (1)

John the son of Zebedee?

For decades I assumed the disciple whom Jesus loved was the apostle John the son of Zebedee. I presumed that whatever slight doubt there was, would be eliminated if I took the time to study the matter in detail. Then I had an occasion to read the gospel of John straight through in one sitting, and two things struck me:

1) The fourth gospel has none of the episodes found in the synoptic gospels1 in which Jesus takes Peter, James, and John into his special confidence. John’s gospel doesn’t have the healing of Jairus’ daughter, or the Transfiguration, or the Olivet Prophecy, or any of the other “inner circle” incidents. These exclusions are strange if John Zebedee were indeed the eyewitness behind this gospel.

2) This one came like a thunderbolt: if you read John 11-13 without stopping, then the Beloved Disciple is no longer “anonymous” — his name is Lazarus.

This article (in two parts, God willing) summarizes the evidence supporting Lazarus and challenging John Zebedee as the Beloved Disciple. The sections of the article correspond to the appearances of this “other, Beloved Disciple” at the supper (John 13), at the trial (John 18), at the cross (John 19), at the tomb (John 20), and at the lake (John 21). The last of these will be completed in Part 2, which will continue with a sketch of Lazarus as an ideal disciple who mirrors the experiences of Jesus, and then close with a proposed answer to the related question, “Who wrote the gospel according to John?”

At the supper (John 13:23-25)

“Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, who Jesus loved <25 agapao>...” (John 13:23).

The assumption that this Beloved Disciple is the apostle John is common (see John Carter, The Gospel of John, Preface, pp. 5, 37, 149, 203, 213, 219, 229, 232; Harry Whittaker, Studies in the Gospels, pp. 78, 647, 735, 776, 800, 801, 803-805, 826, 834; Sam Alexander, “John: the disciple whom Jesus loved,” The Testimony, December 2013, pp. 454-459; Bill Link, Jr., “The Apostles in the Gospel of John,” The Tidings, August 2014, pp. 366-369; and many others). It is so conventional that it is often presumed without argument.

When evidence is offered it is often based on a process of elimination:

1) It starts by asserting that the twelve apostles were the only ones with Jesus at the last supper (Mark 14:17), so the Beloved Disciple must be an apostle.

2) He must also be one of those listed in John 21:2 — Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee [James and John], and two other of his disciples (John 21:1-7).

3) In addition, he must have had a particularly close relationship with Jesus, which the synoptic gospels show to have been true, for example, of Peter, James, and John.
4) Peter is ruled out because he appears with the Beloved Disciple in every episode except at the cross.

5) James Zebedee can be crossed off the list because he died too early (Acts 12:1-2, fulfilling Mark 10:39).

6) Thomas can be eliminated because he doubted the resurrection (John 20:24-29) in contrast to the reaction of the Beloved Disciple (John 20:1-10).

7) Nathanael is not possible because he couldn’t be the unnamed disciple in John 1:35-51, who is assumed to be the same as the Beloved Disciple (see the citations above).

8) This leaves John Zebedee or one of the two unnamed disciples in John 20:2.

Therefore, because he had to be an apostle, and he was regularly seen with Peter, and he had a special relationship with Jesus, the Beloved Disciple must be the apostle John.

Some of these arguments and this conclusion are more suspect than may appear at first. For example, the starting point in the above argument is flawed because we know there were other people at the last supper besides Jesus and the twelve; in particular, at least the two candidates to replace Judas were there: “Wherefore of these men which accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of this resurrection” (Acts 1:21-22). This period includes the last supper.

The concluding inference is not necessary either, as the Beloved Disciple could just as easily be one of the two “other” unnamed disciples mentioned in John 21:2. This possibility is all the more likely because “the disciple... whom Jesus loved” (John 20:2) is repeatedly called “the other disciple” (John 20:2, 3, 4, 8) in the episode of the empty tomb (John 20:1-10), and probably also at the trial in the palace of the high priest (John 18:15-16). Referring to the Beloved Disciple as “the other disciple” might be the author’s way of indicating that he wasn’t one of the twelve.

Besides these issues, we should note the obvious: there are no references anywhere in the New Testament to Jesus “loving” John Zebedee in any special way.

This last point is even more telling because, in contrast, just two chapters earlier Lazarus is explicitly said to be loved by Jesus. This epithet is repeated four times:

1) In their message to Jesus that Lazarus is sick, Mary and Martha say, “Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest <5368 phileo from 5384 philos> is sick” (John 11:3) — this phrase by itself is sufficient for Jesus to know that they were talking about their brother Lazarus (John 11:1-3).

2) The author declares outright, “Now Jesus loved <25 agapao> Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus” (John 11:5).

3) Jesus says, “Our friend <5384 philos; cf. 3:29; 15:13-15> Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep” (John 11:11).
4) Finally, seeing Jesus weeping at the grave of Lazarus, the Jews observe, “Behold how he loved him!” (John 11:33-36).²

Here are four witnesses to the fact that Lazarus was loved by Jesus. This testimony alone should be ample evidence that Lazarus is the Beloved Disciple. Lazarus (John 11-12) disappears by name just as the Beloved Disciple appears (John 13; John 18-21); the two are never seen together. The author of the fourth gospel follows a similar pattern for Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (John 11-12; cf. Luke 7:36-8:3; Mark 14:3-9; Matt 26:6-13), who is referred to as Mary Magdalene in John 19-20 (cf. Mark 15-16; Matt 27-28) but not before.³

“Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, who Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He lying on Jesus’ breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?” (John 13:23-25; cf. 21:20).

It is unlikely that this disciple is John Zebedee. It wasn’t long before this incident that John and his brother James had manifested an inappropriate superiority complex which annoyed the other ten:

“And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory... And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John” (Mark 10:35-37, 41).

After such self-important thinking, would Jesus have encouraged John Zebedee by giving him the place of honor at this historic meal? Would he have risked further irritating the others by doing so?

In contrast, this place of honor would be especially appropriate for Lazarus, whom Jesus had only recently raised from the dead. Jesus would want him to have it, and so would the others. In fact, this is precisely where we find Lazarus in the previous chapter:

“Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him” (John 12:1-2).

At the trial (John 18:15-16)

“And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple; that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter” (John 18:15-16).

Compared to John Zebedee, Lazarus is a much better candidate for this other disciple who was known to the high priest.
John Zebedee was a Galilean and a fisherman. Both of these make it highly unlikely for him to have been known to the high priest. It is difficult to imagine a plausible scenario in which John Zebedee was known to the high priest while his coworker Peter was not. The idea that John Z provided fish to the high priest’s household is an invention without evidence, created to fill an obvious gap in the usual assumption. Months after the trial of Jesus, following the healing of the lame man at the temple, Peter and John’s interrogators are surprised by the boldness of these uneducated men: “Now when they [including the high priest and his family, v6] saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). In other words, before this incident the high priest and his entourage had not known John Zebedee personally; they realize that he had been a disciple of Jesus who had exhibited similar qualities (John 7:15).

On the other hand, Lazarus was certainly known by the priests. Lazarus lived in Bethany just outside Jerusalem, providing convenient access to the temple and the priests (cf. the last weeks of Jesus’ ministry).

Moreover, his father was a Pharisee (Luke 7:36-50), Simon the leper (Mark 14:3; Matt 26:6). Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha were unmarried, perhaps because leprosy was in the family. Dealing with this disease would have required regular interaction with the priests (see Lev 13-14; Mark 1:40-44; Matt 8:2-4).

Many Jews [i.e., Jewish leaders] attended Lazarus’ funeral to mourn for him and to comfort his sisters:

“And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother... The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there... When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled... Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him... Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him” (John 11:19, 31, 33, 36, 45).

This behavior shows that Lazarus and his family were well-known to and well-liked by the Jewish leadership.

Following his resurrection, Lazarus was certainly known to the chief priests:

“Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him... Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus” (John 12:1-2, 9-11).
At the cross (John 19:25-27)

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved <25>, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home” (John 19:25-27).

The synoptic gospels Matthew, Mark, and Luke say the apostles had fled so were not at the cross or at most saw it afar off (Mark 14:27, 50; 15:40-41; Matt 26:31 cf. Zech 13:7; Matt 26:56; 27:55-56). This makes it unlikely that John Zebedee could have been “standing by”.

Also, John Zebedee lived in Galilee, a long way for Mary to walk, especially since “from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.” Besides, would Jesus have entrusted his mother to the care of one whom he had called to leave his family and career to become an itinerant fisher of men? (Mark 1:19-20; 10:23-31, esp. v28). As Peter says, “we have left all and followed thee.”

On the other hand, Lazarus was from Bethany, near Jerusalem, whose family (Mary, Martha, and Lazarus) was loved by Jesus, and whose home would be suitable for his mother Mary. Jesus had spent lots of time at this home with this family. It had been his home base for the weeks leading up to his crucifixion. The record in Acts makes it likely that Mary lived near Jerusalem: “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren” (Acts 1:14). Mary living with Lazarus would also explain how Lazarus came to know about the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11): Mary, who had attended the wedding, told him about it.

At the tomb (John 20:1-10)

“The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved <5368 phileo>, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home” (John 20:1-10).

If this is John Zebedee, then why doesn’t Luke include him? “Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by
themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass” (Luke 24:12). (This is one of many occasions in which one of the gospels omits people known from parallel records to have been present.)

On the other hand, if this is Lazarus, then Mary Magdalene ran to her own home, where she knew everyone was gathered, including Peter and her brother Lazarus. It is easy to imagine how Lazarus would have been able to outrun Peter: first, he was from nearby Bethany, so he knew the way (he had probably taken the same path many times); second, he was energized by his restoration to life and health; and third, he was eager to see Jesus alive again. (Lazarus of all people would know that this was a real possibility).

That Lazarus would have believed first makes sense, too. His spiritual acuity was now off the charts. Furthermore, he immediately recognized the significance of “the napkin”,

“And the napkin <4676 soudarion>, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed” (John 20:7-8),

because it recalls his own experience:

“And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin <4676>. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go” (John 11:44).

At the lake – Fishing on the Sea of Tiberias (John 21:1-7)

“After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately… But when morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus… Therefore that disciple who Jesus loved <25> saith unto Peter, It is the Lord” (John 21:1-2, 4, 7).

John the disciple, together with his father Zebedee, brother James, and Simon Peter, were Galilean fishermen, so it makes sense that he was among those involved in this episode.

Lazarus fishing on the Sea of Tiberias? This is the only episode that, naturally speaking, fits John Zebedee better than Lazarus. Perhaps this story is included to show that after being raised from the dead Lazarus was now able to travel. He was eager to be with Jesus wherever he went. That Lazarus would be first to recognize the Lord was another example of his increased spiritual awareness.

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

Notes:
1. The synoptic gospels are Matthew, Mark and Luke. The word “synoptic” comes from Latin (syn-opticus) and means “seeing together”. In contrast with John, these three gospels
have many of the same episodes in the ministry of Jesus which are often displayed side-by-side in parallel columns.

2. Both Greek words for “to love” (agapao and phileo) are used for Lazarus (agapao: John 11:5; phileo: 11:3, 36; philos: John 11:11) and for the Beloved Disciple (agapao: John 12:23; 19:26; 21:7,20; phileo: John 20:2). In effect, the two words are used essentially interchangeably as is generally the case (see the multiple discussions on this issue in the Tidings, 1998, pp. 61, 105, 215-217, 271-273, 349-351).


4. This “other disciple which was known unto the high priest” is usually assumed to be the same as “disciple whom Jesus loved” (see, for example, John Carter, The Gospel of John, 1980 reprint, p. 203, who makes this assumption without comment). Some evidence for this assumption comes from observing that the beloved disciple is called “the other disciple” throughout the episode at the tomb (John 20:2, 3, 4, 8). As I suggested earlier in this article the author may call him “that other disciple” to emphasize that he is not one of the twelve.

5. In the fourth gospel, “the Jews” often refers to Jewish leaders; for example, compare John 5:16-18 with Mark 3:6; compare John 8:48 with Mark 3:22 and Matt 12:24. Harry Whittaker writes, “Accordingly, when John’s mission had lasted some time, ‘the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?’ (John 1:19). This is the first of many examples in the fourth gospel where ‘the Jews’ means the leaders of the nation. It is a point to be borne in mind for the more exact interpretation of other passages. When the gospel refers to the common people, the word ‘multitude’ is generally used” (Studies in the Gospel, p. 75). Other instances include John 2:18, 20; 3:1, 25; 5:10, 15, 16, 18; 6:41, 52; 7:1, 11, 13, 15, 35; 8:48, 57; 9:18, 22; 10:19, 24, 31, 33; 11:8, etc.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

Laz’rus is dead, his sisters weep!  
“No”, said the Lord, “he is asleep,  
And for his loving sisters’ sake  
I’ll make him from that sleep awake.”  
“Believe in me”, the Master said,  
“For he will live though he be dead.”  
He prayed to God in heaven above  
With eyes turned upward, filled with love,  
Then looking in the open tomb,  
Cried: “Lazarus, I bid you come!”  
“Loose him!” said Jesus, “Let him go!  
Martha and Mary, take him home.  
In place of sorrow joy is come.”  
Jesus will come on the last day  
When all earth’s sorrows flee away.  
Lord Jesus, Master, think on me,  
From death set your disciple free!

A. H. Nicholls: The Christadelphian 1994 p. 283
Reflection

My Grandpa: Monday, December 14, 2015

My Grandpa, Bob Lloyd, died this morning.

Last Tuesday, he was still driving. Last Tuesday, he woke up, dressed, showered, walked downstairs, made breakfast, and worked on his computer. Last Tuesday, he was an old man, but a reasonably healthy one. Last Wednesday, he suffered a massive stroke, and went into a coma. And this morning, he died. And, in some ways, I'm thankful to God that he died the way he did.

You see, my Grandpa was a doer. He was someone who cared deeply about others, and tried to make a difference in their lives. His attitude was that, as long as God gave him the strength to serve, he was going to. And he did. He only stopped giving study days because he literally collapsed on the plane on the way back from Oregon. He went to the Idyllwild Bible school every single year. And when they forbade him to go there because of his health, he went to Shippensburg instead, until his health stopped him from even doing that. And, at every Bible school he went to, he held an “unbaptized class” where he tried to help unbaptized people decide whether they should be baptized. Every single one.

Even when he didn’t have the strength to travel very much, he still tried to do as much as he could. He still went to meeting, every Sunday, and made an effort to say “hi” to everyone. He still exhorted. Every month, he wrote a minute meditation for The Tidings magazine, and sent a compilation of them to everyone he knew who got baptized. Things got harder, but he kept doing as much as he could, while he could, because, as long as God gave him the strength to serve, he was going to.

But, he was an old man. He was losing his strength. It was becoming harder and harder for him to do things. And that was really hard for him, because he still cared, and still wanted to make a difference, and there were fewer things where he could still be effective.

And so, I think God was being merciful by having him die while he still could do a little. While he hadn’t become completely powerless yet. While he could still be a servant.

Because, although his death will be hard for his wife, and his children, and for me, I think it will be a good thing for him. Because, for him, the next thing he’ll see is the resurrection.

You see, my grandpa sold insurance. And he was a very good insurance salesman. He truly believed in his product, and bought it himself. Now, there’s no insurance you can buy to protect you from death. You can buy life insurance, but that’s not the same thing. But, there is something you can do to protect yourself from death. You can give your life to Jesus Christ. And he’ll keep it safe, no matter what happens.
“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it” (Mark 8:35)

My grandpa didn’t die the violent death of a martyr. But that doesn’t mean he didn’t give his life for Jesus. He spent his entire life serving him. As long as God gave him the strength to serve, he was going to. And he did.

And although God has taken away his strength to serve now, I know that, in the resurrection, He’ll give it back to him. All the strength he had at his prime, and more. And my grandpa will be able to serve Him again. Forever.

And if there’s anything I want, more than anything else in the world, it’s to be there too. With my Grandpa.

James Robinson (Simi Hills, CA)

Righteousness and Peace Kiss Each Other

“Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Love [mercy: KJV] and faithfulness [truth: KJV] meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven” (Psa 85:9-11 NIV)

“Righteousness and peace kiss each other!” Like two old friends who finally meet after a long separation, they embrace and kiss one another, so thankful for each other’s company. So why should righteousness and peace finally kiss each other? Or, to go back to the beginning, why were these two old friends ever parted in the first place?

The answer, as we might expect, is found in the early chapters of Genesis. When Adam and his companion Eve were placed in the lovely Garden of Eden, they lived in a totally harmonious environment. The Almighty Creator had made all things good; His creation existed, quite peacefully, in a full and free fellowship with Him. The Lord God walked among the trees of the garden, and talked freely with Adam and Eve.

The sin of Eve and Adam changed all this. Their disobedience to their Creator’s wise requirements — in other words, their unrighteousness — caused them to be exiled from the garden, away from the peaceful life they had once enjoyed.

In poetic terms, the wonderful partnership of righteousness and peace had been dissolved, and Adam and Eve had lost both. Now they lived in a world of thorns and troubles, consequences and guilt, confusion and sin and death. And by the time they realized what they had done, they could no longer retrace their steps to that place of pristine righteousness which had been theirs in the beginning. Their sins had shut the door upon the place where God’s righteousness and God’s peace had resided in beautiful harmony, and they were on the outside looking in, with no key! Cast adrift in a broken world, they had absolutely no remedy.

We know now what Adam and Eve found out firsthand: that the Almighty God, who is perfectly righteous, cannot even look upon sin, much less have true and lasting fellowship with sinners. Between the Heavenly Father and the crowning
glory of His first creation — man and woman — there was a great gulf fixed, and a region where there could be no real peace because there was no real righteousness to be found there. And when children and then grandchildren were born to these two outcasts, they also inherited the same tendencies to sin and the same experience of enmity, or hostility, from the LORD God.

Something or someone was needed to bridge the gap between the righteousness of God and the peace of God. If that great gulf could be bridged, then this sad world so soon filled with sinners could begin to find its way back to that first place of peace and comfort in the presence of God.

**So, how can a pure God save a world of impure sinners?**

In God’s work of salvation through His Son, two disparate (almost mutually exclusive) elements are at work together. God’s righteousness was declared and vindicated in the sacrifice of His Son, a sacrifice that demonstrated the decreed consequences of sin and its nature (Rom 3:21-31). Because of that sacrifice, and the obedience of the Son who offered it, God was pleased also to offer His peace through His merciful forgiveness of sinners who showed faith in that Son (Rom 5:1,2).

Thus, it is a wonderful miracle that in and through Jesus, both the truth of God and His mercy have been manifested in the Word made flesh (John 1:14-18). These divine attributes parted company at the fall of the first Adam, when God’s holiness decreed an exile from the garden of His presence. They have been joined together again with the coming of the last Adam. Thanks to His Son’s role as a mediator, the irreproachable righteousness of God can save sinners and bring them peace (joyful reconciliation and fellowship with Himself), without any diminishing of His absolutely righteous character. Jesus alone could pray, as he surely must every day: “Father, forgive them, for my sake!”

Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven.

As pictured by the psalmist, this figurative meeting of heaven and earth in Psa 85:10,11 is an anticipation of the advent of Jesus. In him, heaven and earth meet together: Son of God and seed of the woman. This is described in the words of the hymn written by David Brown (Christadelphian Hymn Book, No. 83), words which are themselves a paraphrase of John 1:14:

> Thy grace and truth became
> Flesh for a saving name.

In His righteousness God looked down from heaven, and then planted the seed which germinated in the “earth”, that is, in the womb of the young woman Mary. Out of that barren soil of fallen human nature there sprang up a Righteous Branch — the Word made flesh in an absolutely righteous human being, the like of which had never been seen before. Jesus Christ was the heir of all God’s promises and the perfect expression of His will — as priest, mediator and king.
Only through such a man as this could God offer to the rest of us the “righteousness” of sins forgiven, and thus the “peace” of eternal fellowship with Himself.

**Righteousness and peace kiss each other**

One of the subtle beauties of these verses is that word “kiss”. God’s offer of salvation to man may be worked out and explained in a fairly logical manner, and we are grateful that it can be so explained. Some people need this type of explanation in order to understand and accept the gospel.

But, really, the gospel of salvation as described in the Bible bears much more resemblance to a look of love, a tender kiss, and a gentle caress. It is seen in a husband’s gentle caress of a good wife. It is seen in a father’s tender kiss of a small and helpless child. And it is seen in the devoted love of a man laying down his own life for his friends.

So, is God’s plan of righteousness a matter of logic, like a deed or a contract? Or is it an ongoing act of love? There are certainly elements of a legal contract to be seen in God’s dealings with man — there are covenants, conditional promises, and the inheritance of land. What God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob can be ours too if we believe the right things and take the right actions.

But the heart and soul, the spirit and avowed intent, of God’s interaction with us is a kiss. Nothing good could ever have happened without the divine love manifested in such a kiss. It began with a gentle kiss of divine love, soft as a small bird settling lightly upon a person:

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased’ ” (Matt 3:16,17).

And it culminated in an embrace and a kiss of joyful reunion:

“But while [the prodigal son] was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him” (Luke 15:20).

The psalmist saw all this in the brightness of a clear morning, as the sun rose on a dew-covered pasture, its beams sparkling like a million diamonds. The dawning of a new day, in all its freshness of possibilities, was like a new creation and a new birth:

“Arrayed in holy majesty [the beauties of holiness: KJV], from the womb of the dawn you [Zion] will receive the dew of your youth” (Psa 110:3).

It was then that the writer knew that those fresh drops of dew symbolized those who were born again from the dead:

“But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning” (Isa 26:19).
The inspired poet looked again, and in the beautiful sunrise and the sparkling dewdrops he saw a glorious heaven kiss a perfect earth. He knew then that God’s ancient promises would come true — that even the worst of sinners could be part of the eternal family born out of that divine kiss of love and joy, never to die again.

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

The Most Boring Chapter in the Bible (Numbers 7)

“After the tabernacle of the Lord had been built, according to the plan given to Moses, there was a special ceremony of dedication” (Num 7:1).

The leaders of the 12 tribes of Israel brought a special gift, of their own choosing, to assist the Levites in their duties of transporting the Tabernacle from place to place. Much of the actual structure could be disassembled and made easier to carry, but God (and Moses) accepted the wagons and oxen that the leaders offered to facilitate this work.

All this, however, was only prelude to the main purpose of the chapter: to list, in extraordinary detail, all the offerings of each tribe for the service of the tabernacle. Each of the 12 tribes was asked to contribute exactly the same offering as the other 11. This was for each tribe:

1) One silver plate weighing 130 shekels;
2) One silver sprinkling bowl weighing 70 shekels;
3) Fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, enough to fill each plate and bowl;
4) One gold dish weighing 10 shekels, filled with incense;
5) One young bull, a year old, for a burnt offering;
6) One ram, a year old, for a burnt offering;
7) One male lamb, a year old, for a burnt offering;
8) One male goat for a sin offering;
9) Two oxen, a year old, for a fellowship offering;
10) Five rams, a year old, for a fellowship offering;
11) Five male goats, a year old, for a fellowship offering; and
12) Five male lambs, a year old, for a fellowship offering.

Numbers 7 describes this, in almost excruciating detail, 12 times. The rest of the chapter, up to verse 88, itemizes this whole list over and over again, for each of the twelve tribes, as they brought their offerings, day by day for a full 12 days:

- On the first day, Judah brought its offerings (vv. 12-17).
- On the second day, Issachar brought its offerings (vv. 18-23).
- On the third day, Zebulun brought its offerings (vv. 24-29).
- On the fourth day, Reuben brought its offerings (vv. 30-35).
- On the fifth day, Simeon brought its offerings (vv. 36-41).
- On the sixth day, Gad brought its offerings (vv. 42-47).
• On the seventh day, Ephraim brought its offerings (vv. 48-53).
• On the eighth day, Manasseh brought its offerings (vv. 54-59).
• On the ninth day, Benjamin brought its offerings (vv. 60-65).
• On the tenth day, Dan brought its offerings (vv. 66-71).
• On the eleventh day, Asher brought its offerings (vv. 72-77).
• On the twelfth day, Napthali brought its offerings (vv. 78-83).

As if it weren’t enough detail to make the point, the text of Numbers 7 then also gives a full summary and complete total of all the offerings of all the twelve tribes, and the combined weight of all silver and gold in all the separate vessels (vv. 84-88). Even to list this in abbreviated outline form seems boring, doesn’t it? There is the reading of the whole 88 verses, up to the conclusion of these 12 identical offerings, repeated fully 12 times, and finally concluding with a thirteenth reiteration to summarize and total the first 12 full listings.

The 88 verses that precede this final verse make Numbers 7, in the opinion of many, the most boring chapter in all the Bible. And we might find ourselves agreeing with this assessment! At long last, however, after what can seem like an endless march through mind-numbing lists, we come to the final verse of chapter 7. What a payoff there is at the end:

“When Moses entered the Tent of Meeting to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from between the two cherubim above the atonement cover on the ark of the Testimony. And he [the LORD] spoke with him [Moses]” (Num 7:89)

When we put things in their proper perspective, how this final verse redeems all the rest! After all the tribes have meticulously brought all their offerings and sacrifices, in perfect order, and after they have all been accounted for and catalogued, carefully and even tediously... only then does the LORD God Almighty speak to Moses from His own special place above the mercy seat.

It is then that we must ask ourselves the question: how could a chapter in the Bible qualify as “boring”, in any way imaginable to true believers, when it culminates with the voice of God speaking to man?

What price would we pay, what effort would we go to, and what years might we be willing to wait and watch, in order that God would finally speak directly to us?

And when the LORD God finally does speak to us, will the sacrifice and the wait have all been worthwhile?

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

The record of the offerings of the princes of Israel is given us in the seventh chapter of Numbers, one of the longest, if not the longest chapter in the Scriptures. To most of us it is not a particularly appealing chapter, for it contains much repetition, and so we may be inclined to “skip” through it, feeling there is little for us. Yet this is not so, for the incidents narrated are of interest in themselves and also give us several lessons. (The Christadelphian, 1969, p.174)
Dear Bro. Hemingray,

Letter to the Editor in response to Peter Hemingray’s “Our Self-Inflicted Problems” (The Tidings, Dec. 2015)

I feel that I can shed some outside perspective on one of the issues that you raised in your editorial, that is, outreach into the community. Raised Christian in both the Evangelical and Anglican Church, I first heard of the Christadelphians in 2001 when I met my future husband, Matthew Harrison. It became my touchstone faith community in my twenties, carrying me forward in my walk with Christ through a stringent Bible study for which I was hungry. I was baptized Christadelphian in 2008. While I felt more intellectually stimulated than ever before and my eyes were opened to new truths within the Biblical text, there are elements that I found — and still find — lacking within the practices of the body. I believe that these hinder growth and are damaging to our ability to outreach beyond our own members. I will name a few:

For one, the music is outdated and though there is some effort, there is mostly reluctance to embrace modern forms of worship and even to consider singing as a legitimate form of prayer to our Heavenly Father. It feels as though Bible study is seen as the only outlet for growth, and people’s spiritual and emotional needs are left largely neglected. In Christianity, prayer and praise services are used to foster, feed and develop people’s spiritual sides.

Though admittedly controversial, many brethren believe that there is no Biblical foundation to the requirement for women to cover their heads, and for many it is not an issue that has any bearing on salvation. Yet it is generally enforced as the norm, despite its abhorrence as a practice to any incoming outsider as representative of long-out-of-date societally-based gender hierarchies.

Finally, though the King James Bible is a beautiful text, its value is akin to that of Shakespeare. It should be appreciated privately, but when it comes to meetings that should be considered publicly accessible, colloquial translations should be employed. This particularly comes to mind when brothers, sisters or outsiders join the meeting from other countries and English is not their first language.

Despite our important message of hope, Christadelphians often act as though we are a private club. To turn outward, to appear inviting, accessible and public, should be the goal, in my humble opinion, of a truly evangelical ecclesia. From my perspective, the message is too valuable to be lost because of a petty clinging to non-Biblically founded traditions. Your call to focus on the “true simplicity of the gospel” was refreshing.

Catherine Harrison (nee Sinclair)  
(Ottawa, ON)
Dear Brother Peter:

This note is to thank you for your bold and challenging editorial in the December Tidings 2015 Magazine. I have read it several times and felt how accurately you have assessed the general character and trends of our ecclesial community. The strength of your article is evident in each of the topics you addressed. And so I thank you for writing and publishing such perceptive and helpful editorial.

I have often thought about the institutionalization of functions in the Christadelphian Community. There was a time when there were no organized mission activities. Now we have four mission organizations that have annual budgets that sometimes exceed half a million dollars or more. In the past there were no organized care facilities for the aged. Now, in several countries there are modern well run facilities for seniors and those in need of care. Again, these are expensive operations to run. The combined nursing home network in the UK likely has the Community’s highest annual budget. There was a time when there were no vacation “Bible Schools”. Now they are abundant throughout the world. Once there were no “Study Days”. Today many ecclesias hold these on an annual basis. They seem to have replaced many large Fraternal Gatherings. In recent years, Christadelphian schools have been established in several countries which again requires resources from the Community to operate.

All of these functions require an infrastructure, staffing and substantial financial resources to support. While each of these initiatives has merit, there are perhaps some elements that account for some of the trends you described in your editorial.

Thank you again for your provocative editorial.

With kind regards in the Lord,

Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON)

Dear Bro. Peter,

Thank you for your recent editorial in The Tidings, December 2015, Our Self-Inflicted Problems. You did a fantastic job issuing a wakeup call to our community, correctly identifying some real shortcomings and the ramifications if we continue to neglect Jesus’ example and commands. However, we wanted to share a story of hope.

In 2008, Christadelphians in central Illinois founded a new ecclesia with the specific purpose of outreach and preaching. Then, in 2009, we founded the first English-speaking Bible Education Center (BEC) in North America, modeled after the successful BEC models overseas. Our prayer was God’s blessing on spreading the Gospel, and also showing that the BEC model can succeed in North America.

The BEC is located in a community shopping mall and is open five days a week. Hundreds of people walk past the BEC each day, with both familiar and new faces regularly stopping in just to sit and talk. We hold Bible classes 3 nights a week, and a daytime women’s Bible study. We also use the Bible to teach English
in a weekly ESL (English as a Second Language) class. We conduct individual classes for people further along in their walk. We use modern technology like Skype and a blog on the Daily Readings to widen our audience and our impact. We provide two meals a week to any students, friends and walk-ins that choose to attend our Tuesday night Bible class or our Sunday Service. We host an annual women’s Bible study weekend inviting our students, the public, as well as Christadelphian sisters from across North America.

We strongly believe in the “touch and teach” principle. Though focused on Bible teaching, the BEC also extends God’s love to the community through various “touch” activities such as weeding at the local Boys & Girls Club or raking leaves for seniors. We visit seniors in nursing homes and work with the homeless. We have a booth in a local festival which has been quite effective in notifying the community of our presence and our offerings. Community members participate in knitting squares as part of the SNUGGLES program we created that provides blankets for needy South African children. We have a very special “celebration party” called a “Stitchathon” once a month, attended by a variety of our regular stitchers, to thank them for making the 62,000+ squares that have been generated. We can happily say that your statement “In fact, to my knowledge there are no full-time domestic evangelists in our community” is disproved here in Champaign, Illinois. (BTW, our ecclesia has 13 members.)

What are the results of this? There have been baptisms, for which we rejoice, but fruit is not only in baptisms, as some are prone to think. People’s lives have been changed for the better. Alcoholics have been helped to seek rehab, Scriptural ignorance has been dispelled, hungry people (both spiritually and physically) have been fed, ongoing friendship has been offered to the lonely, sinners have been encouraged to repent. Dozens of Christadelphian volunteers, from North America and beyond, have themselves been built up through participation. We, the workers, have grown. The life we are called to--preaching, teaching, serving--is difficult, yes, but oh so rewarding. Yes, and new brothers and sisters have joined the family of God. We are seed planters; God brings the increase in His wonderful variety of grace and in His own time.

We always welcome visitors or volunteers to come experience or join our work.

Nathan Richard (Champaign, IL)

Many of our readers may have noted that portions of the December 2015 Editorial were abstracted, without proper quotation marks and source citation, from an on-line Christian article by Tom Ehrich (which is available, for example, at www.religionnews.com/2015/05/19/5-ways-churches-inflicted-pain-commentary/). We apologize for this oversight. We hope that our readers will appreciate that the ideas and especially the expanded comments relevant to our own Christadelphian Community are appropriate to our situation as indicated by the letters above.

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.
Fellowship in Jamaica

We arrived in Jamaica Monday, September 28, 2015 for a week of activities with various members and ecclesias. The first few days were spent enjoying fellowship in the homes of members of the May Pen Ecclesia — Brother Melvin and Sister Gerzel Gordon, and then with the family of Brother Leroy and Sister Lorraine Johnson. On Wednesday, Brother Donovan Frazier of the Kingston Ecclesia drove me to the northeast corner of the Island, where the Port Maria Ecclesia received me warmly for three days of activities. Our first visit was with 92 year old Sister Enid Hall in Port Antonio — the only surviving member of the ecclesia which used to meet in this town. Brothers Romain Henry, Conroy Rose and I shared a Breaking of Bread Service with Sister Enid, as well as enjoying a Bible study and hymn singing. We supplied her son and daughter-in-law (who now live with her for company) with some groceries to help with her circumstances of need.

During the next few days we visited members and their families in several homes — in particular, Sisters Alissa Fisher and Sandra Reid. On Friday, Port Maria brothers and sisters came to the room where I was staying, for a Breaking of Bread Service and exhortation on the theme of “A Soft Answer” from Proverbs 15. We also sang hymns, enjoyed a meal together and shared good conversation. This little ecclesia has endured many trials in recent years, and appreciates the support of the CBMJ and the CBMC.

On Saturday October 3rd — Romain, Sandra and I got a taxi ride the quarterly CBMJ Meeting at the May Pen Ecclesial Hall. It rained for a considerable part of our journey but this was welcomed by the residents who have experienced a long drought. Eight ecclesial representatives from the 10 Island ecclesias were present. This meeting was also the annual planning meeting for 2016. The draft 2016 Calendar of Events was reviewed and approved, which includes 12 activities. The three-day Easter Youth Camp and Monday All-Island Fraternal will once again be supported by brothers, sisters and youth from North America — it is hoped that about 12 to 15 will be able to attend. Plans are in motion for North America Truth Corps members to be in Jamaica during July, teaming up with Jamaican youth, as well as brothers and sisters, for preaching and ecclesial activities. There is great anticipation for 2016, God willing.
Finally, we travelled to the southwest corner of the Island for a mini-fraternal held at the Broughton Ecclesial Hall on Sunday October 4th, when members from the Harvey River and Argyle Mountain areas joined Broughton for a day of fellowship. About 40 brothers, sisters and young people were present. We spent the last two evenings enjoying the company of Brother Ray Arthurs at his place in Negril, departing from Montego Bay on October 5th. It was a full and rewarding stay!

Written by CBMC Jamaica linkman, Don Luff
Submitted by Jan Berneau CBMA/ CBMC Publicity

Some at Broughton for a mini-fraternal on Sunday, Oct. 4th

A New Young Brother in Lima, Peru

On Sunday, October 18, 2015 we had the privilege of baptizing Nahuel Carmona into the name of Jesus on the rooftop terrace of his family’s home in Lima, Peru. A short time later he was received into fellowship at the memorial service held in the living-room of the house, the meeting-place of the Lima Ecclesia. The only child of Bro. Flavio and Sis. Gloria Carmona, Nahuel has been keenly interested in the Bible ever since his parents first requested the postal course in early 2007, and had long looked forward to baptism. To that end he received weekly preparation classes from Jean by telephone for about two years and continues with post-baptismal classes by Skype. We pray God’s blessing on Nahuel’s walk in the Truth alongside his parents and the other members of this warm and growing little ecclesia.

Jim and Jean Hunter, CBMA Link Couple
Submitted by Jan Berneau
Baptisms at Los Angeles Hispanic

We had the pleasure of witnessing the baptisms of two new members — Isabella Sotomayor (21) and Ricardo Rodriguez (18) on Saturday, September 26, 2015 — at the Los Angeles Santa Fe Springs Ecclesial Hall in California.

Sister Isabella is the wife of Julio, cousin of our brothers Edwin and David Sanclemente. Isabella was born in Brazil and speaks Portuguese, Spanish and English. She attended ecclesial activities with her family for about a year and a half, and received baptismal classes for over a year, twice a week. Her two children — Alex and Sophia — are very active Sunday School scholars.

Brother Ricardo is the son of our Bro. Jesus and Sis. Carmen Rodriguez, and brother in the flesh of Bro. Jesus Jr and Sis. Rocio. Ricardo began attending the ecclesia when he was five years old, and has always been an enthusiastic member of the young people’s group. It gives us much pleasure to now have him as a brother in the faith!

We are very grateful to the brethren of the Los Angeles Ecclesia for the use of their Hall. We had a supper of ‘pupusas’ (the typical food of El Salvador) prepared by the relatives of Sis. Celina Cervantes. There were approximately 80 people present, including the brethren and friends from other Christadelphian ecclesias in the area, who shared in the joy of our brother and sisters, and enjoyed good fellowship with those of the family of God.

We thank God for His support and guidance in our lives, and we appeal to Him to continue blessing Ricardo and Isabella in their walk towards the Kingdom of God.

Jim and Jean Hunter, CBMA Link Couple
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

ThisIsYourBible.com — 
Bible Courses used to Prepare for Baptism

Bro. Warren Shapcott, in New Zealand shares this very interesting story of using TIYB.com on-line courses which led two families to become Christadelphians.

The story starts 10 years ago when I did an employment phone interview with a Dennis Tabilaran who was in Saudi Arabia and looking for employment in New Zealand. During the interview we spoke about religion. He was a Christian in a Muslim country and was concerned for his family. The interview was successful...
and the Tabiliran family (Dennis, his wife Resa and two children Christie and Christian) was on their way to New Zealand.

It wasn’t long after settling in that Dennis and I got talking about religion again, and I invited him to a Bible seminar which was one of many that Dennis attended over the forthcoming years. Two years ago Dennis asked if we could have a cottage class at his home so that the family could get the benefit of Bible studies. A short time into the cottage classes Dennis asked if another family who lived in the same block of flats could join us and so we were introduced to the Pablo family (Pong, his wife Virgie and their two sons Athan and Sam).

Over the next 12 months we used the TIYB.com online course as a basis for our studies. In November 2014 we witnessed two baptisms on the same evening. Dennis Tabiliran was baptised first and then he helped baptise Virgie Pablo into the saving name of our Lord. We continued the cottage classes one on one with Resa Tabiliran and Pong Pablo for another twelve months resulting in their baptisms in October 2015.

We now have two families in the truth and their children attending Sunday school. The families are very appreciative of the truth and they are a wonderful blessing to our ecclesia. This has been a remarkable journey for my sister wife Sheryn and myself as we had to deal with a language barrier during the teaching process. I thank our heavenly Father that we have been used to sow the seed of his wonderful gospel message and also thank the many people who assisted in this very emotional journey.

The two families, starting from the left Bro. Dennis Tabiliran, his two children Christie and Christian, and Sis. Resa Tabiliran. Then the next family; Sis. Virgie Pablo then their two sons Athan and Sam and then Virgie’s husband Bro. Pong Pablo.
Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 91781, Austin, TX 78709-1781, www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, V3R 0J7

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110. Phone: 818-842-2868 jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Heritage College c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, N3P 2B1

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Rick Szabo, P.O. Box 1528, West Caldwell, NJ 07007-1528 wcfoundation.org

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923. Phone: 732-381-4590 Fax: 732-499-8415 christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, e-mail: jdhunter@gte.net

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Cres., Guelph, ON, N1G 1A2 or 521 Valmont Dr., Monrovia, CA 91016 or website www.agapeinaction.com E-mail: agapeinaction@rogers.com

Christadelphian Indian Children’s Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CBMA earmarked for CICH, c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas. www.christadelphianschildren.com

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Jonathan Farrar, 140 Whitwell Way, Binbrook, ON, L0R 1C0

Joy Fund, Inc., provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Alcohol Help Line fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

Christadelphian Care Line fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039
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.

ANN ARBOR, MI

We have had a change of recording secretary at Ann Arbor as Bro. Peter Bilello has completed his four year term. Effective January 1st, 2016, Bro. Dan Styles will serve in this capacity, contact information as follows: 1638 Hickory Ridge Ct. S., Canton, MI 4818, email dstyles@ford.com, and phone 313-743-7302.

Dan Styles

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, IL

The work of sowing and watering the seed continues at our mission ecclesia, and we are delighted to report that God has again given increase, with the baptism of TAMMIE MORRISON on Dec 16, 2015. Our new sister has been a student at our Bible Education Center for over two years.

We continue to offer four classes a week at the BEC (with a reduced schedule in the summer), and positive interest from the community also continues. A number of instructors from all over North America have taught classes via the internet, and we now have some remote students as well. We also continue to have guest volunteers to teach and help out with our other activities, supplementing the work of our local volunteers. Last winter Bro. Peter and Sis. Maggie Stonell from Hamilton Greenaway, ON made a return visit for a month, and this winter we look forward to Bro. John and Sis. Mary Bilello from Ann Arbor, MI joining us in February.

We are most appreciative of our guest teachers, and we also extend our thanks to guest exhorters, mainly from the Bloomington and Chicago ecclesias. These guests enrich our meetings, and we thank brethren Jonathan Smith, Anthony Green, Dan Richard, Russ Johnson, John Fischer, John Bilello and Peter Stonell for their service during the past year.

In May we hosted our annual women’s study weekend. The instructor this year was Sis. Cathy Badger from Cambridge, ON, who spoke on “Psalms for Women”. In August, we welcomed by transfer from Chicago, IL, Bro. Nathan and Sis. Abigail Richard. One of the regular activities at the BEC is the SNUGGLES program, organized by Si. Jennifer Millay. To date over 62,000 knitted or crocheted squares have been sent to South Africa. There they are assembled into blankets for children, by residents of their townships and Christadelphian volunteers.

Please see our web site (BibleEducationCenter.org) for information on our classes and the SNUGGLES program. We urge you to consider joining us for any length of time as a guest volunteer. If you would like information about volunteering, or about attending classes remotely, you can email us from the site.

Paul Zilmer
TORONTO CHURCH STREET, ON

It has been a while since we updated the Brotherhood on our ecclesial developments so this message covers key changes since 2014. In the last two years we have gained the following new members as fruit from our weekly Learn to Read the Bible Effectively seminars: Sister Arina Ligay (March 2014), Sister Deborah McLaughlin (May 2014), Sister Michelle Mowat (September 2013) and Sister Beverly Beech (November, 2015). We are grateful for these sisters and their work in support of the ecclesia has been wonderful.

A number of transfers occurred over the period. In May, 2015, Sister Lynda Perks transferred her membership to the Mississauga West Ecclesia (May, 2015), Brother Jim Perks transferred to the Toronto East Ecclesia (August, 2015) and Sister Janet Hurd transferred to the Toronto West Ecclesia (January, 2016). We thank them for their efforts through many years of membership at Church Street. Members who joined Church Street included Dev and Rose Ramcharan, from the Toronto West Ecclesia (2014), and Sister Sheryl Thackoorie, from the Book Road Ecclesia in Hamilton (2015).

We are saddened to report the falling asleep of Sister Betty Ashley (July 2015) and Sister Anita Smith (June 2015), both long standing and beloved ecclesial members. We look forward to that day when death will no longer have its sting for us.

We thank those many brethren from the region who have spoken at our memorial meetings and Bible Classes since 2014. In particular, we thank Brother Jim Dillingham, Brother Brian Luke and Brother Ted Hodge Jr. for their inspiring and edifying Study days. Our little ecclesia continues to be a very active lamp-stand in downtown Toronto. Please address all correspondence to Dev Ramcharan, Recording Brother, 1050 Shawnmarr Road, Unit 51, Mississauga, ON,L5H3V1.

Dev Ramcharan

TORONTO EAST, ON

Dear brethren effective January 1st, 2016, Bro. Ken Curry is assuming the responsibility as recording brother at Toronto East Ecclesia. His contact information is 6 Alpaca Dr., Toronto, ON M1J 2Z7, 416-431-7069, and email: krcurry@sympatico.ca.

Andrew Webb

MID-ATLANTIC CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE SCHOOL(MACBS)
SHIPPENSBURG, PA JULY 2- JULY 10, 2016

God willing, the Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School(MACBS) will be held July 2 - 10, 2016 at Shippensburg University in Shippensburg, PA. The theme this year is “Commit Thy Works unto the LORD”, Proverbs 16:3. The Youth Program theme will be “Creation: Spiritual Applications”. Bro. Frank Abel (Hamilton Book Road, ON) will speak on the subject “The God of Peace” to the adults and “The Answer of a Good Conscience” to the teens. Bro. Dafydd Jenkins (Cardiff Museum Place, UK) will speak on the subject “Prophets and Kings” to the adults and “Getting to Know My Lord” to the teens. Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch North, NZ) will speak on “Gabriel – Messiah’s Evening Angel” to the adults and “The Spiritual Habits of the Saints of God” to the teens. Rates for those who register before May 15: Adults: $520, Teens (Ages 12-19): $440, Ages 3-11: $265, Ages 0-2: $25. Rates after May 15. Adults: $545, Teens (Ages 12-19): $460, Ages 3-11: $280, Ages 0-2: $25. This information will be available on the MACBS web site: www.MidAtlanticBibleSchool.org
 Editorial

“How forcible are right words,” says Job, and Solomon declares that “a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” We would also like to include “a word fitly written.” It is our prayer that with God’s help this magazine shall fulfill its obligation in speaking “right words,” words fitly written that will be “like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”

Those who write have a grave responsibility since the written word is a permanent record of thought, put down on paper to influence others. It has been said that the “pen is mightier than the sword.” This is true. The Bible itself is the greatest example of the power of the written word. Look at the effect it has had upon the lives of sincere men and women who have read it and died for the principles set forth in its pages. Men like Tyndale gave their life endeavoring to see that this written word might be available to all.

Today we read our Bible in peace, there are no threats over our head. We also may read almost anything else we want since there is no scarcity of the written word. “Of making many books there is no end,” declared Solomon. We have available all kinds of books on every conceivable subject. They run from the trash of many pulp magazines all the way up to the Bible.

The words we read have a great effect upon what we are, since we are what we think, and the words we read become absorbed into our minds and to a great extent become us.

We shall be wise to choose our books as we do our friends, to read those things which are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report.

We of “The Tidings,” realizing the responsibilities of preaching “The Truth” via the written word, have accepted this assignment with trembling hearts and feeble knees acknowledging, as Solomon, that we are but little children, and we are in the midst of God’s people, a great people, and so we pray with Solomon that God will give us an understanding heart that we may discern between good and bad that our words may be fitly written as “apples of gold in pictures of silver”.

Robert Lloyd

Minute Meditations (10th Edition) available from:

The Christadelphian Office (thechristadelphian.com)
Thousand Oaks Christadelphian Library (christadelphianlibrary.com)
Detroit Christadelphian Book Supply (christadelphianbooks.com)
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

FEBRUARY, 2016

6 Brantford, ON Annual Junior CYC and Little Disciples Winter Gathering at Camp Trillium. Workbooks will be posted toward the end of the year on www.brantfordchristadelphians.com. For information e-mail Bro. Peter and Sis. Karly Styles at peterandkarly@juno.com

21-26 Palm Springs Bible School will be held, Lord willing, at the Miracle Springs Resort in Desert Hot Springs, CA. The speakers for 2016 are Bro. Anthony Whitehorn (Maidenhead, UK): “Faith and Doubt” and Bro. Steve Davis (Boston, MA): “Moving on to Maturity”. The Bible School is held at a natural hot springs resort. The School offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God’s word and enjoy the fellowship of other brethren and sisters. To register, please contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau at jeffgelineau@gmail.com or visit our website www.californiabi@leschool.org for more details.

MARCH, 2016

19-20 Baltimore, MD Bible Study weekend at the Baltimore Ecclesia, 6311 Loudon Avenue, Elkridge, MD 21075. Speaker will be Bro. Steve Cheetham (Mooresstown, NJ). Subject: “Lessons from the Kings”. Saturday classes begin at 1 p.m. and include dinner. Classes resume on Sunday at 9:30 a.m. during Sunday School, followed by memorial service and lunch. Afternoon talk TBD. Contact: Sis. Carol Link at linkgang87@gmail.com.


APRIL, 2016

2-3 Rogue Valley, OR Study Weekend with Bro. Jim Cowie (Moreton Bay, Brisbane, AUS). His topic will be “The Spirit of Christ in the Psalms”. For information, contact Bro. Henry Wisniewski at 541 956-5829 or henrywisniewski@hotmail.com.

16-17 Largo Tampa Bay, FL will host a study weekend at the ecclesial hall. Bro. Frank Abel (Hamilton Book Road, ON) will lead us in the study of God’s word. For further information, contact Bro. Walt Dodrill, Recorder at 727-410-0896 or email waldodrill@msn.com.

22-24 New England Brothers’ Weekend at Camp Joslin, Charlton, MA. The speaker will be Bro. Dean Brown on “Great Prayers”. Please register early. Registration: Bro. Ben Link, 39 Perkins St., Apt 416, Lowell, MA 01854; newengbros@gmail.com; for general information: Bro. Jim Boyko jnkboyko@gmail.com.

MAY, 2016

6-7 Vancouver Island Sisters’ Weekend in Victoria, BC. Study led by Sis. Maritta Terrel (Austin Leander, Texas). Topic: “Renew Your Mind”. Registration Fee: $50.00. For further information or to register contact Sis. Rosa Bailey, 3-1431 Simon Road, Victoria, BC, V8X 3G9 or rosabailey@shaw.ca.

JUNE, 2016

17-19 New York Metropolitan Sister’s Retreat, The Homewood Suite, Lancaster, PA. Speaker is Sis. Cadi Phillips (Moorestown, NJ). Her topic is “The Importance of words”. For registration, please contact: Sis. Averil Ferguson, at (718) 877-6618, email adferguson@gmail.com.

JULY, 2016

2-10 Mid-Atlantic Bible School, Shippensburg, PA. The speakers are Bro. Frank Abel (Hamilton Book Road, ON): “The God of Peace” (Adults), and “The Answer of a Good Conscience” (Teens); Bro. Dafydd Jenkins (Cardiff – Museum Place, UK): “Prophets and Kings” (Adults) and “Getting to Know My Lord” (Teens); and Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch North, NZ): “Gabriel – Messiah’s Evening Angel” (Adults) and “The Spiritual Habits of the Saints of God” (Teens). This information will also be available on the MACBS website: www.MidAtlanticBibleSchool.com.

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

10-16 Southwest Bible School at Schreiner University in Kerrville, TX. The speakers this year are Bro. Roger Lewis: “The Four Faces of Christ in the Gospel” (Adults) and “The Spiritual Habits of the Saints of God” (Teens), Bro. Wilfred Alleyne: “The Book of Beginnings” (both), and Bro. David Jennings: “For Who hath Despised the Day of Small Things” (both). Registration forms will be available on the Bible School website, Lord willing, the beginning of 2016: www.swcbs.com.


31-Aug 6 Rogue River Bible School Speakers: Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, AUS) on “The Life of Noah”; Bro. David Wisniewski (Brant County, ON) on “The Honor of Kings — Searching Out the Parables”; and Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI) on “Forgiveness”. For registration information, contact Sis. Pat Posey at Pat1Posey@gmail.com.
Editorial: Reading the Lines

“Hope” in Revelation

Sunday School: Maps of Bible Lands

New Testament Church: Church Organization

Exhortation: How Men Ought to Behave in the House of God

Doctrines to be Rejected: Holy Spirit is a Person

Jonathan: Pleading for a Friend

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Editorial

Reading the Lines

“Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numb 12:3).

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt 18:20).

Bible study

Bible study has many purposes, and much has been written on how to study the Bible. It is quite noticeable that when you go to a Christian bookstore, there is usually a bookcase of Bibles, one of commentaries and Bible lives, and about 10 on “Christian living” or “Christian novels”, which is reflective of the priorities on most who frequent such stores. On the other hand, in most Bible School bookstores (if they have one, and unfortunately many do not), the ratio is almost reversed between “living” and commentaries. So from such anecdotal information one might conclude our focus is where it ought to be — on Bible study.

But for what purpose? And how do we, or should we, go about it? I sometimes wonder whether the Christadelphian community is more focused on the leaves on the twigs on the branches on the trees in the forest, than on the way our studies should help and mold us, or even inform us about our beliefs.

One example: I have attended Bible Classes on the Psalms which basically worked on the principle of examining each word in the original Hebrew (or at least in the version to be found in Young’s concordance), and then looked up the various ways each word was used in the Old Testament. This approach might be appropriate as part of a doctoral thesis (indeed it has been so done by at least one brother), but not for the purpose of “training in righteousness”.

Another example: in this issue we continue in our studies on “the doctrines to be rejected”, but you can scan our literature for most of these doctrines and find none, or very few. In our series we have not yet got to the one that says “That the observance of Sunday is a matter of duty”. Apart from one rather brief reference in “The Christadelphian”, I can find no account of what it means to our Christian life. All the other references are in lists of “Doctrines to be rejected.” So the BASF, apparently, although it forms the basis of our inter-ecclesial fellowship, seems mostly to be used only to defend what we perceive as error, not as a guide to our behavior. Of course, the “Commandments of Christ” do indeed cover our walk in Christ, but they are referred to only occasionally (e.g. I Believe by Bro. A. D. Norris).

The purpose of Bible study

There are many identifiable areas where Bible study is of assistance. First, a few relevant Bible passages:
“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Prov 9:10).

“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17).

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David” (Isa 55:1-3 NIV).

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom 15:4).

And of course:

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

So some thoughts on the “why” of Bible study:

- To reflect on the whole purpose of God, and understand its scope, purpose, and means.
- A pleasurable exercise which gives its own rewards throughout the process. It informs and gives life meaning and hope.
- To understand God, and His plan and purpose. To guide a disciple’s life. To understand the universe in which we live. To help others come to a knowledge of God.
- To transform the disciple into the image of God and Christ. To communicate that image to others.
- Study for study’s sake, apart from being “a weariness to the flesh” lacks any power, it is more akin to faith without works.
- To learn how to behave and what to do! To forgive when you do not want to, it to be kinder than you might otherwise be.
- To learn to be ready, to be faithful, and by God’s grace enter the kingdom. And to be able and brave enough to witness to our faith, to have the confidence to be able to witness to the glory of God. To love.
- To challenge perspectives or to re-familiarize the student with the content.

**The trap of accepting the opinion of others**

Now to return to the two quotations as the head of this editorial. **The first is:**

“Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numb 12:3).

A typical quote based upon this passage is:

“Moses, notwithstanding the fact that he was the powerful leader of
a million men and women for forty years, was a meek man. Evidence of this aspect of his character occurs in the record in connection with a challenge to his status by Miriam and Aaron. While upholding his authority and leadership, Moses was willing to accept a personal insult without recrimination. This incident revealed his true strength of character: his meekness was not his weakness.\textsuperscript{2}

Now most modern translation use the term “humble”, not meek and the NET Bible has the following note over the word “humble”:

\textit{“The word \textit{יָנָע} (\textit{anav}) means \textit{‘humble.’ The word may reflect a trustful attitude} (as in Psa 25:9, 37:11), \textit{but perhaps here the idea of ‘more tolerant’ or ‘long-suffering.’ The point is that Moses is not self-assertive. God singled out Moses and used him in such a way as to show that he was a unique leader.”}

I am of the opinion that in the context, Moses was more “long-suffering” and hence miserable\textsuperscript{3} than meek. He rarely acts meekly in the Biblical records, certainly after the departure from Egypt.

\textbf{Now for the second:}

\textit{“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt 18:20).}

This quotation is most frequently used for comfort when only a small number of disciples can gather together. For example:

\textit{“It should never be forgotten that by our relationship together we are blessed to share in united worship. Whether our home is in a large city, where we can benefit from regular meetings with brethren and sisters, or in a small isolated rural village, where transport difficulties make such meetings a rare and additionally special event, we can take comfort from the Saviour’s words...”}\textsuperscript{4}

But is this what it means in the context of the passage? If you read the passage, it is clearly considering the case of disagreements between brethren, not about isolated groups of believers. More properly one might say the meaning is that this is the assurance of Jesus that where two or three are agreed about matters concerning disputes between brethren (or sisters), the Lord will be there answering their prayers. He will uphold the righteousness of God and help the brother who is guilty of the sin in question.

\textit{Peter Hemingray}

\textbf{Notes:}

1. Some of these were adapted from a discussion on the topic on ecclesia-discuss.
3. This argument is presented in C. Rogers, “Moses: Meek or Miserable?” JETS 29 (1986): 257-63. To be found on the Internet.

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

How Men Ought to Behave in The House of God

Study to be quiet

This exhortation invites you to ponder the passage that occurs at the end of 1st Timothy, chapter 3. The passage is important because it reveals one of the main reasons for the writing of the letter which is, “how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God.” Allow me to explain how I came to examine this passage more closely. I was struck by a passage from Paul: “And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you” (1Thess 4:11). This passage was even more intriguing in the NIV which renders it, “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.” The study notes at the bottom of the page in the NIV shed some light on its purpose for these words being written. There it says that “some Thessalonians, probably because of idleness, were taking undue interest in other people’s affairs as Paul reports, “For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies” (2Thess 3:11).

The Apostle exhorts men to work with their hands, because the Greeks in general thought that manual labor degrading and fit only for slaves. Early Christians took seriously the need for earning their own living, but some of the Thessalonians, perhaps as a result of their belief in the imminent return of Christ, were neglecting work and relying on others to support them. I have found these themes and currents running all through the Scriptures, and consequently it prompted me to explore more fully the idea of “study to be quiet and to do your own business.” Quiet comes from the Greek word, “hesujthazo” which means to keep quiet in a way that is restful. I found another very similar word which is used interchangeably in the Diaglott, the word “silence”, as in:

“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (2Tim 2:11-12).

The word “silence” is the Greek word, huchia, which means in a similar way to “be in silence” by exercising her quietness through stillness. Both words seem to suggest a lifestyle that does not try to agitate or stir up trouble for the purpose exercising their own will, but instead doing the will of God in love and peace. This struck me as being a behavior in a form of godliness with contentment. If we read 1st Timothy, it reveals for us what the opposite of godliness is so that we might contrast it:

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

On the other hand Peter tell us the characteristics of a Godly life which are:

“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2Pet 1:5-8).

Thus, according to Young’s Concordance, godliness then is “piety and a reverential fear or worship” of the Almighty God in Heaven. Desiring a better understanding or knowledge of the behaviors of a Godly life is what helped me to make the connection with the passage in 1st Timothy.

“These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1Tim 3:14-16).

In the house of God

Nobody who means business about discipleship can be indifferent to the proposal. It may be argued that the passage does not teach us anything about behavior in the house of God; it merely declares the need for right behavior. In my studies on this passage I discovered a book by Bro. Dennis Gillett’s entitled, “May You Know It to be True”, which examines this passage very closely and I wish to attribute many of my thoughts to Bro. Dennis. He adamantly believes that this passage teaches us about our behavior in the house of God.

He states, “I am here to say that it does teach us something and it is the purpose of this little meditation to notice it. Notice the words which follow the phrase ‘the house of God’— ‘which is the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth’ ”.

The Apostle Paul is not speaking of those few believers in Ephesus, but the whole company of the redeemed, the collection of all believing souls in every place and every age.

Pillar

Think of the word ‘pillar’. There are two possibilities.

- The great pillars you see in the White House or Lincoln Memorial which are designed to support the roof;
- Alternatively a great column, elevated to make some form of declaration like
certain dignitaries in front of a governmental building. These are considered to be a founding father of a city, state or country. I think the one that stands out in my mind the most is the statue of Saddam Hussein, which I saw being pulled down by the US military in Bagdad.

I believe it is this second kind of pillar that the Apostle Paul has in mind. There were many such in Rome and Timothy would see similar things in Ephesus: monuments designed to signify some memorial or elevate some philosophy. The word ‘ground’ refers to the thing upon which the column rests. Bro. Gillett in his aforementioned book believes that the right word is ‘plinth’. The idea and purpose of the plinth and the pillar, according Bro. Gillett, is that some object or some truth or fact may be elevated so that the attention of men may be drawn to it. In Washington D.C. there is a great plinth upon which sits Abraham Lincoln with inscriptions of two well-known speeches by Lincoln, The Gettysburg Address, and his Second Inaugural Address, both dedicated to his efforts to keep our nation united in times of radical divisions. On the other hand it may be like the Michigan City Lighthouse. Here, the building is a pillar erected upon a foundation, finally resting upon a breaker wall — but the whole purpose of the elevation is the flashing of the light.

When you sail upon the Hudson River to enter New York City you are usually awed by the Statue of Liberty. The statue elevated upon a column, resting on a plinth, looks out to sea and is intended to proclaim a great idea — that this is the land of the free. Originally, the torch was intended to let the statue act as a lighthouse. Now thinking of all this we can come fairly to our conclusion. The ground and the pillar - the plinth and the column - are of no use apart from what they reveal. Secondly, the statue, the light, the proclamation, is in need of the plinth and the column in order that they may be seen. There is interdependence, an interrelationship between the column and the thing to be revealed. A column built for a statue is an empty useless thing unless the statue is placed upon it. If the lighthouse does not flash the light, it is merely a useless structure that is nonfunctional. When the writing on the pillar is obliterated it cannot tell its story and though it may be kept for sentimental reasons, it has ceased to have any real value.

But also that statue must have the column if is to be seen; the light must be elevated if it is to warn and illuminate: the word written must be in a position where it can be read and understood. Therefore, the ecclesia is the medium which God has instituted to proclaim the Truth. The Truth is to be elevated by the ecclesia to a height at which men may see it. If the light is to cut through the darkness it must have height; if the word is to be proclaimed it must have an instrument for its proclamation.

When the Apostle says “the Pillar and ground of the truth”, what does he mean? Well, notice what follows in the next verse, verse 16 - the analysis of the mystery of godliness, which is the manifestation of God among men In other words the Truth is embodied in a person. God’s final and all-inclusive word is revealed in His Son.
He is the light of the world. It is the work of the ecclesia to reveal Jesus Christ to the world — to flash the light, to proclaim the message, to announce the declaration.

**The ecclesia, the means of salvation**

When you think about it carefully the inferences are startling. God has chosen the ecclesia, made up of human beings, to be the means of revealing His Son to the world. Just as the purpose of the pillar depends upon the pillar, so God depends upon the ecclesia. Jesus Christ has chosen no means himself, except through his own ecclesia. The great central figure of God’s purpose is hidden unless the ecclesia does its work. The Light came into the world and was focused and centralized for a little while, but then passed out of human sight and is no longer shining, apart from the shining power of God’s word proclaimed by God’s ecclesia in the world. This was the situation in the New Testament ecclesia.

But let us not miss the other side of the interrelationship. The ecclesia, apart from the person of Christ, is a useless structure. If the ecclesia does not reveal the person, if the light does not flash, if the word is not proclaimed, if the character is not unveiled — then the structure itself is an empty thing — of no use and no value.

Observe from the word of the apostle Paul what the purpose of the ecclesia is: to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ — the mystery of Godliness, and his purpose. It is not to solve the problems of the nations, not to initiate legislation for the spread of democracy, not to advance scientific or medical research, not to enunciate moral codes.

Its work is to proclaim the Gospel of the King, and his Kingdom, to call men to repentance and faith, to warn men against the dangers of sin. It is a force for good which will make no truce with evil for the sake of peace or through fear of consequences. In the midst of the chaos, uncertainty and opposition, it is a force to proclaim the master principles of the Kingdom of God, and its eventual establishment in the world upon the ruins of human government at the coming of the King. To put it plainly — there is a person the world needs to see. There is a light which mariners need to discover. There is a famine for the word of God and men dying for want. It is the work of the ecclesia to face the issue because it has the remedy.

Remember that all this is in harmony with the works of the King himself. He once said to his men: “Ye are the light of the world.” He is the Light of the world but for the time being he has committed it into the hands of the ecclesia, to throw back the frontiers of darkness and illuminate the way where broken men are groping in the gloom. “Ye are the salt of the earth”. He alone has the power to halt corruption, but instrumentally he has committed it into the hands of the ecclesia — his antiseptic influence being used to cleanse and purify in the little world where the disciples move, The ecclesia of the Living God — that is a God who is active and at work in the midst of men through His own people, chosen to be fellow workers with Him — the pillar and the ground of truth.
Here is the word of exhortation. With all reverence does it not fill you with awe? Bro. Gillett writes in his book, “In the final analysis it becomes a personal matter. What the ecclesia is, you collectively are. Your spirit will decide whether the ecclesia is really the pillar and the ground of truth.”

The proclamation is powerless to save unless it is reinforced by the lives of men and women who live as they preach. We preach the Truth but are we passionately concerned to live and walk in Truth? Our preaching is sound but does our life deny it. Bro. Dennis writes,

“Do not be offended, but I am compelled to say that I am amazed at the trivial reasons disciples give for tempering the Truth in their own lives. In the minds of the unsaved the message lacks force unless it has behind it the witness of souls who believe in it and have proved its power. Think of it another way. The message of pardon ought to be backed by the testimony of men and women who are pardoned. It is the pardoned man who preaches the Gospel, the man who lives in the power of God’s forgiveness — the man therefore who is forever humble — the reverent man who knows in his deepest heart that he owes everything to divine grace; the man who, standing by every pool of Bethesda, is moved by impotence of crippled humanity — the man whose motive is compelled by love”.

Individuals make up the ecclesia

Let us not beat about the bush. The person revealed to the ecclesia is proclaimed in the individual members. This assembly today is full of gifts and graces — full of skill and talent — given by God so that we may be the pillar and the ground of truth. We must therefore be careful to send into the highways and byways, into the places of commerce, into the places of professional life, into the working ways of this society, men and women who themselves love the Truth, observe the divine law and are ready to reveal to other men the love of God which has inspired it.

Another gem of Bro. Dennis’ thoughts on this subject gives a sad but significant point for us all to consider and cautiously weigh in our own life where he writes, “Let me get down to the details of the moment. It has happened that sometimes disciples have had the opportunity to proclaim the Truth, but then they had to remain silent because if they had spoken they knew that their own lives would have invalidated the very words they ought to have said”.

The Apostle John uses an interesting expression:

“I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father” (2John 4).

The Apostle John’s vision of truth extends through the wholeness of our character — how closely tied our ways are to the fundamental idea of truth. Another thoughtful observation that Bro. Gillett reports in his book is that:

“Sometimes a man would do anything rather than perjure himself in a
court of law and yet his whole life is a tissue of small untruths. We hate the false calumny but sometimes we are half pleased with false praise. You see you cannot by some careful statement of theological truth make yourself true if the very habit of your life is false. The character cannot be gilded as gold by mere words if underneath it is but tinsel. Life becomes fictitious and the sorrow is that at last it will pass into your religion, and the pillar which ought to be strong and clear and true becomes an anachronism and a failure.”

So in this solemn time of breaking bread there are questions we ought to be asking ourselves. “Putting it bluntly”, as Bro. Dennis puts it, “there is a person the world needs to see and the questions are these:

- Am I helping to show him to the world or is he being devalued in me?
- Am I helping to flash the light across the dark deep or are these poor men and women being left to flounder through my neglect and indifference?
- There is a famine for the word of God everywhere; hungry souls are dying for lack of life-giving food; am I, having the very remedy for starvation, leaving the word of God unused and therefore impeding the work of God?”

I would like to close the exhortation with one last quote from Bro. Dennis Gillett which well illustrates the issues of this exhortation.

“So then, when you take time and prayer and patience to lead the unsaved towards the light of Truth, when you show the light of the world to the prevailing darkness, when you halt the spread of corruption by your antiseptic influence, you may be more and more what God intended you to be — the pillar and the ground of truth. Is there a better moment than now to resolve upon a rededication of your life to this high calling? In this solemn moment of bread breaking, when you are alone with your Redeemer, come what may, will you resolve to show him to the little world in which you move”?

*Joe Bennett (Kouts, IN)*

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**Special Invitation**

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

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

Bro. Kyle Tucker: "A Study in First-Century Christianity"
Bro. Todd Fazekas: "The Lord Saves"

Contact Bro. Brad Rek at 330-609-6957 or brad.rek@gmail.com.
Visit our website at www.abrahamicfaithgathering.org for more information and to view talks from last year.
First Principles

Hope, (12) Hope in Revelation

“He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be His God and he will be My son” (Rev 21:7).

Revelation is full of symbolism and eternal hope

Secret seals, loud trumpets and locusts that look like horses ready for battle. A woman is clothed with the sun, moon and a crown of twelve stars. There are red, white, green and black horses. Angels and a dragon have a battle. The number of the beast is 666. There are seven bowls full of God’s wrath. A scarlet beast has seven heads and ten horns. There are flashes of lightning, peals of thunder and earthquakes. 144,000 people are sealed securely. There is smoke, fire, drought, plagues and blood. Hailstorms drop 100 lb hail from heaven. The sun is darkened and the moon becomes like blood. A beast comes out of the sea with seven heads and ten horns. An army has 200 million men. They gather at a place called Armageddon.

These are some scary and dramatic figures in the final book of the Bible. It is a book called the Apocalypse, or Revelation, and it was given to the apostle John in a vision regarding events yet to take place. Revelation is likely the most disturbing prophetic book in all the books of the Bible. It is presented like a puzzle waiting to be unraveled or, rather, explode. But like the Old Testament prophets, the doom-and-gloom visions are accompanied by glorious and wonderful visions of hope.

The book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ uses many symbols that can be explained by using the Bible. The book itself interprets incense as prayers of saints, lamps as ecclesias, ten horns as ten kings and waters as peoples. One of the main prophecies that encourage hope is the message that Jesus is coming soon (Rev 22:7, 12, 20). What is so hopeful about that? When he returns, believers have the hope of being raised from the dead and life eternal (1Thess 4:13-18, 1Cor 15:20-26, 50-57). Jesus will be leading the final battles against all that is wrong with the world (Rev 19:11-20: 3; Zech 14:1-9, 16). This will be one step in starting a new world order and a new, perfected earth (Rev 21:1-4, 22-27; 22:1-6; Isa 2:2-4). Jesus will become king and lead the healing of the earth — religiously, politically, environmentally, and personally.

Hope for churches

Jesus sent an authoritative message of hope to seven special churches in Asia. He used Revelation to rebuke, direct and encourage these churches, which
were dealing with various challenges. These messages were intended for all churches, as all followers of Messiah will encounter similar issues. Those who overcome spiritual obstacles and adversity will also inherit the same amazing rewards below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church/City</th>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Noted For</th>
<th>Reward to him who overcomes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ephesus</td>
<td>2:7</td>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>Eat of tree of life in Paradise of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laodicea</td>
<td>3:21</td>
<td>Lukewarm</td>
<td>Sit with Jesus on his throne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pergamum</td>
<td>2:17</td>
<td>Faithful</td>
<td>Hidden manna, white stone &amp; new name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>3:12</td>
<td>Good works</td>
<td>Pillar in temple written with name of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sardis</td>
<td>3:5</td>
<td>Untainted</td>
<td>Clothed in white, names in book of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smyrna</td>
<td>2:10</td>
<td>Tribulation</td>
<td>Crown of life, not hurt by second death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thyatira</td>
<td>2:26</td>
<td>Deeds &amp; Love</td>
<td>Authority over nations &amp; morning star</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Judgment day**

One of the main themes in Revelation is the good-vs-evil battle between righteous followers of Jesus and those who persecute the church. This is presented in a variety of ways and, ultimately, leads to the judgment battle of evil nations, known as Armageddon (Rev 16:16). This same judgment is personalized throughout Scripture in what is known as the "day of judgment" (2Pet 2:9; 3:7; 1John 4:17). Those whom God chooses will be resurrected and “stand before the judgment seat of Christ” to receive their reward or punishment (Rom 14:10; 2Cor 5:10). Jesus referred to the “day of judgment” many times, often in parables. The parable of sheep and goats in Matthew 25 is one clear example where some people receive a reward and some condemnation. In that parable, Jesus commends people who treat others with kindness, while he rebukes any who do not treat people the way they would like to be treated. Another parable in Matt 13:47-50 is about a net that is full of both good and bad fish. When they are being examined, the good ones are used and the bad ones are discarded. The message is clear that at judgment day, Jesus will select those whom he chooses and reject those who are unworthy. In addition, the reward of the faithful happens when Jesus returns and not earlier:

“And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory” (1Pet 5:4).
“The Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom” (2Tim 4:1).

Those who are ‘dead in Christ’ are described in the Bible as being asleep and awaiting resurrection and judgment (1Cor 15:20; 1Thess 4:13; Dan 12:2). No one is able to inherit the promises of God until all receive their reward at the same time (Heb 11:39-40; John 5:25-29). No one dies and goes to heaven, but the reward of faithful Christians will be on earth when Christ returns (John 3:13; Matt 5:5; 6:10; 16:27; Rev 5:10; 22:12).

All go to the same place at death, which is the grave (Sheol). This is consistent throughout Scripture, and fits with how disciples fall asleep in Christ at death. Extensive examples prove this Bible teaching including: 1Sam 28:19; Psa 104:29; 146:4; Ecc 12:7.

It is consistent with the character of our loving Heavenly Father that He will not cause those who are condemned at judgment day to be tortured forever. The Bible hope is eternal life, while punishment is eternal death. Those who are found unworthy by Jesus at his judgment will be punished and put to death again (Rev 20:11-12; 2Thess 1:8-9; Rev 21:8).

No more tears

Revelation 21 is one of the most hopeful and inspiring chapters in the entire Bible. “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (Rev 21:1-2). This vision echoes Isaiah and reinforces Jesus’ prayer, “thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10). The reward of the faithful will be eternal life on earth, but it will not be like our violent, polluted and corrupt planet we know today. The entire earth will be cleansed and “full of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab 2:14).

Then those who are judged worthy will be given immortality like the angels and all our sins will be erased. All of the world’s spiritual darkness will be cleansed by God’s light (1Pet 2:9). All sorrow and sighing will cease. “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev 21:4). This verse repeats for emphasis that what God has promised He will fulfill (Rev 7:17; Isa 25:8; 65:19). Imagine a world without pain or sadness.
What a wonderful day that will be! What amazing sights and surprises we look forward to in God’s Kingdom! The topography of the land will be changed, and perfected. The city of peace, Jerusalem, will be glorified and the glory of God will illuminate the land.

**The final chapter**

Revelation 22 is the conclusion to the entire inspired word of God. While Genesis began with the creation of everything we know, Revelation ends with the new creation of everything we don’t know. Genesis introduces mankind to the garden in Eden, and Revelation ends with a return to a glorified Eden. Genesis describes a river that flows out of Eden (Gen 2:10), and Revelation describes a river of the water of life, which flows from the throne of God. Genesis describes the tree of life and Revelation reintroduces a future tree of life (Rev 22:2) with fruit for food and leaves for healing of the nations. “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life” (Rev 22:14).

In the final chapter, Jesus reminds his followers that he is coming back to reign on earth. He repeats this three times in the final chapter to confirm his testimony: “I am coming quickly” (Rev 22:7, 12, 20). He is not slow about his promise, but is patient towards all people, while he waits for repentance and obedience (2Pet 3:9). Jesus promises a great reward to those who follow him until the end. May you be blessed to follow Jesus and to “keep the words of the prophecy written in this scroll” (Rev 22:7). May you drink of the water of life. May you eat of the tree of life. May you enter those glorious future gates of New Jerusalem. May you be ready and willing, anxiously waiting for Jesus to return as king of all the earth. May you be blessed to call out to him: “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:21).

“The Book of Revelation is about the gospel. The gospel is its central theme. Above all it is speaking of the coming kingdom of God through the victory of Christ at Calvary.” Graeme Goldsworthy

“You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Rev 5:10).

**The Bible says:**

- There will be a day of judgment for those who are resurrected. Rom 14:10; 2Cor 5:10; 2Tim 4:1.
- The New Jerusalem will return to be like a glorified garden in Eden. Rev 21:1; Rev 22:2, 14.

_Chicago, IL Ecclesia_
Doctrines to Be Rejected, (9) Holy Spirit

Doctrine to Be Rejected # 6: “That the Holy Spirit is a person distinct from the Father”.

Introduction
This statement can be restated in a Positive way: “The Holy Spirit is the exclusive power that emanates only from God, which performs His determination”.

The Statement is also associated with three statements (among others) in “Truth to be received”:

1. That the only true God... the self-existent Deity, the ONE FATHER, dwelling in unapproachable light, yet everywhere present by His Spirit, which is a unity with His person in heaven.
2. That Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, begotten of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit.
10. That being so begotten of God, and inhabited and used by God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was Emmanuel...

And another one in the Doctrines to be Rejected:
25. That a man cannot believe without possessing the Spirit of God.

The DTBR # 6 was written, of course, against the conventional doctrine of The Trinity, which we dealt with in considering #2, “That God is Three Persons”. However, the whole topic has become much wider that the consideration of The Trinity, because of two factors:

1) The rise of Pentecostalism, with its emphasis on the Gifts of the Spirit in this age.
2) In our own community in the 1970’s, there was an enormous amount of controversy over whether, and how, the Holy Spirit is directly active today in guiding the individuals and ecclesias.

The first problem has troubled a few in our community, particularly as it relates to faith healing. But the second caused a flood of books and articles at the time. We will deal with both separately. We will do so mainly by adapting sections from what has been written in recent years by prominent brethren.

Gifts of the Spirit today
From time to time there have been groups claiming that once again that Holy Spirit gifts are available to mankind. In modern times both the Pentecostal and the Charismatic movements have made such claims. Speaking with tongues, known as glossolalia, is the gift which exceeds all others in claims of this kind. Rarely is it claimed as an ability to speak foreign languages in the manner of the apostles (Acts 2:4,6,11). Instead it is said that those concerned are given ecstatic utterance which they do not themselves understand but have to depend on others to provide the interpretation.
For the most part this manifestation is made known in meetings of committed members of the groups concerned. It is not used as a principal means for preaching the Gospel as they see it, and this is contrary to the direct instruction and practice laid down in Scripture (1Cor 14:22-25). Indeed, there is no evidence whatsoever that the modern phenomenon is in any way related to the gift of tongues as described in the New Testament. Nor is it unique to “Christian” groups. The same occurrences are to be found amongst members of eastern religions and in the Mormon movement. We believe that the phenomenon arises from “religious excitation”, an emotional state of mind, and not from any action by God through His Holy Spirit.

Similar considerations arise about the supposed “gift of healing”. Healings wrought by the apostles were never carried out at “healing meetings”. There was no religious service, no emotional fervor produced by hymn-singing and preaching, but instead direct and positive healing in the open, on the spot, for all to see; or in private by an apostle (Acts 3:1-10; 9:36-41). These miracles followed the pattern of the healings of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the most part, the Lord healed by a touch or by the spoken word and the results were immediately evident.

Both the procedures and the results of modern healings are widely different from those of New Testament times. There are many failures and often a lack of permanence in the healing achieved. Such was not the case with the apostles. In those days, a man who had never walked was healed in an instant and could run for joy (Acts 3:1-10). A dead woman was restored to life by the quiet prayer of one apostle and his spoken word to the corpse (Acts 9:36-41). Healers of today belong to non-Christian groups, Spiritualists, and others as well as Charismatics. The Holy Spirit cannot be the common factor. It is much more likely to be a result of the power of the mind of the healer upon the mind and will of the person who has come to be healed. Whatever may prove to be the explanation, a far more basic inquiry must be conducted into the claims of those who profess to be moved by the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit in action today

In the 1970’s, there was some dispute about how the Holy Spirit can be said to act in our time. Essentially, this resulted in two different views. These can be summarized as:

1) The “Traditional” view was that the gift of the Holy Spirit consisted of divine supernatural help, which was given to the first century Ecclesia to assist the early brethren in the work of establishing the Truth in the earth. The Holy Spirit was withdrawn when this was accomplished and the Ecclesia established. Such gifts are not received by any today. As far as we today are concerned, we have available in the word of God the result of the Holy Spirit acting upon apostles, prophets and other inspired writers. If, of our own free will, we allow this word to influence our minds there is created in us a new mind, or spirit, which is referred to as “the Spirit of Christ” or “Spirit of God” which is recognized by works of righteousness, otherwise known as fruits of the Spirit.
2) An alternative, somewhat modified view of the Holy Spirit today is that the gift of the Holy Spirit is not to be identified with the miraculous powers, but is an inner power of righteousness received by all believers at baptism. It is not sufficient simply to assimilate in the mind the Word of God, and allow the Word to do its work in our lives, which alone produces righteousness by obedience to its commands. Rather, in addition to the Word, God sends His Holy Spirit into the life of the believer to strengthen him against temptation and help him to overcome his sin. This Holy Spirit or Comforter, which gives strength and courage cannot be explained, but its working can be felt within as it works the transformation of the mind. The receiving of this Holy Spirit is thus part of the process of salvation; in fact without it salvation would appear to be impossible.

It must be said that the second view is not widely held. Rather the current mainstream view is as follows:

1) The Bible was wholly given by inspiration of God.
2) The only true God is everywhere present by His Spirit.
3) The Spirit is a unity with His person in heaven.
4) Creation was effected out of God’s own underived energy.
5) The Son of God was begotten of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, and afterwards anointed with the same Spirit without measure at his baptism.
6) Being so begotten of God, and inhabited and used by God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was Emmanuel, God with us, God manifested in the flesh.
7) The only way in which God makes known His saving revelation is in His Word, and by this alone we come to knowledge of the truth.
8) It is this Word, mixed with faith in our hearts, which produces the growth of the mind of the Spirit within us.
9) Christ-like behavior is formed in us, as Paul expressed it, by the influence and effect of the Word of God at work in the believer’s life, through his understanding and conviction.
10) Those who by believing and obeying the words of “the Lord the Spirit” thus enter into the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ are “in the Spirit” and share in the “fellowship of the Spirit”.
11) The gifts and signs of the Spirit were evidences of the truth of the Gospel at the outset of its first declaration in the name of Jesus Christ.
12) Comfort is to be obtained from the continuing work of the angels as “ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation”.
13) In line with the beliefs of our earlier brethren, we affirm our belief in the continuing care of God and of our Lord Jesus, without seeking to limit or even define all the ways in which the Father fulfils His promise to be ever with His people and to be their helper.
14) The following are expressly denied:
   a) That the Holy Spirit is a person distinct from the Father.
b) That a man must receive and possess direct from God the power of the Holy Spirit to hold fast to the faith once it has been espoused.

c) We reject all expositions which rest squarely on the doctrine of the Trinity where God the Holy Ghost is the Comforter.

This neatly summarizes the vast amount of literature in our community on the subject. Note in particular item (13) above. It is impossible to fully define the way the Holy Spirit operates in believers today, but we acknowledge it is only through the grace of God, and the gift of His son, we have the hope of salvation. We know our prayers are answered, but we cannot always know how.

Conclusion

The Spirit of God is that almighty power by which He:

• Created the heavens and the earth.
• Accomplished His great acts among mankind.
• Has granted powers to chosen individuals to demonstrate their authority in His service, in ways we do not always understand.
• Knows all things, even in the lives of individuals.

The Bible portrait of God as “Spirit” has immense implications for us in our daily living. Of what use is it to profess to worship God who is Spirit, and yet to manifest a spirit that owes more to the desires of our own nature in self-indulgence, covetousness and pride than it does to the true Spirit of God.

“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast” (Psa 139:7-10).

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

Notes:
1. The Section is derived from “The Holy Spirit” By Bro. Harry Tennant. Available on-line or as a pamphlet from the Christadelphian Office.
2. Based on the Leaflet by Bro. AD Norris “The Holy Spirit And The Believer Today” and one of the same title by Bro. John Allfree
Bible Lands: Ready-to-use map activities

Most Bibles come with a set of maps, but how much do we use them? They’re tucked away enough to be forgotten, yet they are full of things waiting to be discovered. Here are a few activities to help your students discover how maps can enrich their understanding of the Bible.

Activity 1 – Around the Sea of Galilee.
1) Locate the Sea of Galilee on the map.
2) What is the size of the Sea of Galilee from north to south? From west to east?
3) How far is the Sea of Galilee from the Mediterranean coast?
4) How far is the Sea of Galilee from the north end of the Dead Sea?
5) What is the elevation of the Sea of Galilee relative to sea level?
6) What is the elevation of the Dead Sea?
7) What river feeds into and out of the Sea of Galilee? Label it on the map. Which way does this river flow?
8) Matt 4:18. What does the Sea of Galilee have that the Dead Sea does not have? Why?
9) How many different names does the Sea of Galilee have in the Bible? What is the earliest name? A Bible dictionary can help here.
10) What tribes of Israel received their inheritance on the west side of the Sea of Galilee?
12) What are the names of the cities that were located around the Sea of Galilee during the ministry of Jesus? Place them on the map.

Supplemental activity. Read about the Sea of Galilee in a Bible dictionary. How does the information in the dictionary relate to the geography of the region?
Activity 2 – Israel’s enemies in the days of the Judges.
1) List the nations that oppressed Israel during the time of the Judges. See Jdgs 3:8; Jdgs 3:12-13; Jdgs 3:31; Jdgs 4:2; Jdgs 6:1, 33; Jdgs 10:7, and Jdgs 13:1.
2) Label Israel. Then show these nations on the map.
3) Jdgs 2:14. How is the geographic location of these nations described in relation to Israel?

Activity 3 – Where David and his men took refuge.
1) List the places that David went when he was fleeing from King Saul. See 1Sam 21:1,10; 22:1,3-4,5; 23:5,14,24,29; 25:1-2. Cp. 1Sam 26:1-3; 27:2,5-6, and 2Sam 2:1.
2) Locate these on the map.
3) Estimate the distance that David and his men traveled as they tried to stay a step ahead of Saul. How long would it take you to walk this distance?
4) What was the terrain like in the places where David stayed? Look at a topographical map. Also look for clues in the Bible passages.
5) What difficulties would you face if you had to be constantly on the move like this?

Activity 4 – Bible details come to life.
1) “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho” (Luke 10:30).
   a) How far is it from Jerusalem to Jericho?
   b) What is the elevation of Jerusalem?
   c) What is the elevation of Jericho?
   d) How much does the land drop for the traveler who goes down from Jerusalem to Jericho?
2) “The Jews’ Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem” (John 2:13).
   a) Why does the Bible consistently speak of going up to Jerusalem? What geographical fact is reflected in this expression?
   b) Use a concordance or search device and find other passages that speak of going up to Jerusalem.
   c) What spiritual lessons can be drawn from the idea of going up to Jerusalem?
3) “But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive. And running under a certain island which is called Claudia (Cauda),
we had much work to come by the boat: Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven” (Acts 27:14-17).

a) Read Acts 27:14 in the RSV, NIV, or ESV. What is another name for Euroclydon? Which way does the wind blow in this kind of storm? (Hint. Winds are named for the direction they come from.)

b) Find the island of Crete on a Bible map. Locate Fair Havens (Acts 27:8); Phoenix (Acts 27:12), and Cauda (Acts 27:16).

c) Read Acts 27:17 in a modern version. Find Syrtis on a map. In what direction would Paul’s ship be driven if the wind drove it from Cauda to Syrtis? How is this consistent with the fact that the storm was a “northeaster”?

The Satellite Bible Atlas – Learning Bible Geography Online

Go to http://www.bibleplaces.com/satellite-bible-atlas-schlegel/. Scroll down to Teaching Videos and let the learning begin. The Satellite Bible Atlas site offers a menu of eleven teaching videos that run from five to 18 minutes in length. You can watch them online and they make valuable connections with the Bible. For example, the video called “Land of the Bible: Basic Regions and Regional Variety” introduces the major geographical regions of Israel. It takes ten minutes to watch and connects the geography of the land with Israel’s struggles to conquer it in the days of Joshua and the Judges. A short section on rainfall helps us understand passages like Deut 11:11 and Jer 5:24.

If your students read a modern version of the Bible, they will come across terms like Negeb (Negev) and Shephelah. The AV simply calls these areas “the south” and “the low country”. The same video shows where these places are and what they are like.

The videos are instructive in their own right or they can be used to enrich other Sunday school lessons. Here’s a suggestion: after doing the first two parts of Activity 4 above, watch the 11-minute video entitled “The Road from Jericho to Jerusalem.” You will travel the road with your students and Bible details will indeed come to life. The videos are young-people friendly. I think you will enjoy using them.

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Jonathan the Faithful Prince
(21) Pleading for a Friend

When we left the story of Jonathan and David, we saw the two of them in the field, with Jonathan again pleading for David’s life before his father. In this article, we will see that tragically, Jonathan’s attempt wasn’t quite as successful as it had been earlier (1Sam 19:1-6).

The feast

It was the feast of the new moon. It was time to put the plan into action. Thus, David hid out in the field, and Jonathan returned home, awaiting the beginning of the feast. When that time came, Saul prepared himself and took a seat:

“And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul’s side, and David’s place was empty” (1Sam 20:25).

It was time for the feast to begin and time for all of those who were going to have the privilege of eating at the king’s table to take their seats. It would appear to have been a fairly small table — one which only had four seats, and based off of the details of Saul’s seat, it would appear to be square. Saul’s seat was the seat that allowed him to sit up against the wall — again showing the paranoia of the king. By placing his seat against the wall, he gave himself the security of knowing that it was impossible for anyone to sneak up behind him. This way, he could see everything going on around him. To each of his sides there would have also been a seat, and then there would have been one across from him.

Thus, the guests of the feast entered into the room and took their seats. Saul sat against the wall, and Jonathan at first sat next to Saul. However, something made Jonathan change his mind, so “Jonathan arose” and Abner took his place instead — Jonathan presumably then took the place across from Saul. On the king’s other side was an empty seat. This was the seat reserved for David.

Such was the setting for the feast of the new moon — a small square table, with the king’s uncle sitting next to him, his eldest son sitting across from him, and an empty spot on his other side for one of his son in laws. It was a sad testament, again, just as sitting up against the wall, to Saul’s paranoia. Unlike David and Solomon, whose tables would be filled with his sons and honored guests (2Sam 9:11; 1Kgs 2:7). Indeed, kings would generally want to have their tables filled with their family and with others who were special to them. As a contrast, Saul’s feast of the new moon was celebrated at a small square table, surrounded by his generals — only those with whom he needed to interact for the purpose of running the kingdom. All others were not invited.
This small setting would have made David’s absence extremely conspicuous. There were four seats at the table, and one of them wasn’t filled — everyone would have clearly known whose seat it was and who it was that was missing. Nevertheless, on the first day of the feast, Saul didn’t say anything about David’s empty spot at the table:

“Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean” (1Sam 20:26).

Why was David absent?

David’s empty position at the table led Saul, and likely Abner as well, to wonder why it was that he hadn’t come. Surely David knew that he was expected, and it wasn’t like to him to simply ignore an invitation from the king. Saul hadn’t been told that he wasn’t going to be able to come, thus, something must have suddenly happened to him that prevented him from being able to come on the first day. Saul’s mind immediately jumped to uncleanness — at times, this type of uncleanness could be a rather embarrassing thing that David wouldn’t have wanted to share with everyone else, especially with the king. As a result, Saul assumed, David didn’t tell anyone and waited to come to the feast the next day, when his period of uncleanness would be finished:

“If there be among you any man, that is not clean by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp, he shall not come within the camp: but it shall be, when evening cometh on, he shall wash himself with water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp again” (Deut 23:10-11).

The man who had a bodily discharge by night (cp. Lev 15:16-17) was required by God to set himself apart from the rest of the camp. He had become unclean and was not to come in contact with the rest of Israel. When the evening of the next day had come, he would then cleanse himself by washing in water and once the sun had gone down, his period of uncleanness was over and he could come into the camp once more. Perhaps this scenario crossed Saul’s mind when he said of David, “he is not clean; surely he is not clean.” It was a bit of an embarrassing type of situation, and it would be over in one day, allowing David to come to the rest of the feast. If this wasn’t specifically what Saul was considering, there were a few other scenarios under the law that would have made David unclean “until the even” as well; if he touched the dead body of an unclean animal (Lev 11:24), if he touched the dead body of a clean animal (Lev 11:39), if he stepped into a house that had been closed off due to a plague, and there were even more reasons as well. It was one of these, or perhaps any choice of these, upon which Saul’s mind settled — he decided that David must be unclean, and he would present himself at the feast the next day.

Therefore, when the next day came, and David’s seat was empty once again, Saul knew that his assumption had been wrong — David couldn’t have missed the feast because of uncleanness, since that only lasted for one day. Now he knew that David was absent for some other reason, and he wanted to know what it was. Would his attempt to kill David be foiled again? If David didn’t come to the
feast, he would have missed another opportunity to capture his enemy — all of David’s narrow escapes were beginning to get frustrating! Turning to Jonathan, whom he knew had a strong friendship with the young shepherd, Saul asked him where David was:

“And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month, that David’s place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day?” (1Sam 20:27).

It would have appeared to have been an innocent question — as far as Saul knew, Jonathan still believed that he was going to keep his oath and spare David’s life. On top of that, David’s open seat truly was quite conspicuous, and it would have seemed fairly natural for the king to wonder why it was that David was absent. Jonathan’s answer to the question, however, soon revealed Saul’s true intention. No matter how innocently the question had been asked, Saul’s murderous hatred was still alive and well:

“And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem: and he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there: and now, if I have found favor in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king’s table” (1Sam 20:28-29).

Jonathan spoke almost the exact same words to his father that David had originally rehearsed to him — but there were a few major changes:

- David had originally told Jonathan to tell his father that it was a “yearly sacrifice” to which David had gone (1Sam 20:5). Jonathan instead changed the event to a “sacrifice.”
- David originally made it sound as though the desire for him to be at the sacrifice came from him (1Sam 20:5). Jonathan changed the reason for David going to the sacrifice; it wasn’t simply because he desired to be there, but because his brother had “commanded” him to be there!
- Jonathan used a very different word to describe David’s journey up to Bethlehem. David originally said that he wanted to “run to Bethlehem his city.” Jonathan changed the word and instead of saying “run to Bethlehem,” Jonathan said “let me get away” — and this word, Strong’s H4422, is most often translated as “escape”!

Jonathan’s changes to David’s words could have perhaps simply been his version of relaying what David had said — he might not have consciously changed what David had originally spoken to him. However, some of these changes seem fairly blatant — and Jonathan always seemed to be careful about his choice of words (cp. 1Sam 19:4-5). Where did Jonathan develop this idea of David’s brother commanding him to be at the sacrifice — David said nothing of the sort to him?!

As well, Jonathan’s word choice of “escape” is almost a loaded word; David had been fleeing from Saul for the past few days, surely the word “escape” wasn’t a lackadaisical choice. Rather, all of these changes would seem to indicate that Jonathan had carefully chosen his words about David’s absence for the purpose
of giving an excuse that would have seemed entirely unjustified to his father! Essentially, Jonathan took the framework of David’s words, and added to them, specifically so that what he said would have the effect of provoking his father and forcing him to drop his “innocence” and show his true intentions. Just consider the weakness that Jonathan’s changes added to David’s excuse:

- No longer was David going to his family’s house to celebrate a “yearly sacrifice,” which would have seemed to be fairly important to the tradition of the family. Instead, Jonathan made the reason for David’s absence less important by merely saying that it was a “sacrifice.”
- Jonathan said that David had been commanded by his brother to be at the sacrifice — who was his brother to command David, the son in law to the king, to leave the king’s table and come home? That would be completely unacceptable!
- Because David had “escaped” from Saul’s last few attempts to take his life, again, this word would have triggered Saul’s anger — when Jonathan said that David asked to “escape,” Saul would have become furious, realizing that he had escaped from his grasp once again!

Truly, it would appear as though Jonathan had purposefully added to what David had told him to say, just so that he could really see if his father had kept his promise about David. Jonathan specifically weakened David’s excuse and added the word “escape” — just to see if Saul would react or if his calmness would continue.

Jonathan’s calculated response did exactly what it was meant to do. When Saul heard Jonathan’s words, he could no longer feign innocence. His true motives and intentions violently came forth.

**Saul’s wrath**

“Then Saul’s anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother’s nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die” (1Sam 20:30-31).

Hearing Jonathan’s response, Saul’s cool composure gave way to that of a mad man — looking straight at his firstborn across the table, Saul shouted out insults about Jonathan and his mother. Jonathan had forsaken him, he knew that — and how it must have pained Jonathan to hear that accusation, considering his loyalty to his father all throughout the record. Yet Saul’s anger was uncontrollable, and in his response his true intentions were clearly shown. David needed to die because he was the one of whom Samuel had prophesied. He was the king who would be captain over God’s people and who had a heart like God’s (1Sam 13:14). As long as he lived, Saul’s kingdom would be threatened and Jonathan’s would never exist — such was Saul’s vain appeal to his son. Nevertheless, with that as his reasoning, Saul commanded Jonathan to send to Bethlehem and call David back — because David’s fate was sealed.
It was the first time that Saul’s reason for wanting to kill David was put out into the open. Ironically, this revelation first proceeded from his lips at the feast of the new moon — a time of renewal and of rekindling faith. Instead, Saul revealed his resolute hatred of David and his determination to do whatever he needed to do in order to stand against the will of God. Samuel had proclaimed that David would be the next king. Saul knew it, and he was prepared to stand against it. Such was the hypocrisy of this man — at the very time that he should have been thinking on God’s glory and greatness, his mind was on nothing but his own kingdom and his own honor. But Jonathan didn’t think like his father. For him, the kingdom had already been given to David — he had given the young man his robe and his armor and his bow! He had just made a covenant with David and that covenant revolved around David’s future kingship! In Jonathan’s eyes, Saul’s reason for David’s death was ridiculous — and so it was that Jonathan pushed his father further. Never mind the fact that he would be the future king, that was by God’s appointment — Jonathan wanted his father to tell him what David had actually done that was worthy of death? Just as he had said to his father in the field, was not David a loyal servant of the king?

“And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?” (1Sam 20:32).

With this response from Jonathan, Saul’s anger exploded even further. If his son would foolishly give up his kingdom to the son of Jesse, if he would continue to ally himself with the king’s enemy, and if he would continue to argue with his father, then Saul would end his disrespect and dishonor at that very moment! Grabbing his javelin, which was no doubt ready to take the life of David, Saul hurled the weapon across the table at his son:

“And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame” (1Sam 20:33-34)

With that, Jonathan knew that Saul’s oath had been broken. The murderous streak had come back, and David’s life was no longer safe. Filled with a righteous anger, Jonathan left the javelin on the floor beside him and arose from the table. With Saul fuming at one end of the table and his son standing at the other end, Jonathan dismissed himself — knowing that this was a situation in which he was better not to stay. For the rest of the day he ate nothing, mourning over the shameful things that his father had said about his friend. Beautifully, that was the depth of Jonathan’s anger towards Saul; he wasn’t concerned about the insults that his father had said about him and about his loyalties — he was concerned for David and his own reputation. Oh that we too could learn to think like Jonathan — to learn to think of others above ourselves and to esteem their needs above our own (Phil 2:4)! Truly and so often, he demonstrated the way to have this selfless attitude and the way to serve our brethren.

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Who is Jesus’ Beloved Disciple? (2)

Confusion over whether the Beloved Disciple would die (John 21:20-23)

“When Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved <25 agapao> following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” (John 21:20-23).

When this was written, the Beloved Disciple must have already fallen asleep. This episode explains that his death did not contradict Jesus’ prediction about him. This confusion is far more likely if the Beloved Disciple is Lazarus rather than John Z.

Jesus prophesied that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, would be executed:

“Jesus said unto [James and John, the sons of Zebedee, v35], Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized” (Mark 10:38-39).

We know that for James Zebedee this meant an early death at the hands of Herod:

“Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword” (Acts 12:1-2). There is a tradition that his brother John Zebedee was also martyred early:

“Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, a disciple of John the theologian, and friend of Polycarp, wrote The Lord’s Gospel in five books... Papias says in the second book that John the Evangelist and his brother James were slain by the Jews [cf. Mark 10:39]” (Philip of Side, Christian History).

Witherington writes,

“Papias Fragment 10.17 has now been subjected to detailed analysis by M. Oberweis (NovT 38, 1996) and Oberweis, rightly in my judgment, draws the conclusion that Papias claimed that John son of Zebedee died early as a martyr like his brother (Acts 12:2). This counts against both the theory that John of Patmos was John of Zebedee and the theory that the latter wrote the Fourth Gospel... we should take very seriously what Papias says. He knew what he was talking about in regard to both the earliest and latest of the Gospels.”
The suggestion that John Z lived to old age likely resulted from confusing John Z with John the Elder (2John 1; 3John 1), who were in fact two different people (see below).

In contrast, Lazarus had been raised from the dead. If brethren had been confused to think someone would live till Christ’s return, then surely Lazarus would have been the natural candidate for such confusion, especially given the words of Jesus to Martha:

“Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:21-26).

Of course, this saying applies generally, and concerns eternal life in the kingdom after Christ’s return, but one could see how it might be misunderstood to imply that Lazarus in particular wouldn’t die again.

The eyewitness source of the gospel (John 21:24)

“This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true” (John 21:24).

The first person (“we”) is used to refer to the author and his community, and the third person (“his”) is used to refer to the eyewitness source. This latter practice corresponds to the earlier declaration: “And he that saw [the crucifixion] bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe” (John 19:35). By using third person pronouns (“he that saw… his record… he knoweth that he saith… his testimony…”), rather than first person pronouns (“I saw… my record… I knoweth that I saith… my testimony…”), the author of the gospel distinguishes himself from the Beloved Disciple, who is his eyewitness source for much of the information in the gospel. From John 21:24, we also learn that the Beloved Disciple provided a written record of his testimony, which was incorporated in the gospel we have now.

It is unlikely that John Zebedee was the eyewitness source behind the fourth gospel. There are ten special episodes involving John Z in the synoptic gospels.

1. Calling of the first disciples (Mark 1:19-20; Matt 4:21-22).
2. Healing of Peter’s mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-34).
7. Request to sit on right and left sides (Mark 10:35-41).
8. Olivet prophecy (Mark 13:3-37).
10. Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42; Matt 26:36-46).

None of these ten events is included in the gospel according to John. These omissions are difficult (impossible?) to explain if John Z is the eyewitness behind the fourth gospel.

The details in item (1) above, in which John Z is one of the first four disciples called, contrast with John 1 in which John Z is not mentioned. Although some commentators suggest that he is the unnamed disciple, there are reasons to think instead that this is Philip, who Jesus finds in John 1:43 (cf. the same verb “find” in John 5:14; 9:35; in both of these situations Jesus finds someone he had recently been interacting with). Philip and Andrew are connected with each other again in John 12:22 (see also John 6:5-9). In this case, John Z is not mentioned in the fourth gospel until John 21:2. That Lazarus would have witnessed these events is likely because they took place in his hometown of Bethany (John 1:28).

In general, the episodes recorded in this gospel make sense if Lazarus is the eyewitness. For example, in contrast to the synoptic gospels, which focus on Jesus’ ministry in Galilee, the fourth gospel pays much more attention to his activities in and around Jerusalem (John 1; 9; 11), especially during the feasts (John 2:13-4:3 Passover; John 5 a feast of the Jews; John 7-8 Tabernacles; John 10 Dedication; John 12-20 Passover). Only four chapters (John 2; 4; 6; 21) recount events in Galilee. This focus on Jerusalem and the feasts is understandable if Lazarus is the eyewitness source for the gospel: Lazarus lived in Bethany, less than two miles from Jerusalem (John 11:18). Conversely, this focus is odd if the eyewitness is John Zebedee, who was a fisherman from Galilee.

Jim Harper observes:

“The gospel of eternal life: John’s gospel is the gospel of eternal life; eternal life first given by God to Jesus and then made accessible to us through him. The language that John uses compared with the other gospel writers underscores this fact:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“eternal life” / “everlasting life”</th>
<th>“Life” (implying “eternal life”)</th>
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<td>Matthew</td>
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“Given John’s emphasis on eternal life through Jesus Christ, it is entirely fitting that he begins his gospel by declaring that eternal life with God was first ordained for Christ. And it is this that gives Christ his due preeminence throughout John’s Gospel”

(“In the Beginning was the Word,” The Tidings, Dec 2012, p. 566)
Lazarus had personally experienced being raised back to life, which, if he is indeed the Beloved Disciple, would explain this emphasis on “eternal life” (cf. John 1:4; 3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 26, 29, 40; 6:27, 33, 35, 40, 47, 48, 51, 53, 54, 63, 68; 8:12; 10:10, 28; 11:25, 50; 14:6; 17:2-3; 20:30-31).

Filson writes:

“The first readers... as soon as they discerned that Lazarus was the Beloved Disciple, saw a real unity in the Gospel. His resurrection, the climactic act of Jesus’ public ministry, fixed attention upon the beloved and favored person who then is present at the anointing of Jesus and a few days later is naturally present at the Last Supper. Moreover, there is no lack of fitness in this prominence of Lazarus. What is the theme of the Gospel? It is life, eternal life, given through Christ the Son of God to those who believe in him. The resurrection of Lazarus stands at the climax of the public ministry as the supreme illustration of the fact that Jesus is ‘the resurrection and the life.’ As Jesus gave life to Lazarus, so in a deeper sense he will give to all who believe in him the divine gift of eternal life. He who is ‘the resurrection and the life,’ who came to give life and give it abundantly (10:10), concludes his public action and ministry by raising Lazarus from the dead. It is but natural that this disciple, in who this life-giving work of Christ has been supremely illustrated and symbolized, should be present at the anointing, at the Last Supper, and so at the final teaching concerning the nature of that life. It is but natural that he should be at the Cross as the disciple who through the gift of life which he has received is peculiarly able to understand the meaning of the work of Jesus. It is especially fitting that he should be the one who first senses the fact of the resurrection of Christ. Lazarus is the one figure who ties together the public ministry, the Last Supper, the Cross, and the empty tomb, and so gives the Gospel a structural unity which scholars have often failed to find.”

Likewise, Stibbe writes:

“Many of the gospel’s puzzles are solved if we see the BD [Beloved Disciple] as Lazarus. The distinctive theme of ‘life’ (zoe) in John’s story is but one example. If the eye-witness authority behind the fourth gospel is a man who has been raised to new life, then it is not hard to infer that his theological reflection on that experience greatly influenced the character and the emphases of the gospel.”

Summary

The evidence is overwhelming — Lazarus is much more likely to have been Jesus’ Beloved Disciple than the apostle John, the son of Zebedee.

Lazarus represents an ideal disciple, following the example of Jesus

Having shown the likelihood that Lazarus is the Beloved Disciple, we can now identify at least seven ways in which Lazarus mirrors Jesus:
2. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (John 11) as God raises Jesus from the dead (John 20-21), in both cases leaving their burial “napkins” behind (John 11:44; 20:7).
3. The people of the Jews come to see Lazarus (John 12:9, 17-18) as well as Jesus (John 12:9, 12-16, 19).
5. Lazarus is in the bosom of Jesus (John 13:23) as Jesus is in the bosom of God (John 1:18).
6. Lazarus remains at Jesus’ side throughout the rest of the gospel (John 12-21).

With respect to item (6), Griffith writes:

“In his article ‘Lazarus’ in the Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, Dr. David Smith says: ‘It might be expected that Lazarus of all men should have stood by Jesus during the last dread ordeal, but he never appears after the banquet in Simon’s house. His name is nowhere mentioned in the story of the Lord’s Passion. What is the explanation? Enraged by the impression which the miracle made, and the support it brought to Jesus, the High Priests plotted the death of Lazarus (John 12:10-11), and it is probable that ere the final crisis he had been compelled to withdraw from the vicinity of Jerusalem.’ If the above conjecture [i.e., that Lazarus is the Beloved Disciple] be correct, that stigma is removed from the character of Lazarus. He did not leave Jesus, he did not forsake Him. He was with Him to the end, with Him at the trial, with Him at the Cross, and was early at the tomb. It is to his house that Mary goes, to his house that Peter, having denied his Lord, returns to be ‘healed of his wounds,’ and to be preserved for the Church and the Kingdom.”

With respect to item (7), the concept of a lawsuit is a major motif of the fourth gospel. Throughout, Jesus is on trial: is he a false prophet or not? On the other hand, all who hear Jesus are themselves being judged too: will they believe him and receive eternal life, or will they reject him and be condemned (e.g., John 3:16-21, 36; 5:19-47)?

There are seven witnesses called to testify in the trial of Jesus:

3. The woman of Samaria (John 4:39).
4. The works of Jesus (John 5:36; 10:25).
5. The Father (John 5:37-38).
7. The people who witnessed Jesus’ raising of Lazarus (John 12:17).

In addition to these seven witnesses, Jesus exhorts his disciples that the Spirit of truth, whom he would send to them from the Father, would testify of him (John 15:26; 1John 5:6, 8-11; cf. John 14:16-17, 26; 16:7, 14). The disciples themselves would also bear witness (John 15:27), the Beloved Disciple (Lazarus as shown above), being the premier example (John 19:35; 21:24).

Final Note: Who wrote “the gospel according to John”?

So if Lazarus is the Beloved Disciple, why then is the book labelled “the gospel according to John”? The simple answer is because the author was John the Elder, of Ephesus. The name “John” was common during the first centuries in Palestine; for example, the Bible refers to John the Baptist (many times), John Zebedee (many times), John Mark (Acts 12:12, 24; 15:37; etc.), John the high priest (Acts 4:6), and John the seer (Rev 1:1, 4, 9; 21:2, 8).

Two of the three epistles of John are said to have been written by “the elder <presbuteros>”: “The elder unto the elect lady and he children...” (2John 1); “The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius...” (3John 1). This designation is important because Papias distinguishes between two Johns, John the Apostle and John the Elder.

Eusebius reports:

“Papias has left us five volumes entitled The Sayings of the Lord Explained... Papias himself in the preface to his work makes it clear that he was never a hearer or eyewitness of the holy apostles, and tells us that he learnt the essentials of the Faith from their pupils:

‘I shall not hesitate to furnish you, along with the interpretations, with all that in days gone by I carefully learnt from the presbyters and have carefully recalled, for I can guarantee its truth. Unlike most people, I felt at home not with those who had a great deal to say, but with those who taught the truth; not with those who appeal to commandments from other sources but with those who appeal to the commandments given by the Lord to faith and coming to us from truth itself. And whenever anyone came who had been a follower of the presbyters, I inquired into the words of the presbyters, what Andrew or Peter had said, or Philip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew, or any other disciple of the Lord, and what Aristion and the presbyter [i.e., the elder] John, disciples of the Lord, were still saying. For I did not imagine that things out of books would help me as much as the utterances of a living and abiding voice.’

“Here it should be observed that he twice includes the name of John. The first John he puts in the same list as Peter, James, Matthew, and the rest of the apostles, obviously with the evangelist in mind; the second, with a changed expression, he places in a second group outside the number
of the apostles, giving precedence to Aristion and clearly calling John a 

presbyter. He thus confirms the truth of the story that two men in Asia 

had the same name, and that there were two tombs in Ephesus, each of 

which is still called John’s. This is highly significant, for it is likely that 

the second—if we cannot accept the first—saw the Revelation that bears 

the name of John”

*(History of the Church, Book III, 39, highlighting and underlining added)*

As Eusebius underscores, Papias mentions two Johns, and the second of these, 

John the Elder, is not among the apostles. It was not John Zebedee the Apostle 

who wrote the Gospel of John; it was John the Elder. Based on this evidence, 

Eller writes:

“The epistles of 2 John and 3 John each open with the writer’s identifying 

himself as ‘the Elder’… it does not seem too incautious a move to suggest 

that ‘the Elder’ of 2 & 3 John is tradition’s ‘John the Elder’ and is the 

Writer of the Gospel, though not the Beloved Disciple who is its Source.”

The testimony of Papias is very early (c. 95-120 AD). It wasn’t till a generation 

later (c. 180 AD) that Irenaeus, in his arguments against the Gnostics,** conflated 

these two Johns and the Beloved Disciple, “Afterwards, John, the disciple of the 

Lord, who also had leaned upon his breast, did himself publish a Gospel during 

his residence in Ephesus in Asia.”*** Such conflations are not uncommon; for 

example, quoting Polycrates, Eusebius conflates Philip the Apostle and Philip 

the Deacon: “Among these are Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who sleeps 

in Hierapolis, and his two aged virgin daughters, and another daughter who 

lived in the Holy Spirit and now rests at Ephesus” (*Church History*, 3.31.3). It 

was Philip the Deacon who had virgin daughters and was buried in Hierapolis. 

Furthermore, Irenaeus had an ulterior motive for attributing the fourth gospel 

to John the Apostle — he was trying to stave off Gnostic attacks, and he was 

confident that apostolic authority would do the trick.

John the Elder’s primary source and authority for his gospel was the (written) 

eyewitness testimony of Jesus’ Beloved Disciple Lazarus. So, “Lazarus is to John 

what Peter (it is argued) was to Mark.”****

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<th>Eyewitness/Source</th>
<th>The Gospel of John</th>
<th>The Gospel of Mark</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author/Writer</td>
<td>John the Elder</td>
<td>Mark</td>
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Distinguishing between the writer and the source solves a problem with the 
title “the Beloved Disciple”, which would be presumptuous if used of oneself; but 
not if used of you by others. Lazarus did not call himself the Beloved Disciple; 
rather, that was what others called him, like his sisters Mary and Martha, Jesus 
himself, and consequently the author of the fourth gospel, John the Elder, and 
his ecclesia in Ephesus. Eller reasons:
“If the Writer was a close colleague and follower of the Source, it is quite understandable that he would refer to his master by using the honorific title ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved.’ If, however, the Writer was the same person as the Source (was himself the Beloved Disciple), it is hard to believe that he would be so presumptuous as to write a document identifying himself, against all others, as ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved.’ ”

The distinction between the author and his source also solves another oddity. The fourth Gospel is filled with details of Judean geography and Jewish religious traditions. On the other hand, there are many examples of simple Aramaic/Hebrew names being translated. Now we are able to provide a reasonable explanation for this incongruity. All the local details come from Lazarus of Bethany and the explanations come from John the Elder of Ephesus, whose gospel was aimed at Greek-speaking people in Asia Minor.

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, Texas)

Notes:
3. For a serious study, see Pierson Parker, “Bethany Beyond Jordan,” Journal of Biblical Literature, pp. 257-261. Parker summarizes his results: “A correct paraphrase of John 1:28 would be: These things took place in Bethany, which is across from the point of the Jordan where John had been baptizing” (p. 258, emphasis in the original). See RV, RSV, NRSV, NASB, NIV, ESV, NET, Phillips, and many others except KJV, NKJV, and YLT.
9. Gnosticism comes from the Greek word “gnosis” meaning “knowledge.” The Gnostics were a collection of Christian sects who believed that salvation required a kind of enlightenment that only they possessed. This special knowledge pertained, among other things, to elaborate definitions of the Godhead including emanations associated with His various character traits (cf. “genealogies” in 1Tim 1:4; Titus 3:9). These emanations corresponded to hierarchical classes of angels who acted as intermediaries between God and man (ct. 1Tim 2:5). Jewish Christian Gnostics combined these ideas with the traditions of the Jewish elders, teaching these as if they were commandments from God (cf. Mark 7:7-8; Col 2:2, 8; Titus 1:14).
10. Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book III, Chapter I, Paragraph 1.

E.g., Geography: Bethesda (John 5:2); Siloam (John 9:7, 11); Cedron (John 18:1); Gabbatha
(John 19:13); Golgotha (John 19:17); etc. Jewish religion: “waterpots of stone, after the manner of the Jews” (John 2:6); animosity between Jews and Samaritans (John 4:9, 7; 8:28); manna haggada (John 6:1-59); circumcision takes priority over the Sabbath (John 7:22); circumcision goes back to the fathers (John 7:22; cf. Gen 17); Sadducee chief priests versus Pharisees (John 7:47-49); Passover (John 2:12, 23; 6:4; 11:55-56; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 39; 19:14, 31-37; cf. Exod 12:46; Num 9:12; Psa 34:20); Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2); the last day, that great day of the feast (John 7:37); Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) in the winter (John 10:22; see 1Macc 4:56, 59, 54, 57; 5:1; 2Macc 10:1-8; cf. 1:9).

14. E.g., Rabbi = Master (1:38; 20:16); Messiah = Christ (1:41); Cephas = Stone (1:42); Siloam = Sent (9:7).

The New Testament Church

(9) Church Organization

This article continues discussing Church Organization, by surveying the evidence in the New Testament.

A more organized basis

So clearly, after the initial start in Jerusalem and Judea, there has been a change. The Gentile churches that had sprung up, including the Corinthian church, were not selling up everything now; they were not bringing all their goods and possessions and giving them to the apostles. They had passed through the stage when the apostles had delegated organizational matters to the seven brethren in Acts 6, and now we have got an organized ecclesial life. So, necessity having arisen among the saints in Jerusalem, Paul urges the ecclesias in Achaia to “lay by them in store as God hath prospered them.” If they have been well blessed with this world’s goods, then he expects that they will give largely of God’s bounty to this collection.

But there is a difference here, and the contributions of the Christians are on a more organized basis. Now we have got ecclesias meeting together on the first day of the week, presumably for the Lord’s remembrance, and the collection being taken up. They are to lay it by so that later the apostle will take it to Jerusalem. By this time, too, it seems as though the financial administration of the ecclesias is in the hands of the “elders,” or the arranging brethren, who have become responsible for the disbursements of the ecclesial funds. So we read in Acts 11.29: “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”

So here in the church at Jerusalem, where originally the apostles had been the ones to whom everybody had brought their gifts of what they possessed, and where later the apostles arranged for the appointment of the seven who would do the distribution, it is the “elders” of the church, who appear to have charge of the distribution, and see that it is fairly distributed among the needy. There is also a rather curious verse, when we are thinking of the ecclesial disbursements for the relief of the needy. I think it must refer to some kind of ecclesial roll on which the widows who were unable to be maintained by their families were placed for ecclesial support.
“Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth” (1Tim 5.3).

And then it goes on to say (verse 9): “Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, well reported of for good works” etc.

Now on the face of it, it seems as though widows were not to become members of the church until they were threescore years old, but it cannot mean that. Most of the modern commentators and translations, in fact, seem to agree on this, that it was some kind of ecclesial roll on which the names of those were placed who needed ecclesial support, when it became clear that their own relatives were no longer able to maintain them. But it does, of course, emphasize again a change in the administration of the affairs of the ecclesia, because the duty of relief now becomes a private responsibility where possible.

It is the duty of every brother and sister, the apostle says, to look after his own if he can. If he cannot, then the ecclesia will care for them. And that seems to be the way in which the later church became organized. And we see in this alone, I think, a development in ecclesial organization. The evolution, if you like, of a policy to fit the changing circumstances. As the church grew and the Gentile ecclesias grew up all over Europe, it became necessary that things should be put on a more orderly basis, and the somewhat looseness of Acts chapters 2 and 4 gives place to an organized relief which is clearly administered by the elders of the church, and the duties of individual members are made quite clear.

I make this point to emphasize another — do not think that every change must be for the worse: You know there are some brethren who as soon as anything is suggested should be done differently, perhaps to meet different circumstances, cry out, “It is not the way our forefathers or great-grandfathers did it, and it must be wrong if it is a change.” Some brethren would say, any kind of organization must be wrong, simply because it is organized. As long as it is disorganized, a rag tag and bobtail affair, it is all right, but if you are going to start organizing it, it is wrong! What we have to take cognizance of is the fact that as the church grew, even in New Testament times, and as the ecclesias developed, so the organization had to change, with it. It has to be adapted to meet the changing circumstances.

Rich and poor

Our mental image of the New Testament church is often a confused one. We tend to think that they were all poor and servile, and possibly as being mainly slaves. For Paul did say “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the things that are mighty and the poor of this world to confound the rich,”
(1Cor 1:26). But the very fact that Paul says this, implies that there were some who were poor, — not many, but some. And there were, of course, in the New Testament church, those who were influential; and there were those who were rich; and there were those who were masters as well as those who were slaves.

We have quite a number of examples in the New Testament of men who were clearly wealthy and influential, having large houses and households, including slaves of their own, although it is still true that the majority would appear to have come from the lower end of society. As we have been told: “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

**Priests**

Even among the priests, during the ministry of Jesus, there were those who believed in him, those that in their hearts, like Nicodemus, felt that this man was the son of God, the Messiah, but would not confess him openly. They were afraid, justifiably; and their influential friends perhaps held them back. They thought, “What would the Sanhedrin say if I declared myself a Jesus man?” But when the resurrection took place, when the preaching of the gospel went out to them, then they were ready to receive it.

Now I do not mean that priests in those days were necessarily wealthy, but they were certainly influential; they were certainly important people in the nation of Israel; and a great company of the priests, it says, were obedient to the faith. You remember in Paul’s letter to Timothy, he clearly has in mind men who were well off, as we would say, in this world’s goods. “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate” (1Tim 6.17). Communicate here has the sense of sharing their good things, their blessings, with other less fortunate brethren.

So here we have again a picture of well-to-do men in the church who were being exhorted to share their riches with others. And, of course, the corollary of this, in Paul’s teaching, is that it does not just apply to the rich, or powerful, or influential; they have this responsibility, truly, but it was the obligation of all Christians, in Paul’s book, to be “rich in good works.” So he writes: “And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful” (Titus 3:14). Paul is saying that there were some, as always in the early church, who one might say were Paul’s men, and others who were against him. He had his enemies in every church; but what he is saying is, our own folk, those who say they are Paul’s men, if they really are on my side, must remember to maintain good works, for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful. In a similar passage we have the same injunction from the Apostle: “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:10).

*Len Richardson*
Preparation for the Kingdom in the Last Days
Jamaica

The annual Heroes Day Fraternal was held at the May Pen Ecclesial Hall on Monday October 19th. Approximately 90 were in attendance from ecclesias across the Island to listen to practical and uplifting addresses, and participate in discussion groups led by Jamaican brothers — Patrick Johnson, Leecroft Blair, Marlon Jackson and Onel Brown. Brother Leroy Johnson presided and Brother Keith Kinlocke gave the word of exhortation in the afternoon for the Memorial Service. With today’s ever-changing and exciting world events, the theme for the day was ‘Preparing for the Kingdom in the Last Days’.

We were encouraged to not be confused, anxious or rushed by today’s busy world. We must be still and see the salvation of the Lord, and be guided by the spirit in everyday situations — always trusting in the Lord! Patience is sometimes bitter, but the fruit is sweet — therefore patience is the engine that sustains our spirit. This is the time to give God the glory and to praise His Holy Name, for all His precious promises. It is the time to be content with what we have, as we wait in anticipation for our Lord, and not be confused with this world’s ‘get-rich-quick’ materialistic ways. We must be in a state of constant prayer, in order to keep our mind and body in the way of the Lord. Daily Bible reading and study is necessary to help us develop the mind of the Lord.

We were exhorted to be eager about what we have learned during the day. That for us as Christadelphians, it is important for Christ to come back! Our brothers and sisters who have fallen asleep in the Lord, will be raised! In particular, we think of the sisters in Jamaica who have passed away in 2015 — we will see them again — that is our hope and confidence! Our longed-for reward is eternal life!
We must keep a ‘fervent watch’ — a watchman should not be found sleeping, for we are children of the day, and should not allow the evils of the world from which we were separated to be part of us again. God’s prophetic word is being fulfilled before our very eyes each day! We are therefore watching and patiently waiting for the glorious time to be revealed at our Lord’s Return! May we all be found awake and alert in His presence.

_A summary of thoughts from Gerzel Gordon (May Pen, Jamaica)_
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

**Guatemala Baptism**

The mornings that we have spent in Guatemala are always wonderful — the sky is a bright blue, the temperature a comfortable 22 degrees C and there is often a lovely breeze. But this particular morning on December 6, 2015, was even more delightful as the brethren were once again preparing the baptismal pool. In the mission field many events call for improvisation and a baptism is no different. We have seen many variations throughout the years, but a bright blue inflatable children’s pool with drawings of sharks has to be one of my favorites. Bro. Jorge, a stalwart of the ecclesia for more than 12 years was filling the pool with water and commented that “the sharks would devour” all the sins of our soon to be sister Victoria. The water was still freezing cold — a coffee pot of boiling water seemed to do little to improve the situation, but Victoria entered the water with a huge smile on her face.

Victoria has been attending the small ecclesia with only five active members for more than three years. There have been several baptisms in the last few years, but this one had special meaning for all that were present. The added excitement lay in the fact that she became the first second generation Christadelphian in the Guatemalan ecclesia. Already we have seen the benefits to an ecclesia when a family finds the truth. Her parents, Bro. Victor and Sis. Marina first attended the ecclesia about five years ago. They were members of a Catholic church, active with the Catholic youth group and organizers of weekend marriage seminars. But once Bro. Victor started taking a Bible correspondence course he soon learned that most of his beliefs and teachings were contrary to the Bible. He embraced the truth and
slowly convinced his wife, Sis. Marina to leave behind their large congregation with its multitude of activities and friends to meet in a small rented house with three middle aged brethren, because they held to Bible Truth.

As morning turned to afternoon, we enjoyed an invigorating day with our new sister and her family — both natural and spiritual! Following Victoria’s first memorial service as a sister in Christ, we enjoyed that sweet fellowship that is spoken of in Acts chapter two — spending a day in one accord, enjoying the study of the word accompanied with prayer and joyous conversation. Despite being few in number, certainly less than the 3,000 that celebrated on that day of Pentecost in the first century, it was commented how similar the joy was in heaven that day!

The next morning we woke up to another beautiful Guatemalan day, but saddened that it was time to return home. We leave behind a small but loving group of brothers and sisters, content in the knowledge that they remain steadfast in the apostle’s doctrine and praying that God will continue to add to their number “such as should be saved”.

Written by Dan & Ashley Robinson, Link Couple for Guatemala
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

Many Changes in Bolivia

By the end of January 2016, there will be no missionary presence in Bolivia for the first time since 2005. Brother Shimon and Sister Joanna Spina will have returned to Perth Australia with their daughter Dallas and son Zander (and expecting their third child mid-2016), after three years of dedicated service. There have been 12 baptisms as a result of missionary efforts in La Paz. Four of those members now live in other countries. Several have stopped attending, leaving a group of six to carry-on ecclesial activities — three brothers and three sisters. Many people have received correspondence courses and personal instruction. Others have attended advertised special lectures, weekly Bible studies and Sunday services. However, the main challenge, before and after baptism, has been commitment. It’s easy to join the church on the corner, but it’s another thing to commit to and live the Truth, following Christ wherever that leads us — especially when the circumstances of daily living are sometimes very difficult!
Thankfully, Brother Shimon will remain in contact with the ecclesia and with the students preparing for baptism. Weekly Spanish exhortations sent electronically by Sister Carolyn Robinson from Australia to members all over Latin America will form one exhortation source for Sunday Memorial Services. As well, Shimon will provide regular exhortations and studies by ‘Skype’ (audio/visual) from his home in Australia. Plans are also underway for brothers from other ecclesias in Latin America to connect by this same method, supplying exhortations on a regular basis. By these various means of support, God willing, the ecclesia in La Paz will be able to continue its regular activities.

During our recent November stay in La Paz, we were overjoyed to witness two baptisms on Saturday, November 21st — Francisco Pardo and Samuel Villa. Both had been studying and attending for approximately two years. Samuel travels by bus for about 1 and 3/4 hours (one way) twice a week to meetings. An indoor pool about three blocks from the hall was rented for the occasion. Afterwards we all went to the hall for a talk on ‘Buried, Planted & Crucified’, followed by a chicken and rice meal. The right-hand of fellowship was extended Sunday morning at the Lord’s Table, when we listened to words of exhortation on the theme of ‘Follow me’. Due to the imminent departure of the Spinas, no advertised lectures were held, so as to not generate new contacts.

Consequently, our efforts were concentrated on members and regularly attending friends. One study focused on the ‘Attire’ for brothers and sisters no matter where we are, along with the purpose and privilege of sisters wearing a head covering. We also reviewed key ‘Lessons from the Life of Joseph’ in a two-part study. One afternoon we enjoyed a recreational activity with the ecclesia and friends as well, followed by readings and refreshments back at the Spina’s apartment.

We appeal for your prayers for our Heavenly Father’s oversight of our ongoing support of the La Paz Ecclesia in 2016, especially as there are still some preparing for baptism.

*Don and Miriam Luff, CBMA representatives
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity*
Books from The Christadelphian Tidings

Observations Along the Way
A Bible Journal
by George Booker

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

$9.00 US (soft cover, 305 pages, illustrated)

On the Way: Bible Studies, Exhortations, Meditations and Musings,
by George Booker
Insights, reflections, practical issues, difficult passages, personal observations and more to uplift and encourage all those “on the Way” whether young or old in the Truth.
$9.00 US (309 pages).

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

Bible Guidelines for a Happy Marriage, by John C. Bilello
Sound, proactive, Biblical advice on how to build and maintain a happy marriage.
$6.00 US (soft cover, 127 pages).

The Creation Text: Studies in Early Genesis, by David Levin
Forty-nine studies offer fresh insights into early Genesis by examining the text and structure of the first five chapters. $12.00 US (364 pages).

My Journey in Faith, by Ronald Hicks
A brother shares his life experience in the Truth with Christadelphians around the world, and the joy of mission work. Special price: Reduced from $10.00 to $5.00 US (372 pages).

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

The Whole Armor of God, by Ryan Mutter
This story takes place nearly 3,000 years ago, but the spiritual challenges are familiar to today’s young people. $6.00 US (110 pages).

HOW TO ORDER:
• Online – www.tidings.org (Go to ‘Books’) • E-mail – books@tidings.org
• Telephone – Karen Guist, 440-227-0212
• Mail – Tidings Books, 11659 Caves Rd., Chesterland, OH 44026

Shipping and handling extra. Make checks payable to The Christadelphian Tidings.
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.

BANK HALL, BARBADOS

The Bank Hall Ecclesia Barbados have been privileged over the past few years to experienced several wonderful events.

At the beginning of 2014, our Hall which was in urgent need of repairs. Thanks to God, those repairs were done through the kind generosity of the CBMC spearheaded by Bro. Rod Ghent. During the time of the unavailability of the Hall, we were given permission by the Barbados Cricket Museum to keep our memorial service at their facility.

Also in 2014 we held our first youth camp, with the help of Bro. Clive and Sis. Joanne Walton from England and Bro. Ashraf Ali from the U.S. The theme of the camp was “All That Glitters...” Bro. Ashraf was the main speaker, he was supported by local Brethren. He also organized a treasure hunt for the young people and cooked a special meal for our picnic.

In 2015 the annually sponsored CBMC Bible School was held at Easter. The speaker was Bro. Ken Styles from the Royal Oak Ecclesia in Detroit USA. His theme was “Studies in Nehewiah.” It was a very motivating four days of Bible study. Bro. David and Sis. Sarah Corbin were also with us at that time. Bro. David is originally from Barbados, but he lives in the US. He was instrumental in helping the Ecclesia make some important decisions. We are very thankful to God for his help.

Also in 2015 we tried some new preaching ideas. With Bro. Ashraf’s help once again, we held a Bible Exhibition. Leading up to and following the exhibition Bro. Ashraf gave a series of talks entitled “Introduction to Prophecy.” Bro. Jonathan Hale from the Crewe Ecclesia, was in Barbados at the time of his first talk. The exhibition was on the Saturday. The sisters were on the street directing people to the Hall. At the Hall visitors were taken around to view the exhibits. We had leaflets printed on prophecy and also some explaining what we as Christadelphians believe and preach. There was a table set up with a computer where short talks on why the Bible was reliable could be watched. The highlight of the exhibition was a miniature of the tabernacle which Bro. Ashraf brought with him. Several Bibles and Bible Basics books were distributed.

In November Bro. Clive and Sis. Christina Drepaul came to help us with our first study weekend. The topic was “The truth of the first beast”. Bro. Clive also did a series of Lectures. We had some visitors for the lectures, the study weekend was very much appreciated by all those who attended.

The annually sponsored CBMC Easter Bible School this year will be held in March from the 25th-28th, God willing. The theme is “Show me thy Glory.” The speaker will be Bro. David Andrews from Guyana. Visitors are welcome to attend.
This year we are planning a family camp in August and a Bible exhibition in September; a date has not been set yet for the study weekend. We would like to thank all those who helped in these ventures. Your efforts are very much appreciated.

We welcome the support of visiting Brethren in the giving of exhortations, lectures and helping out in our special projects. Should anyone like to help please contact me Bro. Joel Caine Programme Coordinator of the Bank Hall Ecclesia at the email cainney@hotmail.com.

Joel Caine

MERIDEN, CT

It is always a pleasure to welcome visitors to Meriden. In the past few months we have enjoyed the company of brothers, sisters, and families from Abington, MA; Baltimore, MD; Bishop’s Stortford, UK; Boston, MA; Cranston, RI; Echo Lake, NJ; Granite State, NH; Milford Road, MI, Moorestown, NJ; Norfolk, VA; Pittsburgh, PA; South Ozone Park, NY; Springfield, MA; Sussex, NB; Wachusett, MA; Westerly, RI, and Worcester, MA. We thank Bro. Jason Dineen for his exhortation and slide presentation on Israel last March; Bro. Simon Dean for his Sunday school presentation and exhortation on Philemon in May, and Bro. Rich Dineen, Jr. for leading our Spring Study Weekend, in June, on Psalm 137 — “By the Rivers of Babylon.”

Bro. Jason and Sis. Ruth Hensley and children, of Simi Hills, CA, visited Meriden before going on to the Eastern Bible School in July. Bro. Jason gave a special midweek Bible class on the Gospel of John. The services of all our brethren have been a great help to us.

On May 25th, Bro. Jeremy Robideau and Sis. Rachel Harper were married in a lovely outdoor service conducted by Bro. Dan Demarest. Rachel is the middle daughter of the undersigned and Sis. Brietta Harper. Jeremy and Rachel are both members of the Meriden meeting. We ask for God’s blessing on their life together.

On Sunday, August 30th, ABIGAIL MYAH HARPER was baptized into Christ. Abi is our youngest daughter. We enjoyed the wonderful support of many visiting friends and families on this happy occasion. On Sunday, September 27th, TIMOTHY LUKE DEMAREST was baptized into Christ. He is the son of Bro. Dan and Sis. Betsy Demarest. Again we enjoyed the company of many who came to witness his baptism. Abi and Tim have grown up in our Sunday school and CYC. May God bless both of them in their continuing journeys of faith.

Many other events have also helped to make 2015 a memorable year. The CYC sponsored a car wash in April to raise money for the ACBM Cyclone Pam Relief Fund. Our annual Sunday School Open House was held at the end of May, featuring exhibits and presentations by the Sunday school members. The annual Sunday School picnic was held at the end of our study weekend in June. A Family Bible Fair was held in August as a public outreach effort. Bible related activities were provided for all ages. Several visitors attended, giving us an opportunity to talk with some of our neighbors. A tag-craft-bake sale in October raised money for the CBMA. And the Sunday School sponsored a Harvest Festival in October that was enjoyed by many. In November we celebrated with our Sis. Helen Sweet on her 90th birthday.

“There is a time to be born” (Eccl 3:2). Ezra Jacob Demarest was born to Bro. Brad and Sis. Sarah Demarest on July 30th. Little Ezra joins several older siblings who all have a knack for bringing smiles to all of us.
“And there is a time to die.” Personal sadness has touched us during the year. Sis. Susan Demarest lost her mother in January. Sis. Gert Turner lost her sister in March. Bro. Jason Cicero lost his grandfather in April. And Sis. Camelia Harvey lost her eldest brother, in England, in July. Our hearts have been with all of our brothers and sisters during these sad times.

Our Sis. Debby Ferraaiolo is finally well enough to leave the nursing home and have her own assisted-living apartment. Bro. Everett and Sis. Faith Wight are now living with their daughter, Sis. Faith Marra. Their health is frail, but they remain a great source of encouragement to us. God willing, we are looking forward to our 2016 Spring Study Weekend with Bro. Jonathan Bowen of Brantford, ON. The dates will be May 7th-8th. Please mark your calendars.

Stephen Harper

MILFORD ROAD, MI

Our ecclesia welcomed a new potential Sundays school scholar when Bro. Andrew and Sis. Allison Livermore were blessed with a baby boy, Luke Edward Livermore. Our ecclesia rejoiced with the young couple as they begin their family. We were also blessed by the following brothers who provided us with comforting words of exhortation: Matt Colby, Bob Jarvela, Jacob Kaufman, Greg Pipe, Dave Shaw Jr, Ken Styles, and Sam Taylor.

The Milford Road Ecclesia is sad to inform the brotherhood that three of our members have fallen asleep in the Lord. Sis. Katherine Shaw was a warm and loving sister that will be missed by all who knew her over the decades that she served our Lord. Sis. Deanna Weems, the beloved wife of our Bro. Jerry, also fell asleep. Sis. Deanna’s smile, friendly greetings, and green thumb will be greatly missed at our small ecclesia. Bro. Harry Birney served our Lord for many decades in the Detroit area. Our ecclesia will not be the same without his friendly greetings and constant presence. We will miss our absent members, but are comforted knowing that their mortal struggles are over and they await their master’s call.

Jeff Livermore

ORLANDO, FL

The Orlando Christadelphian Ecclesia welcomed ANNETTE POWELL into the one hope on November 29, 2015. Sis. Annette is originally from Michigan where her mother, Sis. Sandra Kennedy attends the Royal Oak meeting. Sis. Annette and her two young children, Robert and Mara, have been attending our meeting the last few years. We wish her joy in her walk in the Lord. Following the baptism, and Sunday sermon given by Bro. Aaron Markwith, everyone enjoyed a buffet lunch.

The following visitors recently attended our meeting: Tom and Tricia Bekker, Leah and Trent (Milford Road, MI); Gloria Marmol, Maria Marmol, and Yessica Ramirez (Arlington, VA); JoAnn Washeck (Denver, CO); Sandra Cuda (Detroit Royal Oak, MI); Julian and Sandra Basely (Guildford, UK); Stephen and Betty Lou Lewis (Tampa, FL); Lloyd and Janice Cooper, Ed and Jenn Cabral, Josie and Samuel (Mississauga West, ON); Julie Dawes (Toronto East, ON); and Phil and Jean Hale (Castleford, UK). Many thanks to those brethren who gave the words of exhortation.

Randy Davenport
SAN DIEGO COUNTY

We are pleased to report the baptism on November 14, 2015 of LINDSAY ELLIS daughter of Bro. Kent and Sis. Sharon Ellis. Lindsay has been a lifetime member of our Sunday school and CYC. We rejoice with their family, praise our Father that His Word is still at work, and offer our prayer for Sis. Lindsay as she begins her journey with us in the Lord. We also welcomed Sister Jennifer Welden back into fellowship. It is a joy to have her with us around the table of remembrance.

Our ecclesia joined in sorrow with the Stewart family on the loss of Bro. Ron Stewart of the Lompoc Valley Ecclesia. We pray for God’s healing for Bro. Steve and Sis. Susie Stewart, Sis. Sherry Luskin, Sis. Jessica Stewart, and David and Julie Stewart. May it be that we soon see Brother Ron again on resurrection day.

We would like to thank Bro. Shane Kirkwood from the Sutherland Ecclesia in Sydney, Australia for presenting a stimulating series of classes entitled “How Jesus Changed Lives”. It was a pleasure to spend time with Bro. Shane and Sis. Lynn.

Kurt Wickham

SANTA BARBARA, CA

Since our last reporting of the activities of the Santa Barbara Ecclesia in April of 2015, we have mourned the loss of three of our brothers. Bro. Richard Jones passed away on April 30, 2015, at the age of sixty-two from complications with a brain tumor. In his remaining years, of Bro. Richards poured himself into teaching and preaching the word of God and the soon coming kingdom to all that would hear, including his wife who was baptized just months before his death.

We also laid to rest our elder Bro. Floyd Elsas on June 28, 2015, at the age of ninety-seven. Bro. Floyd was baptized into the saving name of Jesus Christ on December 8, 1935, and was one of the founding members of the Santa Barbara Ecclesia. He was a tireless servant in Yahweh’s vineyard, serving in the ecclesia as an arranging, exhorting and lecturing brother until the day of his death.

Bro. Ron Stewart of the Lompoc Ecclesia fell asleep in Christ on January 16, 2016, at the age of seventy-nine, from a brain tumor and pneumonia. Bro. Ron grew up in the Pomona Ecclesia and was baptized June 13, 1953. Though he was a member of the Lompoc Ecclesia, Bro. Ron was a tremendous help to the Santa Barbara Ecclesia over the years assisting our small ecclesia with midweek Bible classes, first principle classes, seminars, teaching Sunday school and exhorting at least three to four times a year. All of our brethren will be greatly missed, but we rejoice in the hope we share when the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be snatched away together with that great cloud of witnesses. We can comfort one another with these words.

On a joyful note, we rejoiced in the baptism of DENISE SMITH, an interested friend of Bro. Craig and Sis. Carol Stickney, into the household of faith on September 10, 2015. Many of our members are in their advanced years and suffering from the infirmities of the flesh and need our prayers. Sis. Jesse Stevens is confined to her home battling Alzheimer’s and receiving daily care from her daughter, Sis. Julie Gibson and Bro. Brett McDonald. Sis. Dorothy Woolridge is under the care of her daughter, Sis. Marti Bender, and is able to make it out to Memorial service every couple of weeks.
Bro. George Engle who is eighty-nine, Sis. Jean Larson who is ninety-nine, and Sis. Vivian Seagoe who is ninety-four, all live in assisted living facilities. Bro. John Seagoe at ninety-three, still drives to Bible class, Sunday school and Memorial service transporting Sis. Jean Larson. Sis. Shirley Stickney who is eighty-nine is still living at home under the care of her great granddaughter, Ashley Smith and they continue to faithfully support Bible Class, Sunday school and Memorial service as often as they are able. All of our elder brothers and sisters are a constant example to us all of their love for the brotherhood, God’s word and the hope of his soon coming kingdom. May Yahweh bless them for their love and dedication.

We are happy to have as our Sunday school members Chris Riba, attending Westmont College; Ashley Smith, the granddaughter of Bro. Craig and Sis. Carol Stickney; Lois Sechrist, Sis. Carol Stickney’s mother; and Syble Roberts, the mother of our new sister in Christ, Denise Smith.

We would like to thank the following brothers for ministering to our ecclesia with Sunday school classes and the word of exhortation: Ron Stewart (Lompoc, CA), Jeff Lange (Norfolk, VA); Chris Stickney, Jason Hensley, Gordon Hensley and Erik Sternad (Simi Hills, CA); Michael Stickney (San Diego, CA); Nigel Fletcher (Aust.); Nathan Blanchard and Matthew deCaussin (Verdugo Hills, CA).

We welcomed around the table of the lord the following brothers and sisters: Ron and Shirley Stewart, Steve and Kathy Settle, and Ron and Melody Magness (Lompoc, CA); Kelly and Kristy Robinson; Nathan and Janeen Blanchard; Matthew and Jenni deCauass and Laura deCauass (Verdugo Hills, CA); Jane Tunnell, Emily Tunnell, Michael and Myra Stickney, Tom and Becky Nagel, Sheri Luskin, Steve and Susie Stewart, and Jessica Stewart (San Diego, CA); Geoff, Brenda Lee and Vaughn Smith, Doreen Greene, Christ Stickney, Jason and Ruth Hensley, Gordon and Rosa Hensley, Erik and Sharon Sternad, James and Lisa Walker, Gary and Mary Patterson, and Shelley Schmitt (Simi Hills, CA); Mark Belton (Cape Town, SA); John and Carrie Spencer, Kathleen and Larry King (Jackson County, OR); Jim and Marylin Seagoe (San Francisco Peninsula, CA); Sid Wattles (North County, CA); Arthur Woods, and Colleen Uiga (Thousand Oaks, CA); and Bruce and Nancy Andrews (Los Angeles, CA).

Our fervent prayer is that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will return soon to establish his Father’s kingdom on this earth and all our plans will be interrupted by that glorious day.

Craig Stickney

VICTORIA, BC

We continue to be blessed with numerous visitors during the past year, coming from near and far. We welcome them all to meet with us. We rejoiced in gaining three new members by baptism during 2015: CAITLYN DANIEL, HANNAH CLOVER and JOSH MCSTRAVICK. We welcome our new sisters and brother.

We received by transfer from Hamilton Book Road, Bro. Shawn and Sis. Marnie Snobelen along with Sis. Taleigh and Bro. Chase. Bro. Justin and Sis. Mary Enns have transferred from Comox Valley. Bro. Dan Ferrie has been transferred to the Sacramento Ecclesia.

Bro. Christian Russell (Verdugo Hills, CA) spoke at our 2015 Fraternal. His subject was “The Kingmaker.” Bro. Tim Osborn (Okanagan Central, BC) spoke at our Fall Study Weekend. His subject was, “The Epistle of James”.

Craig Stickney
Lord willing, our Spring Study Weekend will be held March 12-13, 2016. Bro. Ken Styles will be speaking on the theme, “Forgiveness”. The Pacific Northwest Annual CYC Conference will be held again at Camp Pringle on Shawnigan Lake on March 24-27, 2016. Bro. Bryan Styles will be speaking. His theme will be “God Consciousness”. Our annual Fraternal Gathering will be held one week earlier this year, August 27-28, 2016. Bro. Roger Long will be our speaker.

Lord willing, Bro. Mark Carr will be with us this year on the weekend of November 27-28, 2016 for our Fall Study Weekend. His topic will be “Samson, My Strength Made Perfect in Weakness”.

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

Clyde Snobelen

INFORMATION WANTED

Lord willing, I’m hoping to put together a book on Christadelphians and their involvement in the Kindertransport. If you have any information or any sources of information that you would like to share, please contact me by email at: jhensley@heritageschoolcalifornia.com; or by phone at: 1-805-304-7860.

Additionally, in gathering materials, I have heard about a book called *Elpis Lodge Scrapbook: 1940-1948*. I’ve been trying to locate a copy through the Holocaust archivist here in Los Angeles, but to no avail. If you can help in locating a copy of this book, please reach out to me.

Jason Hensley

Rugby’s ‘Schindler’ Remembered

(Bro.) Alan Overton, became instrumental in helping hundreds of evacuees escape the horrors of the holocaust during WW2. He became involved with the plight after seeing a poster distributed with the Rugby Advertiser in May 1938. It just touched his heart and he thought, what would he want for his children if he was in the same situation? The wave of fear in Germany meant that many Jewish parents sent their children abroad, to wherever a safe haven could be found. However, boys were harder to place than girls, so in July 1939 the Little Thorn hostel in Bilton Road (Rugby, UK) was established. The boys came from Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The hostel would usually house about 12 boys at a time, during the war. It was also a stop-off point, because my father would go down to London once a week to collect the children. (Off the “Kindertransport”.) They would then come here, before going to homes around the country. The hostel closed once the war ended, and many of the boys returned to their homelands in search of their families. Most couldn’t find their parents, as they’d been killed during the holocaust. So many of the boys moved away, to America or Australia.

Adapted From The Rugby Advertiser, dated Jan 23 2004
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

MARCH, 2016


12-13 Victoria, BC  Spring Study Weekend Bro. Ken Styles will be speaking on the theme “Forgiveness.” Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen at victoria@csll.ca.

19-20 Baltimore, MD  Bible Study weekend at the Baltimore Ecclesia, 6311 Loudon Avenue, Elakridge, MD 21075. Speaker will be Bro. Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ). Subject: “Lessons from the Kings”. Saturday classes begin at 1 p.m. and include dinner. Classes resume on Sunday at 9:30 a.m. during Sunday School, followed by Memorial Service and lunch. Afternoon talk TBD. Contact: Sis. Carol Link at linkgang87@gmail.com.

24-27 Pacific Northwest Annual CYC Conference to be held again at Camp Pringle on Shawnigan Lake. Bro. Bryan Styles will be speaking. His theme will be “God Consciousness.” Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen at victoria@csll.ca.


APRIL, 2016

2-3 Rogue Valley, OR  Study Weekend with Bro. Jim Cowie (Moreton Bay, Brisbane, AUS). His topic will be “The Spirit of Christ in the Psalms”. For information, contact Bro. Henry Wisniewski at 541 956-5829 or henrywisniewski@hotmail.com.

16-17 Boston, MA 25th Annual Spring Study Weekend. Boston Ecclesia, 48 Freeman Street, Stoughton, MA. Bro. Steve Stewart (San Diego, CA): “A Faith to Move Mountains” Registration and coffee at 10:00am Saturday with three classes beginning at 10:30AM. Lunch will be provided. The fourth class is Sunday morning at 9:30AM, followed by Memorial Service. For more information contact Bro. Jim Sullivan at jimsulliv@aol.com.

16-17 Largo Tampa Bay, FL  will host a study weekend at the ecclesial hall. Bro. Frank Abel (Hamilton Book Road, ON) will lead us in the study of God’s word. For further information, contact Bro. Walt Dodrill, Recorder at 727-410-0896 or email waldodrill@msn.com.

22-24 New England Brothers’ Weekend at Camp Joslin, Charlton, MA. The speaker will be Bro. Dean Brown on “Great Prayers”. Please register early. Registration: Bro. Ben Link, 39 Perkins St., Apt 416, Lowell, MA 01854; newengbros@gmail.com; for general information: Bro. Jim Boyko jnkboyko@gmail.com.

23-30 Eastern Bible School. *New Location* Franklin Pierce University, Rindge, NH; Theme: “Let Us Consider One Another To Provoke Unto Love and Good Works”. Bro. Dennis Bevans (Baltimore, MD): “Jonah and Nahum: Christ’s First and Second Advent” (adults)
and “Philippians: Christ Our Everything” (teens); Bro. Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD): “Peter: A Living Hope” (adults and teens); Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA): “Family Life Lessons from Genesis” (adults) and “Ecclesiastes: Lasting Happiness Can Only Be Found With God” (teens). For registration information contact Sis. Cindy Nevers at 18 Sibley Street, Auburn, MA 01501 or cindynevers@verizon.net.

**MAY, 2016**

**6-7 Vancouver Island Sisters’ Weekend** in Victoria, BC. Study led by Sis. Maritta Terrel (Austin Leander, Texas). Topic: “Renew Your Mind”. Registration Fee: $50.00. For further information or to register contact Sis. Rosa Bailey, 3-1431 Simon Road, Victoria, BC, V8X 3G9 or rosabailey@shaw.ca.

**7-8 Meriden, CT** Spring Study Weekend on “The Testimony of Archaeology to the Truth of the Bible”. Speaker Bro. Jonathan Bowen. Please contact Bro. Steve Harper for details at sharper.rrn@me.com.

**6-22 Southern California Men’s Weekend** at Lake Cachuma, CA. Speaker: Bro. Dennis Bevans (Baltimore, MD): “Becoming a Man Like Jesus”. Join us for an uplifting camping weekend in California’s beautiful central coast. All meals are provided. For questions or travel/accommodation issues, contact Levi Gelineau Leviandjessica@gmail.com.

**21-22 Prince George, BC** Annual fraternal. Our speaker is Bro. David Jennings and his topic is “The Temple of Zerubbabel”. Please contact keith.billington@telus.net to register.

**JUNE, 2016**

**17-19 New York Metropolitan Sister’s Retreat**, The Homewood Suite, Lancaster, PA. Speaker is Sis. Cadi Phillips (Moorestown, NJ). Her topic is “The Importance of words”. For registration, please contact: Sis. Averil Ferguson, at (718) 877-6618, email adferguson@gmail.com.

**JULY, 2016**

**2-10 Mid-Atlantic Bible School**, Shippensburg, PA. The speakers are Bro. Frank Abel (Hamilton Book Road, ON): “The God of Peace” (Adults), and “The Answer of a Good Conscience” (Teens); Bro. Dafydd Jenkins (Cardiff – Museum Place, UK): “Prophets and Kings” (Adults) and “Getting to Know My Lord” (Teens); and Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch North, NZ): “Gabriel – Messiah’s Evening Angel” (Adults) and “The Spiritual Habits of the Saints of God” (Teens). This information will also be available on the MACBS website: www.MidAtlanticBibleSchool.com.

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

**10-16 Southwest Bible School** at Schreiner University in Kerrville, TX. The speakers this year are Bro. Roger Lewis: “The Four Faces of Christ in the Gospel” (Adults) and “The Spiritual Habits of the Saints of God” (Teens), Bro. Wilfred Alleyne: “The Book of Beginnings” (both), and Bro. David Jennings: “For Who hath Despised the Day of Small Things” (both). Registration forms will be available on the Bible School website, Lord willing, the beginning of 2016: www.swcbs.com.


31-Aug 6 Idyllwild Bible School at the Idyllwild Pines Camp in Idyllwild, CA. The speakers and topics for this year are: Bro. Wilfred Alleyne (Handsworth Birmingham, UK): “Learning from the Lord”; Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto Church Str., ON): “Esther: Thou art come to the Kingdom for such a time as this”; and Bro. Simon O’Grady (Tawa Wellington, NZ): “Daniel Narratives”. Idyllwild Pines is a rustic camp in the San Bernardino National Forest in the mountains above Palm Springs. The camp is at 5200 feet elevation, and is quite dry and dusty. There is a lot of walking required on the campus, with a few hills. The Bible School is considered fairly “casual” due to the camping nature. To register or for more information, go to californiabibleschool.org or email Jeff Gelineau at jeffgelineau@gmail.com

31-Aug 6 Rogue River Bible School Speakers: Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, AUS) on “The Life of Noah”; Bro. David Wisniewski (Brant County, ON) on “The Honor of Kings — Searching Out the Parables”; and Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI) on “Forgiveness”. For registration information, contact Sis. Pat Posey at Pat1Posey@gmail.com.

AUGUST, 2016

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

SEPTEMBER, 2016

24-25 Kouts, IN Fall Study Weekend at Woodland Park Community Center, 2100 Willowcreek Road beginning at 10:00 A.M. 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

8-9 Vancouver, BC Fraternal Gathering. Speaker Bro. Marc Hunter (Saanich Peninsula, BC): Contact Sis Pam Snobelen at pamela721@shaw.ca or 604 881 4733 for a program.

NOVEMBER, 2016

27-28 Victoria, BC Fall Study Weekend. Bro. Mark Carr will be with us this year. His topic will be Samson — “My strength made perfect in weakness.” Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen at victoria@csll.ca.
Thoughts on the Way
Our Wilderness Journey

Editorial
Intelligence

First Principles
Hope

Jonathan
Farewell

Exhortation
Humility

Why I Left the
Catholic Church

Building the
Tombs of the Prophets

Doctrines to be Rejected
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Editorial Notes

Thoughts on The Way

The *Minute Meditations* penned by our Late Bro. Robert J Lloyd are irreplaceable, and I cannot pretend otherwise. It was with deep sadness that I heard of his death, for he had sent me one of his inimitable remarks only a few days before. I had only known him personally for a few years, but the dynamism of his talks had always enthralled me, and the way he could relate to people who were often over sixty years younger than himself amazed. He had exceeded the time allotted to mankind: for “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psa 90:10).

So we welcome, not a replacement, for that is not possible, but another type of closing thoughts, this to be conducted by our brother, and former editor, George Booker. So turn to the end of this issue, and you will find his first such article, which actually somewhat ties in to my editorial, whether by co-incidence or some other factor I cannot tell.

Publishing delays

Due to circumstances beyond our control, recently the arrival of *The Tidings* has been around one month late, more overseas, and many have not received renewal notices. We are sorry for these delays. The magazine is intended to be published on the 25th of the month for the month following, so the February issue should be available for mailing on January 25.

Electronic copies

We are considering making electronic copies of the magazine available in subsequent years, if the Lord remains away. These would be made available soon after the nominal publishing date. They could be in addition to or in place of the printed and mailed copies, with the various options appropriately priced.

To assess interest, we would like to hear from you. If anyone is interested, please write to editor@tidings.org.

Re-union matters

I have been reluctant to write any account of the many recent developments in this area. As soon as I think to put pen to paper (or rather fire up my word processor), more items come to my attention. However, it is hoped that the path forward might be clearer by the time this comment appears in print.

*Peter Hemingray*
Editorial

Intelligence

“I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles” (Rom 16:1-4).

News is useful

At the end of Romans, Paul thought it worthwhile to expend paper and ink (or perhaps papyrus and ink) on personal news and commendations: a pattern that was repeated by Robert Roberts in his first issue of “The Ambassador” in 1864. In this Bro. Roberts differed from his mentor, John Thomas, who is rightly regarded as the founder of our community. John Thomas included almost no news of ecclesias in his magazines, so Roberts felt impelled to head the first “Intelligence” he printed with the following comment:

Fellow feeling is a powerful instinct, and in none more so than among the brethren of Christ, who, in the proper development of their relation, love each other much. Hence their mutual fortunes have a powerful mutual interest; and if tempered with the proper “manner of spirit” pertaining to their high calling, the interchange is profitable and encouraging. This is the apology, if apology be needed, for introducing a social column into a periodical more particularly devoted to the demonstration of the truth. Brethren in intercourse do not confine themselves to the doctrinal. The doctrinal is but the basis of their loves and hopes personally developed. So while wielding the broad sword of the spirit, we may be permitted in the intervals of attack, to step aside for a little to taste the enjoyment resulting from a contemplation of the truth in external and socialistic manifestation. Editor. (The Ambassador, July 1864 p. 15.)

In this he was, in fact, following the pattern of the first magazine of our community in the UK, because four years before The Ambassador in January 1860, the first “Messenger of the Churches” was issued by George Dowie, with the title:

The Messenger of the Churches, A Magazine of Scripture exposition, and Medium of Intercommunication on all social and Practical Topics of Importance to the Brotherhood.

It is interesting that, in this magazine, Bro. Roberts is recorded later in 1860 as being the correspondent from Halifax: he had been married in 1859 to Jane Norrie by the same George Dowie. But by 1866 the two had sundered. So from 1864 on,
The Christadelphian has faithfully recorded, month by month, the doing of our community, particularly in the UK. It is almost automatic that any transfer, death, baptism and other items (although not births) are communicated in its pages. A quick scan of recent magazines shows that, in any given year, about 90% of the ecclesias in the UK send in news, and the ones who do not are mostly tiny. And it must be mentioned that the community in the UK is, as in North America, somewhat fractured.

Of course, there are other Christadelphian groups in the UK other than the Central/Amended community, but they are all very small with few having fraternal magazines.

So you can, if you were brought up in the Truth in the UK, look up the date of your baptism, and when you were transferred around the country. Which I personally have taken advantage of. And going back in time, if your forbears were also Christadelphians, it is quite fascinating as well to trace their movements.

There are, and have been, many other “Christadelphian” Fraternal Magazines in the UK, as published by one or other of the various factions, almost all of which reunited in the UK in the 1960’s. I remember being in the Christadelphian Office when the Assistant Editor was scanning the pages of such old magazines, for both Bro. Alfred Nichols and Bro. John Carter, former editors of The Christadelphian, were baptized into two groups that were separated at the time from the Central Community, so their early lives in the Truth were not recorded in The Christadelphian. Of the Christadelphian magazines that were not “fraternal” magazines, very few have survived for many years. The only one continuously published for decades is The Testimony Magazine, published since 1931.

**In North America**

The situation regarding intelligence has always been less universal than in the UK. It is complicated by the current presence in the USA of two distinct large fellowships, each with their own magazine, and during the period 1923 – 1953 there were three groups. As far as I can tell by scanning three magazines current in the 1920’s, in any given year only about 60% of the USA ecclesias sent in intelligence. (This is deduced by comparing the number of ecclesias who sent in intelligence with the total number of ecclesias recorded in the 1926 USA census. The same comparison is not possible in Canada.)

So, as with the UK, in many cases you have to look at a number of magazines if you are in search of records of an individual. Quite by happenstance, you can find an example of this in the first of what, God willing, will be a new series of “Thoughts on the Way”. In it, Bro. George recounts the baptism of Bro. Bob Lloyd, as recorded in the Berean Christadelphian for 1940.
The current situation is roughly the same for the Central (Amended) community: in any given year 40-50% of ecclesias send in intelligence, with another 10% sending in intelligence only every 2-3 years. Of the ones who have not sent in intelligence for quite a few years, many (but not all) are quite small, so there is some explanation for their absence. In addition, it must be pointed out that ecclesias in the UK routinely send in brief notices of things like transfers, changes in meeting times, brief periods when no meetings are held etc., which is unusual in North America. Still, it is noticeable that many events that I would consider worthy of announcing, like baptisms and the passing away of well-known brethren and sisters, are not recorded.

It is also noticeable that in the Unamended community quite a small proportion of their community currently send in news and notices of any kind. This appears to be quite a recent phenomenon: looking back a few decades, at least the same proportion of ecclesias as in the Amended community seemed to send in communications.

The future
I am of the opinion that presence of news and notices in the magazines of the community does serve several purposes:

- It lets the community know of items of interest to many: births, weddings, and baptisms are of course times of happiness.
- It certainly serves to make members aware of the fact they are part of a wider community, somewhat isolated as many are in this vast continent
- Although e-mail communication typically informs the local area of events such as gatherings, special events, study days, prophecy days etc., often these are of interest to many others outside the geographical area
- If done properly, such intelligence serves as an archive for future generations, if the Lord remains away. As we can see in this issue, news of baptisms can be of interest over many generations.

It is quite possible that paper copies of this magazine will be looked on as archaic in the not too distant future, although I am pleased to note that electronic books are not making printed ones obsolete. In fact, the reverse seems to be true: the growth in printed books sold has actually increased lately, and the rate of growth of eBooks is slowing. But even if this magazine in paper form disappears, it will remain available in electronic fashion, and I hope its legacy of information will prove to be a trove of valuable information for generations to come.

I am only too well aware that “of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh” (Eccl 12:12). If that were true of a time when books were hand written, how much more when electronic publishing makes everyone an author. So as we remember Priscilla and Aquila, and their travels and work in the Truth, as written by Paul, let us hope that the example of the workers of this day will be remembered as examples for the generations to come, or until the Lord returns.

Peter Hemingray
Exhortation

Humility

“And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:9-14)

Balloon stomp

There once was a fourth grade class in which the teacher introduced a game called “balloon stomp.” A balloon was tied to every child’s leg, and the object of the game was to pop everyone else’s balloon while protecting one’s own. The last person with an intact balloon would win. The class really got into the game. Balloons were relentlessly targeted and destroyed. A few of the kids tried to stay near the walls, but their balloons all got stomped just the same. The game was over in a matter of seconds, with only one balloon left un-popped. The winner turned out to be the least liked kid in the class, which is not surprising, because you have to be pushy and rude in order to win at balloon stomp.

The interesting part of the story was that a second class was introduced to the same game. Only this time it was a class of mentally handicapped children. They were given the same explanation as the first class. But, this time, the game went very differently. It may have been that the handicapped kids didn’t completely grasp the instructions; but the one idea that got through was that the balloons were supposed to be popped. So it was the balloons, not the other players that were viewed as enemies. Instead of fighting each other, they began helping each other pop balloons. One little girl knelt down and held her balloon carefully in place, like a holder for a field goal kicker. A little boy stomped it flat. Then he knelt down and held his balloon for her. It went on like this for several minutes until all the balloons were destroyed, and everybody cheered. Everybody won.

It makes you wonder: who got the game right, and who got it wrong?

In our world, we tend to think of another person’s success as one less opportunity for us to succeed ourselves. For example, it’s often the case that if one person gets a job promotion, that reduces the chance of others getting a promotion. I was watching my 12-year old son’s basketball game yesterday. When one team got a basket, half the parents cheered, while the other half sighed or just sat quietly. Then the other team would score and the first group of parents...
sighed while others cheered. But, you never have all the parents cheering at the same time (unless one of the kids gets up after being hurt). That’s just the nature of competition.

**In the Ecclesia**

But, in the ecclesia it’s different, (or at least it is supposed to be), because we’re here to serve Christ, not ourselves. And, the most effective way to do that is by elevating others while humbling ourselves.

My family talked about this one Friday night because it was our Family Home Evening (an idea I got from a Mormon friend of mine); it’s something we do one night a week where we’re all together as a family and everyone participates. This week’s theme was humility, and the parable of the Pharisee and the publican in Luke 18 was our reading:

> “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:14 NET).

The kids thought Jesus was saying it was the Pharisee who went home justified.

So, I had to explain that even though the Pharisee praised God, fasted, and gave up 10% of his income, he didn’t have God’s approval; because the quality God was actually looking for was **humility**.

Humility is a **Christian characteristic**, because it was part of the character of Christ. Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt 11:29).

What that means is: if we learn to follow Jesus’ example — to be gentle and humble in heart — we will find peace. Pride and arrogance throw us into tension and turmoil, but humility gives us peace from that competitive spirit.

> “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment. . . Do not be proud. . . Do not be conceited” (Rom 12:3,16).

Consider the ways in which Jesus showed humility.

**First of all**, his focus was on God’s will, not his own. This is the crux of the Christian faith. Whether or not we follow Jesus is determined by whether we are doing our will or God’s will. To be a Christian means you are no longer living by your own will, but have surrendered to and are seeking to live out God’s will in your life. “For I [Jesus] have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38). Facing the cross, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed: “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Matt 26:39).

And, that’s the mind we need to have if we want to belong to Jesus.

> “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing
to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:5-8).

Pride and arrogance are destructive to our lives, but humility enables us to surrender to the will of God and experience peace. Jesus humbled himself by surrendering his entire life to God; and, in so doing, he proved what he said in the parable that: “everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” Being humble means I understand that I don’t know it all, and that I can’t do it on my own. Even Jesus said, “I can of my own self do nothing... my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me” (John 5:30). Being humble means I give up my pride and surrender to God’s will.

The second way in which Jesus demonstrated humility was that his focus was away from himself, not on himself. He came to do his Father’s will, not his own. He came to serve, not be served. He came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Since we’re supposed to be like Jesus, the Bible says, “Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others” (1Cor 10:24). Proud people are self-focused. They love talking about themselves. They tend not to ask how someone else is doing, or what is going on in others’ lives. It is all about them. They are the most important person in their universe.

Consider the argument Jesus disciples were having at the time of the Last Supper. Jesus just got through telling them that one of them would betray him to death; and the very next verse says, “A dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest” (Luke 22:24). How sad is it that, at a time like that, they were only thinking of themselves!

Jesus had just told them that one of them is going to betray him. He explicitly stated that they would all fall away from him and that Peter would deny him. He warned them to pray so that they would not fall into temptation, but all they could think about was their status — about who would sit on Jesus’ right and left in the kingdom. It should have been a time for humility, not pride and self-righteousness. It’s been said that “Humble people don't think less of themselves . . . they just think about themselves less.”

Humility means that our focus is away from ourselves, not on ourselves. The Scripture says:

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 2:3-4).

The third thing about the humility of Jesus is: his focus was on serving, not being served. Nowhere do we see the humility and servant-spirit of Christ more than at the Last Supper when he washed the feet of his disciples — the very ones who would betray him, deny him and desert him.
“Because Jesus knew that the Father had given everything into his control, that he had come from God, and that he was returning to God, therefore he got up from the table, removed his outer robe, and took a towel and fastened it around his waist. Then he poured some water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to dry them with the towel that was tied around his waist” (John 13:3-5).

That was humility. He knew he was sent by God and was about to ascend to God’s very throne in heaven — and what did he do? He performed the task of a slave in front of his own disciples!

“After Jesus washed their feet, he said to them: ‘Do you understand what I have done for you? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you’ ” (John 13:12-15).

I am certain Peter was remembering this episode when he wrote: “In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time” (1Pet 5:5-6). After all, Jesus had said to Peter at the time, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand” (John 13:7).

Our example
Bro. Gillet wrote these wise words in his “Genius of Discipleship”:

“Humility is an attitude of subjection out of love for the King’s goodness. How can understanding men and women ever be proud in the presence of the God of eternal time, of unlimited space, of unchangeable character — God infinite in grace and matchless in love? It is the knowledge of God which generates the birth of humility in the soul.”

As we remember the example of the humility of Jesus in his sacrifice of our behalf, how often do we miss the most powerful argument we have for defending our faith — the example of our lives.

So we come now to remember the sacrifice of our Lord — the one who said:

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt 11:29).

As we draw near to the Father and His son, let us do it with humility:

- That focuses on the Father’s will, not our own;
- That focuses away from ourselves, rather than on ourselves,
- That focuses on serving rather than being served.

Dan Garan (Orlando, FL)
Hope, (13) What must we do to be saved?

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6:8).

Grace: The reason any person will be saved is entirely due to the grace of God. No one can earn eternal life and everyone deserves only death due to sin. The Bible teaches it is only by the grace of God that we have the hope to be saved.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8).

“No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are” (Acts 15:11).

“For the wages of sin is death, but the (free) gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23).

Faith: Without the faith of Abraham, no one can please God or be saved. Faith is the foundation for believing and obeying the Word of God. Jesus told one follower: “Your faith has saved you; go in peace” (Luke 7:50).

“For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed — a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’ ” (Rom 1:17).

“For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved” (Rom 10:10).

“But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved” (Heb 10:39).

“For you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1Pet 1:9).

God our Father: It is essential that we understand and believe that God is one. He chose Abraham and his seed to be His special people. This group includes those who have been baptized into Christ. The Creator of the universe has a plan and a purpose for all creation, including you. He seeks your submission, obedience, praise and worship.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (Heb 6:4).

“Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3).
“I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God” (Isa 45:5).

**In Jesus:** There is no real hope apart from Jesus. He is the Son of God who was sacrificed to take away the sins of the world. Thanks to his offering, all people now have the opportunity to be reconciled to the Father. God raised him from the dead, gave him immortality, granted him all authority on earth and in heaven, and set him as mediator in heaven between God and man.

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name (besides Jesus) under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved” (Rom 10:9-10).

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

**Confession/Repentance:** All people sin and fall short of the glory of God. In order to please God and obtain salvation, we must confess and repent from our sins. Jesus said, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32).

“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret” (2Cor 7:10).

“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1Tim 6:12).

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1John 1:9).

**Baptism:** Jesus taught that disciples must be born again of both water and spirit. The word ‘baptism’ means to dip, or totally immerse (not sprinkle). Jesus was baptized as an adult, and he provided the example that baptism is a necessary symbol of repentance, cleansing, death and resurrection.

“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

“And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1Pet 3:21).

“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Rom 6:4).
Communion: Fellowship, communion, sharing and breaking of bread are all Biblical terms that describe the symbolic act of eating bread and drinking wine in memory of Jesus. Paul exhorted early disciples to break bread in memory of Jesus’ body and blood until he comes again.

“Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day” (John 6:53-55).

“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’” (Matt 26:26-28).

Good Works: Works by themselves can save no one. But good works are an important expression of our faith. Jesus himself performed many good works, and we should follow his example.

“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead” (James 2:26).

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me” (Matt 25:35-36).

“As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work” (John 9:4).

Endurance: The Bible says that believers have been saved, are being saved, and still hope to be saved. Salvation is a process that ultimately depends on believers being faithful until the end. No one is “once-saved, always-saved” because we must run the race until the end to win the prize.

“But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Mark 13:13).

“We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end” (Heb 3:14).

“Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off” (Rom 11:22).

The information above is not meant to be a checklist that leads to salvation. Nor is it a comprehensive list for what the Bible says should be done by disciples of Christ. There are several brief lists in Scripture that emphasize the importance of “first principles” such as the nature of man, source of sin, sacrifice of Christ and Kingdom of God — among others.
“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1Cor 15:3-4).

It is our hope that this series of articles will have enriched all in their studies of the Bible. We believe that the Word of God is divinely inspired and able to “make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2Tim 3:15). Our prayer for everyone is that when Jesus returns to the earth to set up his kingdom, we will hear his precious words, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matt 25:21).

**Our Creed**

We believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and buried; The third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from where he shall come to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

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Chicago, IL Ecclesia

**Doctrines to Be Rejected, (10) Immortal Soul**

**Doctrine to Be Rejected # 7: “That man has an immortal soul”**

**Introduction**

This doctrine to be rejected is closely associated with two others:

8. That man consciously exists in death.

10. That the righteous will ascend to the kingdoms beyond the skies when they die.

It can be restated in a positive way: The soul of man defines his being, his life, his existence; and is related to his attitude and emotions. As such, it ceases to exist when the breath of life departs.
This particular doctrine is interesting, because it is almost always phrased as a negative when we describe our beliefs, as in: “we do not believe in an immortal soul”. In addition, we rarely focus on this aspect of our faith: a quick glance at a sample of accounts of “what Christadelphians believe” from the Internet finds no explicit mention of this doctrine. This is despite the fact that it is one of the aspects of the beliefs, in which we differ sharply from most other Christian denominations.

**The immortal soul and the early church**

The concept of the soul’s supposed immortality was first taught in ancient Egypt and Babylon. “The belief that the soul continues in existence after the dissolution of the body is . . . speculation . . . nowhere expressly taught in Holy Scripture . . . The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principal exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended”.

Plato, the Greek philosopher who lived 428-348 B.C., as a student of Socrates taught that the body and an “immortal soul” separate at death. One major source comments on ancient Israel’s view of the soul: “... We are influenced always more or less by the Greek, Platonic idea, that the body dies, yet the soul is immortal. Such an idea is utterly contrary to the Israelite consciousness, and it is nowhere found in the [Old Testament]”.

Similarly early Christianity, after the age of the apostles, was influenced by Greek philosophies even as the gospel of Christ was being preached to the Greek and Roman world. By A.D. 200 the doctrine of the immortality of the soul became a staple of the beliefs of the established church. It is often argued by Christadelphians that these beliefs came in much later, but much of this is based upon ambiguities of language. What is certain is that such beliefs are not to be found in the Bible, neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament.

**Since the Reformation**

Although scattered groups held the truth about the immortal soul, it was only with the reformation in the 16th Century that many came to the correct understanding. Of the well-known names, perhaps Isaac Newton and the Anabaptists are the most worthy of mention. By the 19th Century, belief in “soul sleep” or “Conditional Immortality”, two terms for this doctrine, became widespread, and to this day such groups as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists are strong believers in “sleeping in the dust”.

In addition, many mainstream theologians have come to deny the traditional view on Hell, so the old “hell fire and damnation” form of preaching has almost disappeared. The denial of the immortality of the soul has gone from being a minority view in the 19th century to part of main stream Christianity, at least among the theologians and thinkers of the churches.
John Thomas

John Thomas started off his new-found Christian faith in the USA as a Campbellite, being baptized as such in 1832. His stay in that denomination was not long, for one of the causes of division between himself and the Campbellites was over the doctrine of the immortal soul. He gives in several places the account of the origin of his beliefs, perhaps the most interesting being in *The Herald* for 1859. It is as follows:

We proceed then to remark, that in 1834, while residing in Richmond, VA., we started two questions in this country, which may be presented in the form of the following propositions, namely, that

1. No person destitute of the “One Faith” previous to his immersion is the subject of the “One Baptism.”

2. The animal man is in no sense immortal.

When we started the questions, it was more in the spirit of inquiry than of perfect conviction; and it is also probable that, if we had not been violently opposed, and bitterly persecuted, the matter would have dropped...

The second proposition is self-evident to those who know the truth, and it was not long before we came to be certain of its verity. From 1835 to the present time we have never wavered in our conviction;

So, apart from a prior dispute over exactly who needed to be baptized, the recognition of the falsehood of the doctrine of the immortal soul has been one of the distinguishing hallmarks of the Christadelphian faith, as it was so called in 1864, thirty years later. This statement, or one like it has been consistent, for example:

Man, an immortal ghost, tabernacling in an animal body. (*John Thomas, as perverted by the apostasy, synopsis of the one faith, 1867*).

That the immortality of the soul is a pagan fiction, subversive of the first law of the Deity’s moral government, viz. that the wages of sin is death. (*Robert Roberts’ Statement of 1871*).

“Soul” in the Bible means, primarily, creature; but it is also used of the various aspects in which a living creature - man or beast - can be contemplated, such as person, body, life, breath, mind. It never expresses the idea of immortality. (*Christadelphian Declaration — recent*)

In our preaching

There are a few pamphlets available that offer guidance, and the section in *Wrested Scriptures* is useful. In addition, the New English Translation (the NET) Bible with its notes is most helpful. For example:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Old Testament</th>
<th>New Testament</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hell</td>
<td>Never (KJV 31)</td>
<td>16 (KJV 39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soul</td>
<td>36 (KJV 419)</td>
<td>18 (KJV 39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Passage**

Genesis 2: 7 The Lord God formed the man from the soil of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

**Footnote**

‘The Hebrew term נפש (nefesh, “being”) is often translated “soul,” but the word usually refers to the whole person. The phrase נפש חיה (nefesh khayyah, “living being”) is used of both animals and human beings (see 1:20, 24, 30; 2:19).’

**Passage**

Genesis 35: 18 With her dying breath, she named him Ben-Oni. But his father called him Benjamin instead.

**Footnote**

‘Heb “in the going out of her life, for she was dying.” Rachel named the child with her dying breath.’

**Passage**

Deuteronomy 32: 22 For a fire has been kindled by my anger, and it burns to lowest Sheol; it consumes the earth and its produce, and ignites the foundations of the mountains.

**Footnote**

‘tn Or “to the lowest depths of the earth”; cf. NAB “to the depths of the nether world”; NIV “to the realm of death below”; NLT “to the depths of the grave.”

sn Sheol refers here not to hell and hell-fire — a much later concept — but to the innermost parts of the earth, as low down as one could get. The parallel with “the foundations of the mountains” makes this clear (cf. Psa 9:17; 16:10; 139:8; Isa 14:9, 15; Amos 9:2).’

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**Notes:**

3. See “Sleeping in the Dust” by Jonathan Burke (A Christadelphian). An older work from the 1950’s, “The Conditionalist Faith of our Fathers”, By Leroy Froom, an Adventist, has much information, but some seems to be a little overstated.
4. Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come, 1859, p. 66.
5. “After Death What.” (Fred Pearce.) CMPA Publication
7. Derived from “Sleeping in the dust”, Op Cit.

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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.
Why I Left the Roman Catholic Church (1)

(This article, the first of several, is from a letter written in 1996. Many Christadelphians were formerly Roman Catholic, but few were heavily committed.)

Introduction

To my family, friends, and fellow parishioners at the St. John’s Parish and Missions.

I write this letter to inform you that I have decided to leave the Roman Catholic Church. It is not a decision that I take lightly. I have put many months of concentrated thought, prayer, and considerable Bible research into this decision. My greatest desire is to serve and obey God, and to one day, through His Son Jesus Christ, be part of His Kingdom here on earth. The only way to do this is to search through the book that He gave us which contains His Word — the Bible.

In the Catholic Church, I know we do some very good works, and that we continue to meet together sincerely in “fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” as did the early church (Acts 2:42). However, in the course of my Bible study over the last two years, it has come to light that some of the ways we worship at Mass, and some of the ways in which the Roman Catholic Church is organized, are in direct conflict with what Scripture dictates; in fact, we do not “continue steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine [teaching]” (Acts 2:42).

I have enjoyed meeting you, my fellow parishioners, and I have enjoyed being of service to you and our children in the Sunday School program that I developed and teach, and in the Christmas pageant that I organized for the past four years, and I have enjoyed serving two terms on the Parish Council. I know that you also love the Lord Jesus, and that you are earnestly seeking him. As I said, this is not a decision I take lightly. In fact, I wish it were not necessary. It would be much more comfortable for me to remain in the Roman Catholic Church with you, and I am reluctant to leave my Sunday school students and my loving church community. Also, I fear that my decision might drive a wedge between myself and some of my beloved family and between myself and Catholic friends. However, Jesus himself told us:

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me,” (Matt 10: 34-39).

I respect you, so I will not just “disappear” from your midst without a sound explanation. If you will permit me, please let me explain some of what I have found in the Scriptures that has led me to this decision. While this letter is by no means a full account of what I have found in Scripture which has led to my
The Catholic “Tradition”:
The Roman Catholic Church calls the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, God’s Word, a “dead letter”, “unless it is interpreted within the living Tradition of the whole Church”1. It is believed that only priests, bishops, and other Catholic officials can correctly interpret the Bible. In fact, the Catholic Church forbade the reading of Scripture by lay people for many years, and forbade the printing of it in the common language (per Council of Trent, 1546). Indiscriminate reading of the Bible with independent interpretation was forbidden by Pius IV in 1564. For the same reasons, non-Catholic Bible societies, established to spread Bible translations to be interpreted without Church guidance, were reproved by Pius VII, and severe punishments were imposed on those who did not obey (Wm. Cathcart, in The Papal System, 1872).2 At the Council of Toulouse in 1229, it was decreed that the Bible in the common tongue was to be listed on the Church’s Index of Forbidden Books. In 1199, a Papal decree was issued which stated “desire to read the Scriptures was praiseworthy, but that the practice was dangerous for the simple and unlearned”.3 However, one must note that the Apostles Peter and John were described as “unlearned and ignorant men” (Acts 4:13), and they read, interpreted, and taught the Scriptures with authority. Peter himself tells us to heed the Scriptures; “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed... knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit,” (2Pet 1: 19-21). If Catholic officials have the only true interpretation, why is there so much conflict between their interpretation and what the Scriptures actually say (read the body of this letter for many examples)? And why would Jesus say, “It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me,” (John 6:45)? Is the Catholic Church God?

If Catholic Tradition is correct, then why are we (all followers of Christ) urged by the Apostle Paul to read Scripture daily, and search for the truth — even though it is at times difficult to understand? Many times in the Bible, we are encouraged to search out the truth and we are warned against false prophets and deceivers. We are told to search the Scriptures daily to find out whether what we are told is true or not: “Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures... These were more noble (fair-minded) than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so,” (Acts 17:2, 11). Peter reminds us that the prophets searched the Scriptures carefully (1Pet 1: 10), and even though some of the Scriptures are difficult to understand, we should be steadfast in our search for the truth (2Pet 3: 15-18). Paul told us to “test all things, hold fast what is good,” (1Thess 5:21) and to reject old wives’ fables (1Tim 4:7).
John warned Christians: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1John 4:1). Paul writes:

“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing them from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work,” (2Tim 3: 14-17).

According to the Bible, “tradition”, independent of Scripture is not inspired teaching.

The word tradition is only used thirteen times in most Bibles. All of those occurrences are located in the New Testament and of the total, eleven refer to ‘tradition’ in a negative sense... Eleven of the thirteen references are speaking of Jewish traditions outside of Scripture. Jesus insisted on a definite contrast between ‘tradition’ and the Word of God. In one chapter alone this sharp distinction is made five times in the course of Jesus’ remarks (Mark 7:3-13). In all of Jesus’ statements about tradition he never once came close to equating ‘tradition’ with Scripture. For years the Jews had mistakenly believed that ‘traditions’ were useful, even authoritative, to interpret Scripture. Jesus’ view was that these destroyed the original meaning of God’s message in order to serve man’s interests or beliefs (Matt 15:6). In the other two references to tradition (2Thess 2:15; 3:6), Paul speaks of ‘tradition’ as the substance of his and the other Apostle’s preaching.

Ruth Anne Chisholm-Davin (Shelburne, ON)

Notes:

Special Invitation

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

You, your family, and friends are invited to the
41st annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 25-31, 2016.
Bro. Kyle Tucker: “A Study in First-Century Christianity”
Bro. Todd Fazekas: “The Lord Saves”

Contact Bro. Brad Rek at 330-609-6957, or brad.rek@gmail.com.
Visit our website at www.abrahamicfaithgathering.org for more.
Ready-to-Use Character Plays (1)

A good play has a message in it. Here’s one to try with your Sunday school or CYC. “The Case of Samuel Q. Fence-Sitter” is one of several short plays about developing Christlike character. All the plays in the series are set as a dialog between Dr. Goodword and a patient who comes to his Spiritual Clinic. The afflictions that the good doctor treats are chronic disorders like pride, hypocrisy, and temptation.¹

The play is short and simple. Add a few props and costumes and you are ready to go to work. Encourage the kids to put feeling into it and be sure to have someone behind a video camera. Your cast and crew will enjoy watching the play afterward, and so will the rest of the ecclesia. The message doesn’t grow old.

Enter Doctor Goodword and Sam. Sam has a persistent case of Worldly Distraction.

The Case of Samuel Q. Fence-Sitter

Characters:
Announcer, Doctor Goodword, Samuel Q. Fence-Sitter, one or more Bible readers.

Props:
The setting is the doctor’s office. A desk (card table) and two chairs will do. The doctor has a pencil, pad, and Bible on his desk. Give Doctor Goodword a white coat, spectacles, and a moustache, and you are ready for the camera(s) to roll.

Script:²

Announcer: Patients come and patients go at the Spiritual Clinic of Dr. Goodword, but none more frequently than Samuel Q. Fence-Sitter. Hardly a day passes but what he puts in an appearance at the clinic to register a chronic complaint. And, sure enough, today is no exception, for we find Sam now in the office of the saintly old specialist for another consultation — the third this week! Listen, the Doctor is speaking.

The Play
Doctor: Now, Mr. Fence-Sitter, what can I do for you?
Sam: It’s my eyes again, Doctor.
Doctor: Same trouble?
Sam: Yes sir, only worse.
Doctor: What is it this time?
Sam: I’m beginning to see double, sir.
Doctor: I was afraid of that.
Sam: You were?
Doctor: Yes. I’ve been expecting it sooner or later. You see, it runs in your family. Fence-Sitters have been afflicted this way for centuries.
Sam: It’s very annoying, Doctor.
Doctor: Of course, I understand. But can you tell me just how this ailment affects you?
Sam: Well, my greatest trouble is this. I find myself unable to distinguish between God’s values and the world’s values. They’re all a big jumble to me.
Doctor: In other words, your focus is bad?
Sam: That’s what it amounts to, I guess. There was a time when I felt close to Christ.
Doctor: But now?
Sam: I still see the Lord Jesus, but he’s pretty faint. There are so many other things in the margin of my vision.
Doctor: For instance?
Sam: Well, to be honest with you, Doctor, a lot of worldly pleasures.
Doctor: I suspected as much.
Sam: And they’re not only in the margin of my vision, sir. They’re crowding Christ to the side and taking over the central place.
Doctor: Worldly pleasure is bound to do that, if we’re not careful.
Sam: I still see Christ, you understand, but not as plainly as I did before my eyes started going bad.
Doctor: That’s usually the way it is with these double-vision problems.
Sam: And worst of all, Christ just doesn’t appear as attractive to me as he once did.
Doctor: Worldly pleasures are really dazzling, aren’t they?
Sam: I’ll say they are! Sometimes I almost feel that they’re all I want. I don’t need the Lord Jesus Christ at all. I hate to say it, Doctor, but I’m afraid if worldly pleasures crowd him out of my vision completely, I won’t even miss him!
Doctor: You’re in a bad state, lad ... a very bad state!
Sam: I know it, Doc. That’s why I’m here. I can’t go on like this any longer.
Sam: *(Working self into frenzy).* Do you hear me? This double vision is killing me! It’s killing me, I tell you.

Doctor: Now, now ... take it easy, son. I think we’ll be able to help you.

Sam: Either Christ goes, or these worldly things go! I can’t have them all in my vision.

Doctor: We’re going to see to it that it isn’t Christ who’s crowded out, my boy. That’s the way you want it, isn’t it?

Sam: Yes, sir. That’s the way I really want it.

Doctor: Fine. That’s half the cure!

Sam: But seeing all those other things has made me so confused. Sometimes they look so attractive that I wonder what I ever saw in Christ.

Doctor: That’s the way with these double-vision cases. Compromise is a very dangerous practice, Mr. Fence-Sitter. But there’s one thing that will straighten you out, I’m sure.

Sam: Do you mean it, Doc! I was afraid there wasn’t any hope for me.

Doctor: There is, if you follow my instructions. I’m going to prescribe some exercises for you that will bring your eyes back into proper focus.

Sam: You mean Christ will be back in the center of my vision again?

Doctor: That’s right. You remember the old song: “Fix your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.”

Sam: That’s what I need, Doctor, more than anything else — to get my eyes focused on him. But how am I going to do it?

Doctor: These exercises will help.

Sam: Tell me, Doc! I promise I’ll follow them faithfully.

Doctor: All right. Here they are. First of all, you’re going to have to get down off the fence.

Sam: But, Doctor ...

Doctor: No objections now. I must be very firm about this. You’ll have to get down off the fence. You’ll have to give up all compromise with the world. As long as you try to straddle the fence and belong half to the world and half to Christ you’re going to see double. Now, are you willing to do that?

Sam: Isn’t there any other way?

Doctor: No other way, son ... no other way!

Sam: All right, then. I’ll do it. I’ll get down off the fence. I’ll get down on the Lord’s side.
Doctor: Good. You’ll be amazed at the difference that’ll make.

Sam: Why, I feel better already. My eyes are clearing up, Doctor! My eyes are clearing up!

Doctor: Fine. I knew that would help your focus. Now here’s the rest of the prescription. Go home and start doing your daily Bible readings again. Get back into your prayer closet, too. And start serving Christ’s brothers and sisters, not just yourself! I guarantee that you won’t be troubled with double vision any more. Christ will fill your line of vision so completely that there won’t be room for those other things.

Sam: Thank you, Doctor. I am going to do everything you’ve told me to do. And on top of that, I’m going to change my name, too. No more fence sitting for me.

Reader: “How long will you go limping between two different opinions?” (1Kgs 18:21).

Reader: “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other” (Matt 6:24).

Reader: “A double-minded man (is) unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8).

Reader: “But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14).

Curtain.

If you would like printable copies of the plays in the series, just drop me an email. I will send them to you in PDF form.

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

Notes:
1. The plays in this series are quite old. They are not Christadelphian in origin and the source is unknown. Anyone who recognizes the plays and has information about their origin is asked to contact me. I would like to credit the source if possible – Jim Harper.
2. Play scripts have been revised, and in some cases familiar Christadelphian terms like ecclesia, CYC, daily Bible readings, etc. have been introduced.

There were other gods besides Baal in the Canaanite Phoenician pantheon of gods. This great prophet [Elijah] put the issue with stark clarity in his confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, asking the people how long they would “go limping with two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him” (1Kgs 18:21, RSV). In Elijah’s view there was no place in Israel for the worship of gods other than Yahweh. The difference between Jezebel and Elijah was crystal clear. Was Yahweh the only god or one among many? The Queen regarded Yahweh as one among many and refused to acknowledge that He alone was God.

The Christadelphian, 1956 p. 248.
Youth Speaks

Jonathan the Faithful Prince, (22) Farewell

Jonathan had pleaded with Saul and this time, as we saw in our last article, his pleas were unsuccessful. Instead, filled with fury over Saul’s slandering of David, Jonathan left the feast. From there, he knew that he had to tell David his father’s evil intentions.

The arrows

The next morning began exactly as David and Jonathan had planned together.

“And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him. And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond thee?” (1Sam 20:35-37).

Just pause and imagine what this morning would have been like for these two men. Jonathan woke up and the morning was just like any other day, and yet it was about to be tragic. That morning, Jonathan woke up knowing that he had to go out into the field and tell David that it was no longer safe for him to be in Gibeah or even anywhere near Saul. Thus, he went out into the field and brought the little lad with him — shooting the arrows out of his bow, he shot an arrow far out beyond where the lad was standing. “Is not the arrow beyond thee?” he shouted — and how he would have strained his voice to remain strong and unbroken as he said those words. They were the very words which were the signal for David to flee from Saul; when he heard them, he was to get up from where he was and run away. There was no more planned meetings — when David heard the words, that was the sign that it was time for him to flee:

“But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee; go thy way: for the Lord hath sent thee away” (1Sam 20:22).

When David heard that the arrows were beyond the lad, he was to pick up and run. That was it. “Go thy way.” Unlike what we might typically picture, the two men did not arrange a meeting together afterwards — the entire point of shooting the arrows was to allow David to run away without anyone realizing what had just taken place. As Jonathan said those words, he must have wondered if he would ever see his friend again.

For David, the morning would have likely been filled with anxiety. This was the day which Jonathan had told him that he would shoot the arrows. For three days, David had been hiding out in the field. He was likely dirty, tired, and still slightly overwhelmed — but it was time for him to move out of his hiding place. From his hiding place in the field, he was to go to his former hiding place in the same field, the place where he had been when Jonathan had pleaded with Saul.
for David’s life (1Sam 20:19). As quickly and as quietly as he could, David went over to the stone “Ezel,” or the stone of parting. From there, he waited — until finally he heard the voice of his friend. What a welcome voice it would have been for a fugitive who had been hiding for three days out in a field! As Jonathan began, David heard the first words — “Behold, the arrows...” and his breath would have caught. Then he heard his friend finish “…are beyond thee.” As a wave of sadness and loneliness passed over him, David knew that it was time to run.

“And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan’s lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. But the lad knew not any thing; only Jonathan and David knew the matter” (1Sam 20:38-39).

In a final message to his friend, Jonathan, with well-ed up emotion, shouted out “make speed, haste, stay not.” Now was not the time for David to wait around. Saul’s hatred had gone beyond anything Jonathan had ever seen before. His father had openly declared that he would stand against God’s will, and he had even sought to kill Jonathan for getting in his way. David’s quick departure was imperative.

Yet at the same time, out in the field, Jonathan’s lad heard the words of his master — and “the lad knew not any thing.” As providence would have it, it appears as though the lad assumed that the words were meant for him, and quickly gathering up the arrows, he ran back to Jonathan, ready to “stay not.” Perhaps it was at this time that the lad’s expectation to leave and Jonathan’s desire to see David once more overruled his regard for security. Quickly, Jonathan gave his weaponry to the lad, and told him to take them into the city:

“And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry them to the city” (1Sam 20:40).

With the lad expecting to leave, Jonathan realized that the two friends could once more see each other before David disappeared into the wilderness. It would appear as though David had been thinking the same thing — not wanting to leave his final friend and his mentor. David saw the opportunity to be alone one final time with Jonathan, and he seized the moment.
A final goodbye

“And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded [or wept the most]” (1Sam 20:41).

For a brief moment, the two men had thought that they might never see each other again — and now the opportunity had come for a final goodbye. Once David saw the lad depart from Jonathan, it was as though the young man was overcome with emotion, and he rushed out towards his loyal friend and mentor. As he approached Jonathan, he fell down on his face before him — a beautiful act of submission in which David sought to abase himself before the one whom he believed to be greater than himself. Though he was the one who was destined to be king and though Jonathan had consistently acted as though he was David’s servant, the young man sought to show his love and thanks for his mentor by bowing himself down. Words could not express the gratitude which David had for this man — the man who had seen him through his lapse of faith, the man who had pleaded for his life despite the danger that it brought to him, the man who had patiently endured David’s accusation of disloyalty. What more could he do?

Standing up, the two men said goodbye with a parting kiss, and then began to weep — but David wept most of all (see ESV, NASB). As Jonathan held David, his friend convulsed in sobs; truly there was nothing else to do. David had been driven from his wife. He had been chased to the prophet’s house and had narrowly escaped capture there. Now, he was to leave his best friend and mentor. One by one, his friends were taken from him until he was completely alone. There would no longer be anyone to help him when his faith began to break. There would no longer be anyone with whom he could discuss matters of the kingship. There would no longer be anyone with whom he could think upon the Kingdom of God. They were all taken from him. After this last embrace with Jonathan, he would have no likeminded companions.

As he considered his plight, David’s tears would have continued to flow. Where was he going to go now? How was he going to live? Why was God making all of this happen to him?

Go in peace

In this moment of despair, Jonathan once again broke through the anguish of the moment and lifted up the mind of his friend. Through both of their faces were coated with tears, and though David’s tears were still forthcoming, Jonathan again reminded his friend of the promises of the future. Despite the dreariness of the situation around them, the faithful prince could never forget the glories of the future — nor could allow his friend to do so:

“And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed, and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city” (1Sam 20:42).
As Jonathan looked upon David’s anguished face, he gave him words of comfort — “go in peace.” Yet at first these words may have seemed entirely useless and even insolent in this situation; how could Jonathan tell David to go in peace, he was a fugitive and hunted by the king? Peace would have nothing to do with the next few years of his life! Nevertheless, while the words may have first shocked David, Jonathan backed them up — David wasn’t to have peace because his situation was filled with tranquility and solitude, no, instead, he was to have peace because he knew that something better was coming. Jonathan’s last words to David were all about the covenant which the two of them had made — the covenant in which Jonathan had caused David to swear that he would protect Jonathan’s seed when he became king! Despite the fear and gloominess that surrounded them, Jonathan reminded David of the covenant which they had made just days prior:

“And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not: but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the Lord even require it at the hand of David’s enemies” (1Sam 20:14-16).

Just days before, when Jonathan and David had created their plan together, Jonathan had asked David to swear that their covenant would not only be between the two of them, but between their children, and that when David became king, he would look with favor on Jonathan’s seed. It was the request of a man who seemed to calmly acknowledge that there was the possibility that he would die before David came to the throne — and he wanted his friend to preserve his posterity and watch over his children. Not only so, it was the request of a man who confidently believed in God’s promise of David’s kingship. Now, in this final moment before they parted, Jonathan once more lifted David’s mind out of the depths of today’s sadness and quickly brought it forward, reminding
him of the covenant which they had made between their two seeds — between “my seed, and thy seed” — the covenant which revolved around David’s future kingship! No matter the depravity of the situation, no matter how much his friend’s eyes were filled with tears, Jonathan refused to let David forget that God would see him through all of the trials and would place him on the throne. God had promised, and Jonathan firmly believed that He would fulfill.

The greater Kingdom to come

But there was even more to Jonathan’s words. When he spoke of the future, he wasn’t merely referring to the future when David would be king. No, his mind reached that point, but it didn’t stop there. Looking far past the tribulation of the moment, and even past the glories of David’s kingdom, Jonathan set his face to an even greater kingdom. Such was the power of the message in Jonathan’s final words — “the Lord between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed forever.” The two of them hadn’t simply made a covenant that would bond the two of them together for the rest of their lives — this was something that was greater. This covenant between them was a promise which was based upon something bigger and more extensive than all of the years in their lives and the years of the lives of their children. It was a covenant which would last forever, a covenant which was based upon an understanding of the hope which was given to Abraham, and which echoed the promise which God made to that patriarch:

“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee” (Gen 17:7).

The words which God spoke to Abraham laid the foundation for what Jonathan spoke to David! God had made a covenant with Abraham which wouldn’t simply be with him, but it would be made with his entire seed, and it would last forever. Altogether, this covenant with Abraham was focused on the Kingdom of God, which is when it will fully be fulfilled. So it was with the covenant which Jonathan made with David — it wouldn’t merely be between Jonathan and David, but would be between their seeds, and it would last forever. Thus, just as the promises to Abraham were entirely based upon the Kingdom of God, it was the same with this covenant which Jonathan made with David — and Jonathan’s echo back to Genesis was an extra hint which he was giving to his friend in order to help him think about the age to come! Thus, as Jonathan spoke his final words to David, he reminded him that there would be a time when he would king and reign over all Israel, but even more, there would be a time when the two of them, by God’s grace, would never be parted again.

It was a thought which would constantly stay in Jonathan’s mind, and it was a picture which Jonathan would use to continually lift up the thoughts of his friend. May we learn from that example. And so, with that reminder of a glorious time to come, David arose and disappeared into the distance.

Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)
Let us do good unto all men

There are those in our community today, and we honor them and respect their point of view, although I cannot share it, who really believe that we ought not, not merely that we need not, to shed our benevolence abroad on any other than Christadelphians or Christadelphian causes. I cannot understand this. They say, “The devil can look after his own. Our job is not to do with helping people outside.” But Paul says only that we shall get our priorities right. “Let us do good unto all men, especially them of the household of faith” (Gal 6:10).

Charity, though it begins at home, does not end there; and the kind of charity, the love of the New Testament, is not something that can be bounded by walls. We may not say: “We love one another, but we do not love anybody else. Our love extends to the back of our meeting room, but not outside.” That is not really love, it is partisanship. John said “We love because he first loved us” (1John 4:19 NIV). (You will notice in all the new versions that the word “him” is deleted; in fact, even in the Authorized Version of that passage “him” is italicized indicating that it is not there in the original). What John is saying is, “We love, because he first loved us. We have learned what love is from Jesus Christ. We have learned how good God is to the undeserving and the unworthy. He has been good to us, and therefore we learn from him to love other people. Not a love that is bounded by this or that, or by our fads and fancies, but a love that is all-embracing, as his love has been in embracing us.”

“Limitation of sympathy”

It seems to me that the church in the first century was motivated by “other-worldliness” more than by “unworldliness”. Now, by this I mean that they were not indifferent to their fellows. We have already seen from the quotations I have made from historians, and from the New Testament quotations as well, that the early Christian church was not indifferent to the needs of others. It was not indifferent to the poor and the weak and the despised. Their policy was certainly one of non-involvement in what Paul calls “the affairs of this life,” as he wrote to Timothy, “No man that warreth, entangleth himself in the affairs of this life” (2Tim 2:4). I would think almost certainly that they were more indifferent to worldly advancement than we are today; and yet kindness and benevolence characterized the Christian ethic at that time.

We have this rather strange anomaly, as I see it, that we as a community are well off, generally; sometimes very ambitious; many of our brethren do make their mark in all sorts of spheres; they get on, they have university education, they become the bosses, and the heads. We say, of course, that the Christian way of life requires us to be diligent in business; that they are quiet living people, and
they give their minds to their work and are conscientious, so that the boss says, “That is a conscientious man,” and he promotes him; and this sort of thing does happen. But making all allowances for this, it seems to me that we tend to be much more interested in advancement in this world, and not as much concerned for its people, as the early church was.

I got the following references to Christadelphians out of a magazine that came to me through the post, and it refers to a book of Bertrand Russell’s, “Power — a New Social Analysis”, which many of us have heard of only because it mentions our community and puts us in a rather good light — he says, in fact, that:

“Christianity was, in its earliest days, entirely unpolitical. The best representatives of the primitive tradition in our times are the Christadelphians, who believe the end of the world to be imminent and refuse to have any part or lot in secular affairs.”

Now that has been quoted in my hearing a good many times, and yours too I dare say, and we are all rather pleased about Bertrand Russell giving us an honorable mention, because we do not usually get a mention at all. Although I do not suppose we would agree with anything he said about any other subject under the sun, we agree with him here that Christadelphians are the nearest of any other group of believers to the primitive Christian tradition.

But I am indebted to whoever wrote this article, because he tells us that Russell also made another reference to Christadelphians in the same book which was not very flattering, and we never hear that mentioned. Do you know what it says?

“But limitations of sympathy are also natural; the cat has no sympathy for the mouse; the Romans had no sympathy for any animals except elephants; the Nazis had none for Jews, where there is a limitation of sympathy there is a corresponding limitation in the conception of the good. The good becomes something to be enjoyed only by the magnanimous man, or only by the superman, or the Arzan, or the Christadelphians.”

“Christadelphians” he said! He is linking us up with the Nazis now.

My observation of our community and speaking as one who loves it, is that one can be very zealous about what we call the truth, and yet very unkind with it. There is a “limitation of sympathy” very often. You can have a kind of religion that says, when the bombs are raining down on London, you are not to put out the fires, for they are the judgments of God. You are interfering. This was said, not by berserk men, but by sincere Christadelphians who felt that their interpretation of prophecy was such that they would be doing something wrong by helping their neighbors in these distressing conditions.

I do not personally accept this. I think Bertrand Russell is right, that there can be a limitation of sympathy where you hold this rigid closed-door mentality, as doctrinally we do. We say, “They are all wrong; the world is in darkness, so let them stew in their own juice.” Now you cannot really do this, and it was not the Christian ethic of the first century. I am convinced it was not. We sometimes
find the same spirit in our own dealings with one another. There is nothing so bitter as two brethren who have fallen out with one another about Adam’s nature before the fall, or something like that. They treat one another worse than “the publican and sinner.” These kinds of arguments go on, and this kind of writing goes on; and vituperation and bitterness creep in the pamphleteering from one to another, and it is all in the name of Christianity.

This is understandable. We say, “Well, of course, when people feel strongly about things, you know.” But we ought to feel strongly about some other things as well. We ought to feel strongly about loving one another, and caring for other people, and being sympathetic, and being kind and gentle; because Jesus was all of these. He was a “strong man,” and he stood up and denounced error; but he was always kind, and patient, and gentle to those who needed help. To those who were down the bottom end, whose lamps were burning low, and the wick was flickering. He did not stamp people out — “the bruised reed shall he not break and the smoking flax he shall not quench” (Matt 12:20). He never quenched people, he poured in the oil of love, of his spirit, and helped them to burn again. And this is what we have got to learn from Jesus and, I believe, from the New Testament church.

The general picture

Let me now try to summarize our findings. The general picture we have of ecclesial life, in the later part of the first century, is probably not as unlike our own as we might have imagined, persecutions apart. That is interesting is it not? We are the first century church — “apostolic Christianity revived,” but we have to admit that we have not heard of any Christadelphian, at least in the UK, thrown to the lions or even put to death. There are people being put to death for their religion, for their Christianity. There are people suffering tortures for their faith. We may say that it is all misguided, and that they do not hold the truth; but I only record, without comment, that there are people who are undergoing tortures, real tortures, in prisons and in solitary confinement in parts of Europe, because they believe in Jesus Christ; while we ourselves have to say, “Well, we are like the first century church, but, of course, we do not have any persecution.”

There is as much activity, possibly, in preaching and teaching today as in the New Testament church. There were apostles, and prophets and evangelists at work in the field then, as we today have our Bible Mission workers, and campaigners, and men who do not spare themselves, who go out to preach this gospel as far as they can with great zeal and great devotion and great love. Their organized ecclesial life at local level, as we saw previously, was in a sense similar to our own. It may not have been exactly parallel, but they had comparable structure, with their arranging brethren (or eldership), and serving brethren; their speaking brethren, and so on. Their community activities consisted, as it would appear, mainly of the weekly meeting for the breaking of bread and worship. “When you come together on the first day of the week”; “when the disciples were gathered together for the breaking of bread”, and phrases such as that, indicate that their way of life was in some senses like our own.

The majority of members of the early church were not going off to Gaul to preach
the gospel there, or up and down Italy, or over to Asia Minor. Most of them were getting on with a routine job; they had to, for they worked in households, or they might have been artisans or even slaves; and most of them were going about their daily vocations at various levels of society, though, as I have suggested, probably chiefly from the lower orders. Some were slaves, but some were slave owners — Philemon you remember, was a slave owner, and Onesimus was one of his slaves who had run away and had been converted in Rome. And what did Paul do? He sent him back to his master, and asked Philemon to treat him kindly and to forgive him for any wrong that he had done.

There were artisans and merchants; there was a doctor, and a government official; plenty of poor, but some wealthy, with large houses and estates and servants. The point being that the Christian gospel in New Testament times was for every man. It cut across all the social barriers. Barbarians, Scythians, bond, or free, male or female — it mattered nothing as far as Paul was concerned. This was a faith for living every day. It was a faith that men turned into the stuff of their daily lives. The slave in his service, the master in his business, the artisan making his leather goods, or tents, or whatever. They went about their jobs, and they were to turn their religion into the daily living. They were not, as I suggested earlier, all chiefs and no Indians. They were not all office seekers, nor all important people in the church. The majority of them were the humdrum stuff of the ecclesia, the people on whom the work was being done and for whom it was being carried out. “We are workers together with him,” Paul says, “You are God’s field, you are God’s building” (1Cor 3:9). We are working on you, and the quality of the work will show in the quality of the lives of the people who belong to the Christian ecclesia at that time, on whom we are working, and the Day of Judgment, he said, will show what kind of workmanship has gone into it.

We do tend to think of ourselves today as all being involved at the top level, whereas, in fact, the importance of the Christian calling is in the daily life, in the kind of people we are becoming, in the way in which the Christian gospel is working itself out. There were those in the Thessalonian Ecclesia, you will remember, who appear to have thought that the day of the Lord was so near that there was no need to work at all, and they seem to have just lived on the largesse of their wealthier brethren. Paul had to point out to them that they could not go on like that:

“But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia; but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing” (1Thess 4:9-12).

Len Richardson

Notes:
1. [Editor]. I have read Russell’s book, and not only cannot I find the reference there, I cannot find it in any of Russel’s writing. Perhaps someone else can.
Reflection

Building the Tombs for the Prophets

“Woe to you, because you build tombs ['sepulchres': KJV] for the prophets, and it was your forefathers who killed them. So you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs” (Luke 11:47,48 NIV; cp Matt 23:29-31).

Jesus criticized the Pharisees for building the tombs for the prophets. Examples of such tombs dating to before Jesus’ day can still be seen near Jerusalem, and he may well have been pointing to some of them as he spoke. His criticism suggests that the Pharisees showed a great zeal for the reputations of the righteous ones who had gone before them, but that their zeal had produced a decidedly negative result. The parallel passage in Matthew 23 adds a second phrase to “you build the tombs”. There, Jesus also says: “and [you] decorate the graves of the righteous” (vs. 29). The word “decorate” (“garnish” in KJV) is from “kosmeo”, and it means to arrange, adorn, or set in order, with the strong suggestion of worship.

Jesus then adds: “You testify against yourselves” (Matt 23:31), thus indicating that those who revered the prophets’ tombs, or the graves of the righteous, were like those who had actually “murdered the prophets” (v 31; cp also Luke 11:47,48) and other “wise men, and teachers” (Matt 23:34).

Not only were the Pharisees just like those in the past who murdered the prophets: they were in fact their heirs. In other words, these Pharisees were the proper successors of all those previous generations who had disregarded the wise men, and now they would condemn themselves by continuing the sins of their forefathers:

“Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all” (Luke 11:50,51; cp Matt 23:35,36).

So intent were the religious leaders of Christ’s day upon preserving the traditions of their fathers, that they fought tooth and nail against anything and anyone that was different and challenging. This was also what their fathers had done when challenged by the prophets. Such rigidity of thought renders men incapable of hearing the message of God, and witnessing His glory. Being thus blind and deaf, they were unable to examine themselves, and unable to repent. They clung to traditions that had the outward appearance of religion, but never came to grips with the “more important [‘weightier’: KJV] matters of the law — justice, mercy and faithfulness” (Matt 23:23).

The same frame of mind which would slavishly revere dead prophets and teachers would just as easily kill contemporary ones.
“The attitude of the scribes to the prophets was paradoxical. They professed a deep admiration for the prophets. But the only prophets they admired were dead; when they met a living one they tried to kill him. They honored the dead prophets with tombs and memorials, but they dishonored the living ones with persecution and death.”

William Barclay, Daily Bible Study Series: Luke

Anthony Oosthuizen paraphrases:

“You have plenty of zeal for the tombs of holy men — but you have more use for them dead than alive! And remember that the men who treated them so vilely were your fathers. You have inherited the same characteristics, only worse. And now you plan to slay a greater prophet than any whom your fathers persecuted!”

Encounters with the Lord

Not just for Christ’s day

These are very hard words, and not just for the devout Jews of Christ’s day. If his words mean anything to us today, as we must assume they do, then they are very hard words indeed for us also. So hard, in fact, that we can scarcely imagine ourselves — “good” Christadelphians that we are — in the picture Jesus describes. And so hard, perhaps, that we may never have taken to heart the Lord’s warning — if one may judge such matters by the apparent dearth of any exposition of this passage in previous Christadelphian writings.

Jesus seems to say that the believer who is prone to overly idealize the memory of prophets, teachers and pioneers is all too quick to “kill” those who protest against such a practice, as well as those who are the same sort of teachers and pioneers in a modern context. Praising long-dead “prophets” is relatively easy and pleasing to human nature. Like those who worship images and relics, those who publicly lavish praise upon our “pioneers” achieve a superficial religiosity — a form of religion which carries the special benefit of being easy, since it requires no sacrifice or pain or even effort to achieve!

Thomson’s observation

W.M. Thomson was an American Protestant minister who lived in Palestine for more than 25 years. He rode a horse the length and breadth of the Holy Land, and kept an extensive journal of his travels, which was published in 1859. The book was entitled The Land and the Book, and it contains extraordinary insights into the landscape, buildings, culture and customs of the land and its inhabitants. These insights are so valuable because, for an outsider in his day, Thomson was uniquely familiar with his subjects — both of them: the Land and the Book!

Citing these verses in Luke 11, Thomson recalled the many instances he had come across, in his travels, of superstitious devotion at shrines supposed to hold the relics of long-dead “saints”. This kind of slavish devotion had infected Christian worshipers as well as Muslim ones.
His words, written with evident distaste, are a helpful exposition for us:

“The greatest sin of Israel... was apostasy from the true God and His worship by idolatry; and the most prevalent mode of this apostasy is sacrilegious reverence for dead men's tombs and bones... Now, it was for rebuking this and other kinds of idolatry, that “the fathers killed the prophets”, and those who built their tombs would, in like manner, kill anyone who condemned their idolatrous reverence for these very sepulchers. Thus the Pharisees, by the very act of building those tombs of the prophets, and "honoring" them as they did, showed plainly that they were activated by the same spirit that led their fathers to kill them; and, to make this matter self-evident, they very soon proceeded to crucify the Lord... because of his faithful rebukes. Nor has this spirit changed in the least during the subsequent eighteen hundred years.”


Are we prone to this also?

Why are we, even with far greater knowledge, still prone to a similar veneration of the “pioneers”? Perhaps primarily because we are human, and it is easy! But perhaps also because we intuitively understand that dead “prophets” and dead “pioneers” can be confined to books on shelves, where they can be controlled. By contrast, living “prophets” and “pioneers” cannot be compartmentalized or filed away. They stick their noses into our business, intentionally or otherwise. They disturb our consciences. They prod us out of our comfort zones, and they encourage us to actually do something when we would rather do nothing. In other words, maybe we revere deceased teachers so that we don’t have to listen to living teachers who are still with us.

Rules for Bible study

For example, we may devote ourselves to every detail of John Thomas’ prophetic interpretations, almost as if he were inspired. At the same time we may neglect to read Scriptures like Daniel and Revelation with the same open mind that Bro. Thomas himself used when he wrote his commentaries!

Early on in his ministry, Bro. Thomas published guidelines for personal Bible study, including these rules:

Never be afraid of results to which you may be driven by your investigations, as this will inevitably... disqualify you from arriving at ultimate truth.

Investigate everything you believe: if it is the truth, it cannot be injured thereby; if error, the sooner it is corrected the better.

Pursue this course with as much independence as if you were the only one concerned. Rely on no authority less than divine in so momentous an undertaking.

Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come, Vol. 9, No. 8 (August 1859), p. 180

What happens then if we neglect John Thomas’ guiding principles of Bible study, but at the same time instinctively accept every word he wrote? We congratulate ourselves on revering his memory by “believing” all he wrote, but in doing this, we become much like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, tombs and special decorations and all. We honor John Thomas in principle but not in practice.

Meanwhile, we may compound our shortcomings by also belittling and ostracizing other believers who try, like Bro. Thomas the Bible student, to study their Bibles with open minds.

Jesus said to the Pharisees of his day that, when they built the tombs for the prophets whom their fathers killed, they were actually testifying that they approved of what their fathers had done (Luke 11:47,48)! As T.W. Manson paraphrased in his book, The Sayings of Jesus (London, 1949, p. 101), Jesus’ criticism of the Pharisees could be condensed into this simple slogan: “The only prophet we honor is a dead prophet!”

Are not these same words in Luke and Matthew our Lord’s criticism of us?: Do we really honor the memory of dead pioneers and wise men by refusing to even consider the words and studies of other Bible students in our own day?

**What would John Thomas think?**

Put it another way: What do we suppose that Bro. Thomas would think of his “disciples” — that is, those who have been most outspoken in their devotion to him — if he knew that they had advanced very little if any beyond the prophetic ideas he developed 150-plus years ago? I think he might say something like this:

Why didn’t my professed friends take into account all the geopolitical changes since my day? Why didn’t they take into account all the advances in understanding Bible languages and the messages of the prophets in the last two centuries? But especially, if they were my true friends, why didn’t they revere and imitate my rules and my attitude toward Bible study? Surely they knew, didn’t they, that they show their devotion to the LORD God by carefully studying His Word — but not by carefully studying my words?

**And what would Jesus think?**

Most importantly, what will our Lord Jesus Christ think of us, when he returns to raise the dead? He will find that we have been given the “one talent” of gospel truth, in part by the labors of wise teachers and preachers who have gone before us. But will he also find that we were content to receive that “one talent” wrapped up neatly and handed to us (Matt 25:18), and then to complacently examine that truth from time to time, but not bother to work at making it grow?

If, as we often say, we stand on the shoulders of giants of faith who went before, shouldn’t we be able to see further and more clearly than they did? The great scientist (and Bible student) Isaac Newton summed up his career in these words:
“If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants... I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore... whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.”

Many “giants” have gone before us, in various fields of science, linguistics, textual analysis, history, and archaeology, as well as Bible study. We show proper respect to their memories not by lauding them, but by building on what they have labored to give us, in whatever capacity we might be engaged. We demonstrate that respect by following the rules which our own “giant”, John Thomas, has pointed out to us:

- Investigate what you believe.
- Do not be afraid of the results of your investigation.
- Do not rely on any human authority for the last word.
- Keep an open mind.
- Remember that the Word of God must come first, last and always.

The greatest “giant” of faith to go before us — Jesus Christ — showed the greatest reverence for his Father’s Word. We do our Lord the same service by showing real reverence for the Word of God too, in all that we say, think, write and do.

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Let us recover the sense of excitement about prophecy which former generations of Christadelphians had.

Try to be led by the Bible, not by world events — It is easier to seize on a political development and make it ‘fit’ a prophecy; it is better, though harder, to take a prophecy and look for a current situation to which it may correspond.

Study all the prophecies that appear to relate to the latter days, not just one or two — It is a trait of Christadelphians to concentrate solely on passages such as Ezekiel 38 or Zechariah 14, or only to be interested in Revelation: there are important last-day prophecies in Isaiah, Joel, Zephaniah, the epistles of Peter and many other books.

Let us not be afraid to emphasize the simple and straightforward prophecies that are being fulfilled in our own times — The continuing fulfilment of prophecies about, for example, the return of Jews to their land are usually far more compelling to interested friends than speculations about the place and time of the gathering of the saints for judgement.

Let us insist, among ourselves and in our witness, that the exhortation to preparedness is the most important element in prophecy — It is of no merit to be an expert in international affairs, or to have a complete mastery of Bible prophecy, if we have neglected our personal discipleship and involvement in ecclesial life.

“When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28).

Events at the Bank Hall Ecclesia Barbados (2014 – 2016)

The Bank Hall Ecclesia Barbados have been privileged over the past few years to experienced several wonderful events.

At the beginning of 2014, the Hall was in urgent need of repairs. Thanks to God, those repairs were done through the kind generosity of the CBMC spearheaded by Bro. Rod Ghent. Also in 2014 we held our first youth camp, with the help of Bro. Clive and Sis. Joanne Walton from England and Bro. Ashraf Ali from the USA. The theme of the camp was “All That Glitters...” Bro. Ashraf was the main speaker, but he was supported by local brethren. He also organized a treasure hunt for the young people and cooked a special meal for our picnic.

In 2015 the annual sponsored CBMC Bible School was held at Easter. The speaker was Bro. Ken Styles from the Royal Oak Ecclesia in Detroit, USA. His theme was “Studies in Nehemiah.” It was a very motivating four days of Bible study. Bro. David and Sis. Sarah Corbin were also with us at that time. Bro. David is originally from Barbados, but he lives in the USA. He was instrumental in helping the ecclesia make some important decisions. We are very thankful to God for his help.

Also in 2015 we tried some new preaching ideas. With Bro. Ashraf’s help once again, we held a Bible Exhibition. Leading up to and following the exhibition Bro. Ashraf gave a series of talks entitled “Introduction to Prophecy.” Bro. Jonathan Hale from the Crewe Ecclesia, was in Barbados at the time of his first talk. The exhibition was on the Saturday. The sisters were on the street directing people to the Hall. At the Hall visitors were taken around to view the exhibits. We had leaflets printed on prophecy and also some explaining what we as...
Christadelphians believe and preach. There was a table set up with a computer where short talks on “Why the Bible was reliable” could be watched. The highlight of the exhibition was a miniature of the tabernacle which Bro. Ashraf brought with him. Several Bibles and Bible Basics books were distributed.

In November Bro. Clive and Sis. Christina Drepaul came to help us with our first study weekend. The topic was “The truth of the first beast”. Bro. Clive also did a series of lectures. We had some visitors for the lectures, and the study weekend was very much appreciated by all those who attended.

The annually sponsored CBMC Easter Bible School this year will be held in March from the 25th-28th, God willing. The theme is “Show me thy Glory.” The speaker will be Bro. David Andrews from Guyana. Visitors are welcome to attend.

This year we are planning a family camp in August and a Bible exhibition in September: a date has not been set yet for the study weekend. We would like to thank all those who helped in these ventures. Your efforts are very much appreciated. We welcome the support of visiting brethren in the giving of exhortations, lectures and helping out in our special projects. Should anyone like to help please contact me Bro. Joel Caine Programme Coordinator of the Bank Hall Ecclesia at the email cainney@hotmail.com.

Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

Jamaica — Fraternals are like an ‘Oasis’

It’s always a pleasure to attend a fraternal in Jamaica. It’s like an oasis away from the demands of daily life. The hired cars and mini-buses arrive from across the Island loaded with members and children. The February 10, 2016, Ash Wednesday Fraternal at Broughton was attended by brothers and sisters from the Argyle, Harvey River, Kingston, May Pen, Port Maria, Round Hill and Spanish Town Ecclesias.

About 85 received instruction from the Scripture on the theme “Living the Word”. Bro. Don Luff gave the first talk on ‘Man shall not live by bread alone’. The second study on ‘Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it’ was presented by Bro. Keith Kinlocke. The emphasis was on letting the Word teach us to develop our consciences, which in turn will guide our behavior. Hymn 165 —‘Teach me thy way O Lord’ was sung with enthusiasm setting the tone for the day.

Deuteronomy also urges us to teach our children, or our sons and our sons’ sons. This coupled with the large
numbers of children and teens present, highlighted the importance of Sunday School and C.Y.C. activities. To this end, the young people were encouraged to register for the Annual Easter Weekend Youth Camp at Camp Hope. The ‘Book of Ruth’ is the study theme for that weekend, and preparatory readings have been assigned so as to encourage the youth to be ready for the studies and the ‘Quiz Challenge’ during the Camp.

Three discussion groups followed the two talks on the following topics:

- Living the Word – wherever I am each day
- Living the Truth – with my family
- Living the Truth – with members of my ecclesia

The day ended in the afternoon with a Memorial Service and a provided meal. No-one was in a hurry to return home, since everyone lingered after for conversation. Fellowship was enjoyed at this oasis in our time of pilgrimage, as we await our Lord.

Written by Bro. Don Luff, CBMC Jamaica linkman
Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

Jamaica — A Special Sunday in Port Maria!

The members in the Port Maria area organized a mini-Fraternal on Sunday, February 14, 2016, at the Forrester’s Banquet Complex in this town. The seven active members had been unable to meet on a regular basis, due to the lack of an available meeting room. The whole facility includes several buildings and an undercover outdoor cooking area, plus a large central open space where the young people played soccer and basketball. With funding from the CBMJ, one of the meeting areas was rented for the day — and friends and family members were invited to a public lecture, a hot meal prepared on-site, followed by a Memorial
Service for members. A Sunday School type lesson took place instead of the lecture, since there were more children and teens present at the beginning than adults — a pleasant circumstance indeed! The exhortation theme — “Where will I be when Jesus returns?” — was of benefit for all. A thought-provoking topic to consider, in light of current world events, while meeting around the Lord’s Table.

It was a worthy effort, for the first attempt in several years, of a combined public witness and fraternal, to which 38 children, adolescents and adults attended. We thank Sis. Sandra Reid for the beforehand organization of the necessary details. Everyone was also thrilled to see 93 year old Sis. Enid Hall present for the day’s activities — she is the only active member left of the ecclesia which used to meet in their own hall in Port Antonio, over an hour east of Pt. Maria. The CBMJ will continue to do its best to support the efforts of the members in this town, plus provide means of working with the youth as well.

Don Luff, CBMC Jamaica linkman

Those attending the Fraternal. Sis. Enid is in the chair on the left.

Children lining up to shoot baskets
Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 91781, Austin, TX 78709-1781, www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, V3R 0J7

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110. Phone: 818-842-2868 jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Heritage College c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, N3P 2B1

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Rick Szabo, P.O. Box 1528, West Caldwell, NJ 07007-1528 www.wcfoundation.org

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923. Phone: 732-381-4590 Fax: 732-499-8415 christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, e-mail: jdhunter@gte.net

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to P.O. Box 146, Three Rivers, CA 93271-0146, or 97 Twenty Place Blvd., Mount Hope, ON L0R 1W0 or via website www.agapeinaction.com e-mail: agapeinaction@rogers.com

Christadelphian Indian Children’s Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CBMA earmarked for CICH, c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy children in mission areas www.christadelphianschildren.com

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Jonathan Farrar, 140 Whitwell Way, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0

Joy Fund, Inc. provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Alcohol Help Line provides fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. Phone: 866-823-1039

Christadelphian Care Line provides fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems, as well as family issues. Phone: 866-823-1039
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.

BOSTON, MA
We are pleased to welcome Bro. Ray and Sis. Elizabeth Calise to the Boston, MA Ecclesia by way of transfer from the Cranston, RI Ecclesia. We look forward to their company on our journey to the kingdom of God.

We would like to thank Bro. Steve Stewart (San Diego, CA) and Bro. John Mannell (Toronto West, ON) for their recent words of exhortation.

Jim Sullivan

COLLINGWOOD, ON
It has now been three months since we started meeting weekly for Sunday services in Collingwood, and our new ecclesia has thrived. The highlight of our first quarter was the Sunday School Entertainment held April 3, 2016. The young people put on a dramatic performance of the Life of the Prophet Elijah, and sang some musical items as well. Ben Aback was King Ahab, Abel was Elijah, Levi was Obadiah/Naboth. Kyla was Queen Jezebel with Beth as Athaliah, and the others had various parts. With scholars ranging in age from five to fourteen, it was a great combined effort and all the parents were pleased with the result. We had three visitors from the Seniors Home we meet in also attend the performance and it was a great way to introduce them to the truth.

Our recent exhortations and adult Sunday school classes have taken on a bit of a theme regarding communication and how we as brothers and sisters in Christ can get to know each other better and therefore be in a better position to help each other out. With this in mind we have started a “mentorship” program where members and young people are paired up with another member and encouraged to meet or contact each other outside of regular ecclesial activities. Each month we will rotate to another pairing. We hope this will enhance the family atmosphere of the ecclesia.

The mid-week Bible class continues with our study in the book of Hebrews, as does a bi-weekly Sister’s class studying the book of Ruth.

We encourage anyone visiting the area to join us for any of our functions. Please keep our new lamp stand in your prayers as we witness to a world in darkness and encourage each other in these last days to be ready and prepared for our Lord’s return; surely he comes quickly!

Perry Braux

HONESDALE, PA
We regret to inform our brethren that our beloved Bro. Alan Decker went to sleep in the Lord on March 2, 2016. Baptized in 1974, he became dedicated to the Lord and
serving our ecclesia as well as being a loving and supportive husband and father to Sis. Debbie and their three daughters. He put our precepts into practice providing joyous light to all in his daily life and will be greatly missed until Christ returns.

_Stephen J. DeMarco_

**PITTSBURGH, PA**

On August 23, 2015, we were blessed to witness the baptism of JOSHUA BUDNEY into the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the son of Bro. Len and Sis. Julie Budney. On December 13, 2015, ANNA FOLKERTS was baptized. She is the daughter of Bro. Bill and Sis. Laura Folkerts. On February 28, 2016, ABBY TELLES, the daughter of Bro. Fred Telles and Sis. Jennifer Bekhit, was baptized. We pray that our heavenly Father will watch over and guide them as we await the soon return of His Son.

We thank Bro. Kevin Mayock for his encouraging classes on, “Joseph” for our CYC Study Weekend of November 13-15, 2015. We had wonderful support from many visitors in the US and Canada.

We thank Bre. Peter Wilson, Ian Nibloe, Steve Harper, Roger Snyder, Mike Coy, Michael Davey, Chris Stilwell, and Dan Langston for their very helpful words of exhortation.

_David Pommer_

**SARASOTA, FL**

It is with great joy that we announce the baptism of HELEN PRICHETT into the saving name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sis. Helen is the daughter of Bro. Terry and Sis. Jean Cannon of the Castle Bromwich, UK Ecclesia, which will be our new sister's home ecclesia.

It was the Sarasota ecclesia's great pleasure to provide the pool for the immersion. Our new sister's father had the joyous opportunity of immersing her into Christ. Our prayer to the heavenly Father is that He will be with her on her walk to the kingdom.

The members of the Castle Bromwich Ecclesia heard the audio transmission of the baptism. They saw, via “Go To Meeting”, the right hand of fellowship extended to Sis. Helen, which followed the exhortation by her brother in law, Bro. Keith Archer (Studley, UK).

_James Wilkinson_

**WICHITA FALLS, TX**

Since last reporting our ecclesial news we have welcomed the following brothers and sisters around the Table of our Lord: Ed Newton Verdugo Hills, CA); Kelly Ellison (Westerly, RI); Rachel Newton (Los Angeles, CA); Bucky and Debi Wilhoit (Detroit Royal Oak, MI); Malinda Beutel (Tulsa Joplin, OK); Jim Cowie (Brisbane, Aust.); Kerri Maier (Texas); Tyler Cherry and Aron Cherry (West Houston, TX); Ronnie and Kristen Hefner and Brandon Hefner (North Houston, TX); and Peter Trotter, Jacob Matthew, Michele Massip, Antonio and Marcia Howell, (Dallas,TX). We thank Bre. P. Trotter, A. Cherry, B. Wilhoit, A. Howell, E. Newton and J. Cowie for their words of exhortation and special Bible classes.

In November 2015, Bro. Daniel and Sis. Malinda Beutel moved to Tulsa, OK. We certainly miss these fellow laborers and commend them into the loving care of the Tulsa Joplin, OK Ecclesia.
We were pleased to welcome Bro. Colin and Sis. Chris Hollamby (Glenlock, AUS). Bro. Colin gave a series of classes on, “The Altar Offerings, Sin, Burnt and Peace,” and a public address entitled, “The Jews are God’s True Witnesses.” Then at the end of March, Bro. Colin led our annual Spring Gathering at the T4C Camp on the topic, “The Pleasant Theme of Israel’s Psalms”. We thank him for his very uplifting efforts on our behalf.

John A. Clubb

[Note: these are the first two items of intelligence communicated by Bro. Robert Roberts.]

Halifax,— The brethren here have been distressed with it prevalence of ill health, and the death of four of their number; yet, as far as they have been able, they have, during the year, occupied themselves—as was their wont—in setting forth the truth before the public,— Heckmondwike, Holmfirth, Huddersfield, and Dewsbury having been centres of action. They express their repugnance to the full declaration of our principles proposed, if that means the making of a creed, or test of union; recommending rather an abstract of the things confessed by each Church (without individual crotchet or idiosyncrasies) as a ready basis of friendly correspondence one with another, Brother Roberts is now correspondent.

Messenger of the Churches, 1860, p 120

Halifax – for a good many months past, the brethren in Halifax wore without any understood order system. They met together, broke bread, read the Scriptures, exhorted, etc, quite in a spontaneous manner; no one in particular being appointed to do any of these things. This state of things gave offence to one or two of the brethren, and they brought forward a proposition to have a president — to lead the meetings, and act as guardian and “ruler” of the brethren, both in and out of the meetings. This proposal was strenuously objected to; and, after some discussion at a meeting called for the purpose, a satisfactory compromise was effected. Three elders were appointed to conduct the meetings by turn, and to look after the interests of the brethren generally. This is now the order of things, and it works very well. The brethren have just adopted a plan of cottage preaching, which is expected to be more satisfactory to themselves and profitable to the bearers than street preaching. Weekly meetings (on Wednesday nights) are to be held in all the brethren’s houses by turn, each brother who is able taking his turn in speaking; the audience to consist of the neighbours and friends of the brethren, who are to be invited by them to come and hear the truth proclaimed.

Messenger of the Churches, 1860, p 139
Our Wilderness Journey

An interesting piece of ecclesial news appeared in *The Berean Christadelphian* for December 1940. It was submitted by the recording brother of the Houston Ecclesia, J.T. Smith. Here is an extract:

Since last writing we have had the pleasure of visits by Bro. and Sis. Joe Lloyd (of Midland, Texas). Sis. Ella Lloyd (mother of Bro. Joe Lloyd), of Celina, Texas, fell asleep in Christ, July 3, 1940. She had continued steadfast in the faith for which she earnestly contended for 51 years. She dearly loved “the Truth”. Her mind remained alert until she closed her eyes in sleep and rest, to know no more until she is awakened by angels and given the glad news that “the Master hath come and calleth for thee.” She has fought her fight and we feel sure that she will awaken with joy and gladness in her heart, knowing that there is laid up for her a crown of righteousness by him for whose return she so often and earnestly prayed.

We see such news often in *The Christadelphian Tidings*, as well as *The Christadelphian* from Birmingham. Given the inevitable end of “all flesh” in this age, such reports are to be expected. For the brotherhood as a whole, these announcements mark the final rest of each believer in Christ. For a moment perhaps, whether we were personally acquainted with each believer or not, we pause in our activities to offer our thoughtful respects to the departed one. Many years ago, the English poet John Donne wrote:

> No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main... Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.

**A death, and a new life**

Bro. Smith also reported another event which happened four short days after the first:

Bobbie Joe Lloyd, son of Bro. and Sis. Joe Lloyd, embraced the one Hope while in Houston, July 7, 1940. He has long been a student of the Scriptures and an ardent and uncompromising believer in the “glad tidings” conveyed to fallen man through Scriptures, whereby we may, with God’s help and through His mercies, work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

“Bobbie Joe Lloyd”, the grandson of Sis. Ella Lloyd and only 13 years old, grew up to become Bro. Bob Lloyd, or — as his name appeared under each “Minute Meditation” in *The Tidings* — Robert J. Lloyd. His life in the One Faith spanned almost 76 years, and along with his grandmother’s life in Faith of 51 years, covered 127 years — all except for four days — between 1889 (the days of
covered wagons and Bro. Robert Roberts) and 2016 (the days of space travel and a worldwide Christadelphian brotherhood).

In 1940 my grandmother Sis. Jessie Hatcher was a member of the Houston Ecclesia when Sis. Ella Lloyd died and Bro. Bob Lloyd was “born” in baptism. Sis. Jessie’s daughter Ruth Hatcher also attended the Houston Ecclesia and eventually became Sis. Ruth Booker — and my mother. I still remember them both referring affectionately to little Bobbie Joe, and telling me what a diligent Bible student he was, especially for such a young man. Partly because of his example, I became a Bible student also.

As time passes in the brotherhood, we mark the arrival and departure of many faithful ones. The arrival of new believers, by baptism, is a time of rejoicing for believers, and angels as well (Luke 15:7,10). On the other hand, the departure of other believers, in death, is a time of sadness. Nevertheless, our sadness is mitigated by the knowledge that one more follower of our Lord Jesus Christ has finished the race and kept the faith, and that a “crown of righteousness” could await such a one in the future, when the righteous Judge returns (2Tim 4:7,8).

If we live long enough, we will all experience quite a number of both “arrivals” and “departures”. We might wish for more of the former and less of the latter, but that is not in our hands. We may plant the seed, but we cannot force it to grow in honest hearts, God alone gives the growth: as Paul said “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1Cor 3:6). We may mourn the passing of beloved ones and wish they were still with us, but we cannot turn back the clock, and we cannot prolong the inevitable. Life and death alike are in God’s hands:

“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” (Matt 6:27).

Bro. Bob saw his grandmother laid to rest, and many other loved ones besides, over many years in the Faith. Now he has fallen asleep in Christ, on December 14, 2015, to be mourned by those he left behind.

We all see many loved ones finish their courses. We pause to remember, and to pay our loving respects. Then we continue our journey, through the vast wilderness which is our world, on our way to the Promised Land.

A great exodus
One of the great mass exoduses in human history occurred in the years between the end of the American Civil War and the last years of the 19th century. It was a span of only 30 years. The great western migration of hundreds of thousands of Americans started from states like New York and Ohio and Pennsylvania. These people were bound for Texas and Oklahoma, Colorado and New Mexico, California and Oregon.

But the movement of pioneers across the vast and sometimes brutal mountains and deserts of North America was far from easy, and not without its losses. Attacks by hostile Indians, starvation, accidents, and illnesses took their toll on these pilgrims. Many never reached their destinations. They died along the way, and they died in such numbers that chroniclers of that time and that trek have
noted an extraordinary fact: After the first few years, no markers or guides were needed to show the path westward. The main trails were clearly marked, not by signposts and direction indicators, but by graves. ‘Follow the line of graves westward, keep going, and you will reach your destination.’

We might say the same thing about our travels “on the way” to the Promised Land. Follow the markers set up for you; walk in the ways of those who have gone before. Follow the paths of the sheep who follow the Great Shepherd, and you will not go wrong. Take note of the direction they were traveling even as they breathed their last, and died “along the way”. Our memories of them, their lives and their words, strengthen and encourage us to continue. They remain, even in death, a “great cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12:1).

Keep their examples before your eyes, and press on, “farther along” that same trail. You are bound for the glorious land and the city which our LORD God has chosen for His people. If you survive to reach that place, then you may rejoice. But if you, like so many others, die short of your final destination, you may rest in peace, with the sure knowledge that you will be there too.

**Bro. Bob’s last meditation**

In his last “Minute Meditation”, which appeared in the January 2016 issue of The Tidings, Bro. Bob quoted 1Thess 4:16-18:

“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words” (ESV).

Whether we are alive or dead when the Lord Jesus returns, we have this assurance: that he will come to claim his own. No matter when or where we start our individual journeys, no matter when or where those individual journeys come to an end, we will all — living and dead — stand in his glorious presence. Those elect ones who are alive in that day will be called together to meet him, while at the same time those who have died before his return will rise from their graves, also to stand in his presence.

We are all — living and dead — his special treasure, the sheep who hear his voice. We are all precious to him, as he is to us. And if we do not forget him, he will never forget us. He tells us:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me... I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:1,6).

George Booker
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

MAY, 2016

April 30-May 1 Pittsburgh, PA  Annual Spring Gathering. Bro. Phil Prater (Richmond, VA) will have classes on “The Seven Abominations in Proverbs 6”. Travelers’ lunch will be provided at noon and classes will begin at 1:00pm. Contact Bro. David Pommer at david.pommer@verizon.net or (724)224-7363.

6-7 Vancouver Island Sisters’ Weekend  in Victoria, BC. Study will be led by Sis. Maritta Terrell (Austin Leander, TX). Topic: “Renew Your Mind.” Registration Fee: $50.00. For further information or to register contact Sis. Rosa Bailey, 3-1431 Simon Rd., Victoria, BC, V8X 3G9 or rosabailey@shaw.ca.


20-22 Southern California Mens’ Weekend at Lake Cachuma, CA. Speaker, Bro. Dennis Bevans (Baltimore, MD): “Becoming a Man Like Jesus.” Join us for an uplifting camping weekend in California’s beautiful Central Coast. All meals are provided. For questions or travel or accommodation issues, contact Bro. Levi Gelineau leviandjessica@gmail.com.

21-22 Prince George, BC  Annual Fraternal. Our speaker is Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA), and his topic is, “The Temple of Zerubbabel.” Please contact keith.billington@telus.net to register.

JUNE, 2016

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

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

JULY, 2016

2-10 Mid-Atlantic Bible School, Shippensburg, PA. The speakers are Bro. Frank Abel (Hamilton Book Road, ON), “The God of Peace” (Adults), and “The Answer of a Good Conscience” (Teens); Bro. Dafydd Jenkins (Cardiff, Museum Place, UK), “Prophets and Kings” (Adults), and “Getting to Know My Lord” (Teens); and Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch North, New Zealand), “Gabriel — Messiah’s Evening Angel” (Adults), and “The Spiritual Habits of the Saints of God” (Teens). This information will also be available on the MACBS website www.midatlanticbibleschool.com.

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

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


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

23-30 Eastern Bible School **New Location This Year** Franklin Pierce University, Rindge, NH; Theme: “Let Us Consider One Another to Provoke unto Love and Good Works.” Bro. Dennis Bevans (Baltimore, MD): “Jonah and Nahum: Christ’s First and Second Advent” (adults), and “Philippians: Christ Our Everything” (teens); Bro. Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD): “Peter: A Living Hope” (adults and teens); Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA): “Family Life Lessons from Genesis” (adults), and “Ecclesiastes: Lasting Happiness Can Only Be Found with God” (teens). For registration information contact Sis. Cindy Nevers at 18 Sibley St., Auburn, MA 01501, or cindynevers@verizon.net.


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


AUGUST, 2016

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

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

**SEPTEMBER, 2016**

**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.

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

**8-9 Vancouver, BC** Fraternal Gathering. Speaker Bro. Marc Hunter (Saanich Peninsula, BC). Contact Sis. Pam Snobelen at pamela721@shaw.ca, or 604-881-4733 for a program.
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Editorial

Freedom of Speech

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

Preaching etc.

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

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

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

“Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers and for the praise of those who do
good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men — as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God” (1Pet 2:13-16)

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

Defamation

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

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

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

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

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

Internally

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

This trait has largely disappeared in our community. As I grew up in the 1960's, there was a considerable amount of discussion about many topics, such as
Biblical inspiration, the precise role of the Holy Spirit, attempts to reconcile the early chapters of Genesis with scientific observations, as well as much deep study of the text of the Bible, its message to the early Church, and its implications for today. I listened to Brethren AD Norris, Harry Whitaker, Len Richardson, Edward Whittaker, and many others of high intelligence, deep Biblical knowledge, and searching minds as they strove to answer deep questions. They were not afraid to be questioned by younger minds, they stood up ably in debates with academics, and they devoted their whole being to understanding the message of the Bible. And if you read the magazines of the time, you can see the debates about these topics echoing through the pages.

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

- What is His Name by Bro. AD Norris.
- The Drama of Creation by Bro. Alan Fowler.
- The Last Days by Bro. Harry Whittaker (and many other of his books).
- The Holy Spirit And The Believer Today by Bro. AD Norris.

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

Questions from the young

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

Peter Hemingray

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

The Greatest Commandment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Answer
Jesus’ answer goes back to the Old Testament: “Listen, Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You must love the LORD your God with your whole mind, your whole being, and all your strength” (Deut 6:4-5 NET). The phrase “Heart and
being” used here mean, in a sense, mind times two. “Heart” in Scripture is not about emotions; it’s one’s thinking and “mind”. In the New Testament it usually means spiritual insight versus brainpower. “Strength” here implies with your whole body. In addition, to there being only one true God perhaps this verse also speaks to being one with His family in the Millennium.

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

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

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

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

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

The Good Samaritan

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

The answer is the story of the Good Samaritan. A brief summary: A man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho and he was robbed and beaten. Later a priest, and then a Levite, came along and passed him on the other side of the road. However, the Samaritan when he saw the man had compassion and looked after him with great care and kindness. The Samaritan cleansed and bandaged the wounds.
He did all he could to ease pain and provide comfort, and he went even further by paying the innkeeper for current and future expenses.

Jesus then asks the expert in the law: "Who was the neighbor?" The expert said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise" (Luke 10:37 ESV). The neighbor to be loved is someone in front of you who needs help, and you have means to help him ... and how? With all the compassion and means that you have.

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

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

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

**The law and the prophets**

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

Concerning “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31). This is in the same paragraph as “bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” And a few verses later: “love your enemies, do good to them...”
“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ ” (Gal 5:13-14). Of course this also goes back to Moses and the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20.

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

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

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

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

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

**We are to walk in His ways**

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

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

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

We are not to follow idols, we are to have no idols, American or otherwise.
“...and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but... go after other gods that you have not known” (Deut 11:28)

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

We must give our all, including all our hearts.

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

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

The end of the matter

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

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

Dave Kerr (Baltimore, MD)

Special Invitation

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

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

Bro. Kyle Tucker: “A Study in First-Century Christianity”
Bro. Todd Fazekas: “The Lord Saves”

Contact Bro. Brad Rek at 330-609-6957, or brad.rek@gmail.com.
Visit our website at www.abrahamicfaithgathering.org for more.
First Principles

Doctrines to Be Rejected, (11) Death State

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

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

Traditional statements and Biblical proofs

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

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

The following Biblical references are cited:

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

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

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

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

“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.” (Psa 146:3,4).
Note: the last reference was given in 1871 as Psa 46:3-4, and this was repeated in at least the 1868 through 1877 versions, but The Declaration has the (presumably) correct version.

**Declaration 1867 (First Edition)**

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

Other references often cited are:

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

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

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

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

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

**New Testament**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Apostle James tells his readers not to make too confident assertions of what they will do at some future time. You never know what will happen tomorrow, he says; and then adds:
“What is your life? For ye are a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14, RV).

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

The Trinity and worshipping images

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

Encyclopedia Britannica has these interesting points on the Trinity:

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

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

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

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

In addition:
• In Mark 1: 12-13, and Matt 4:1-11, Jesus is tempted, but remains sinless. In Heb 4:15, Paul writes that Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses because he was “in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Now, James (1:13) writes, “God cannot be tempted.” Since Jesus was tempted, yet God cannot be tempted, then Jesus cannot be God.

• God cannot die, because He alone has immortality, and God cannot be seen by men (1Tim. 6:16); however, Jesus died (Rev 1:18), and he was seen by men. Therefore, Jesus is not God.

• “The child [Jesus] grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him,” (Luke 2:40). If Jesus was God, why did he have to become strong in spirit and filled with wisdom? Would this Jesus/God not automatically be filled with the spirit and wisdom of God? Again, Jesus said: “I can of myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous, because I do not seek my own will but the will of the Father who sent me, (John 5:30). And, “when you crucify the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father taught me, I speak these things,” (John 8:29). These statements show that Jesus and God are two distinct beings, God is the Father, and Jesus is the Son of God. The head of Christ is God (1Cor 11:3); Jesus is subject to God (1Cor 15:27-28); and Jesus stated that his Father is greater (John 14:28). Therefore, Jesus is not co-equal with God. This truth is put clearly thus: At his second coming:

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

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

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

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

“...who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. And having been perfected, he became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him” (Heb 5:7-9);
“Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and this is now already in the world” (1John 4:2-3).

The Holy Spirit

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Worshipping images:

God said:

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image - any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor worship them.
For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Exod 20: 4-6).

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

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

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

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

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

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Notes:
1. To be found on the Internet.
The last visit

As David departed from his friend and the two of them could no longer see each other, they must have wondered how it was that God would reverse this situation. How would David go from a fugitive in the wilderness to the king of Israel? David had been in the perfect position to become king — he had recently been brought into the king’s family and the prince had clearly demonstrated that he was willing to give the throne to him. He had fought a number of battles with the Philistines and had gained quite a reputation within and without the nation. But, instead of ascending to the throne or waiting until Saul had passed it to him, he was being driven further away from everything related to royalty. In fact, his life would soon be the exact opposite of how he would have expected it to be. He would live in caves, running from the king of Israel and surrounded by a band of discontents and debtors! How would God reverse all of what had been done and bring David back to the throne?

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

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

Saul had been scouring the countryside looking for David, yet as soon as Jonathan sought to find him, he knew where to look. Just think of the danger that Jonathan encountered trying to do this — trying to depart from his father’s camp without
Saul seeing him or realizing that he was gone! Nevertheless, Jonathan went to his friend, a visit which would be their last before he died — and throughout this final meeting, Jonathan “strengthened his hand in God.” Though David had been gone for months, Jonathan hadn’t changed. He was still that mentor who was focused on the things of the Kingdom and who would constantly bring David’s mind back to the things that were good. Thus, Jonathan’s words were again focused on the time in which David would be king, “The hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel.”

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

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

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

Type of Christ

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

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

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

The same ritual-bound man who sought to kill Jonathan, also slandered him by calling him illegitimate — the son of a “perverse and rebellious woman” (1Sam 20:30). Once again, this was endured for the sake of his friend. In the same way,
the Master was called the same thing by the Jews — illegitimate, yet he endured it so that he might complete his mission, all for the sake of his friends (John 8:41).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There were certainly some adaptations made to meet the changing situation of the church in New Testament times and some of these we have already seen. The first church at Jerusalem was clearly Jewish in origin and in membership. It still gravitated to the temple and to the synagogue. So in Acts 3:1 we find Peter and John going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, and it would seem probable
that they were going up there to take part in the temple service. Later on, when Paul and Barnabas took the message out to the Gentile world they always seem to have gone to the synagogue first of all. Acts 13:5 and verses 14-15 are examples of this. We have already looked from another angle at the Council at Jerusalem in Acts 15, which was clearly making new decisions in the light of the changing circumstances brought about by the influx of Gentile Christians. And in the pronouncement made by “the apostles and elders with the whole church” which we have looked at already we see the transitional period brought to a head in the declaration sent out to all the churches for their obedience.

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

A transition period

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

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

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

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

Because this is what they were urging on Paul: they were saying, “There are all these Jews here and they have heard that you do not keep the Law, and that you are saying the Law does not matter any longer. Now prove to them that you
are a good Jew and put yourself at charges with these men and associate with
them in their vow.”

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

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

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

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

The lesson we may take is that although necessary developments take place,
the danger is that they may accelerate and go too far. Thus, from a reasonable
development in New Testament times, in which the various ecclesial offices
and officers were clearly developed, and wisely so, under the guidance of the
apostles, we only have to move into the second century to find the breach
growing between the clergy and the laity, and the bishops taking more power and riches to themselves with the growth of the church hierarchy to which I have already referred.

Len Richardson

Reflection

Giving the Bible its Present Shape

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

“NTHBGNNNGGDCRTDTHHVNSNDTTHRTH.”

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

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

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

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

“NTHBGNNNGGDCRTDTHHVNSNDTTHRTH”

Into

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

So What Now?

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

**Let us not be surprised**

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

**Let us not give in to fear or paralysis:**

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

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

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

**Let us accept what cannot be changed:**

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

Some have far more liberal views than others. Some are more insistent on traditional (conservative) influences. It has been this way for generations. Both
of these mindsets have their strengths. Both have, at their roots, a desire to serve meaningfully. This will not change.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**It really is about families:**

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

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

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

It is a myth that children need lots of peers. It is a myth that giving children much time on their own builds independence. It is a myth that giving children
unsupervised access to computers builds in them responsibility. Having parents that care about them, monitor them and hold them to account is far more likely to build the strong, independent decision makers we need children to grow into.

**Conclusion**

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

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

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

*Dana Kohlman, (Calgary, AB)*

**Notes:**

2. A cursory search of “church attendance decline” in N. America confirms this.
3. There are at least 10 passages in Scripture that use the phrase “hold fast”.

**One in Seven, and Seven in One**

**Ephesians 4:1-16**

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

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

The passage is presented below, from the New International Version. This presentation is intended to highlight certain features of the passage, e.g., how the whole passage (vv 1-16) revolves around, and explains and amplifies, the
seven-fold “unity” of the One Faith (vv 4-6). These seven “unities” provide the ‘first principles’ which define the members of that Body, or — to put it another way — the foundation upon which the One Body of Christ, like a tabernacle or temple, is constructed.

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

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

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

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

13) until we all (#7) reach unity* in the faith (#5) and in the knowledge of the Son of God (#s 4,7) and become mature* (complete, perfect), attaining to the whole measure of the fullness (#7) of Christ (#4).

14) Then we will no longer be infants (#7), tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

15) Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things (#7) grow up into him who is the head (#4), that is, Christ (#4).

16) From him the whole body (#1), joined* and held together* by every supporting ligament, grows and builds* itself up in love, as each part does its work.

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

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

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

1) First of all, a body (like the One Body of Christ: 1Cor 12, etc.), held together by joints and ligaments and muscles, receiving oxygen and food by the intricate working together of its various parts, and receiving outside stimuli from eyes, ears, nose, etc. — in short, every part joined together and working together for the good of the whole. Also, in Ephesians 4:13,14, the “body” of believers is spoken of as “growing up”, i.e., from the “infant” stage to a maturity of stature and judgment and strength.

2) Then there is a building (cp Eph 2:11-22), also held together by “joints”: Jews and Gentiles “joined together” or “framed together” (2:21) as a “temple” in which God will dwell. This concept is revisited here in Ephesians 4: notice the “building up” in verses 12,16. A building has a lot in common with a human body. It has an outer frame which holds the structure together, gives it unity, and protects vital elements inside. As one example of this simile, Ecclesiastes 12 describes a human body as it ages, and compares it to a house deteriorating.

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

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

The first Adam was made of dust, and that’s what he would have remained: a lifeless body if the Lord had not breathed into him the spirit, or breath, of life! This is a picture of the giving of life, and a prophetic picture of the resurrection of the dead.
For us, right now, it is also a picture of a spiritual renewal of life. A person, or even a collection of people, is nothing more than a “body”, without spiritual life, until and unless the Spirit of God is breathed upon (and into) them. The Body is dead without the Spirit! What does this mean? Does it mean, as others might say, that we must have the Holy Spirit “gifts” before we are truly alive in Christ? Of course not. But it does mean that we must have God’s Spirit before we can live spiritually. And that’s a key thought in this section of Ephesians 4.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

More than that: Even the Holy Spirit gifts, by themselves, did not guarantee that the Body of Christ would automatically grow and develop and produce fruit to
God’s glory. It required faith and commitment and sacrifice by individuals, as well as the “gifts” themselves, in order for the Body to grow.

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

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

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

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

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

One Hope (#3)

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

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

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

A true, or Biblical, “hope” needs, at the very least, to take into account these
three items (resurrection, the kingdom, and Israel). If one’s “hope” doesn’t deal with these things, it can scarcely be the one hope.

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

One Lord (#4)
We notice that Paul speaks of himself as “the prisoner of the Lord” (v 1), and this ties in well with the Psalm 68 quotation about “captives” in verse 8. Those who are “captured” by the Lord Jesus Christ become his slaves, or servants. But this is no burden; it is a blessing. As his servants, they receive “gifts” to enable them to carry out his will. This includes the “grace” of sins forgiven (v 7). Who would not gladly become a prisoner and a captive so that he or she might receive the forgiveness of sins?

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The “one hope”...</th>
<th>... “the kingdom of God”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The “one Lord”...</td>
<td>... “the name of Jesus Christ”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

One Faith (#5)
The “one faith” is a belief, or faith, in that which is real: the kingdom of God and the work of Jesus Christ. But it is more than some kind of vague, nebulous “faith” (or reluctant consent) to what is real. It is, especially, a real faith! It is this sort of faith that will save us — not just knowing what is right, but a loving commitment to do what is right: a faith made perfect in deeds and actions. A “faith which does nothing is no faith at all! All by itself, this passage, Ephesians 4, makes this plain:

- Those who have been “captured” by the Lord must live lives worthy of the eternal glory to which they have been called (v 1).
- They must, in love (the crucial ingredient), demonstrate humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance (v 2).
• They must make every effort to maintain the “unity of their spirits” focusing on the final goal (v 3).
• They must use all their gifts in “works of service”, to “build up”, and not to tear down, the body of Christ (vv 11,12).
• They must grow in faith and knowledge, and endeavor to become “mature”, and to help others to become “mature”, in Christ (v 13).
• They must “speak the truth in love”, and grow up into “the Head, who is Christ” (v 15). If there is no real resemblance between themselves and the Lord they profess to serve, then how can they be said to truly belong to him?
• Once again, all their effort must be directed to “build up” the whole body “in love”, “as each part does its work” (v 16).

One Baptism (#6)
The “one baptism” must relate to the method of “baptism”, which is by total immersion and not by sprinkling. Furthermore, it must be undertaken by those who are old enough, and mature enough, to know why they are doing it. And old enough and mature enough to make a real commitment, and to carry it out.

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

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

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

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

One God and Father (#7)

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

The answer finally came to me, as I read this passage over and over: This seven-part statement is written, not from God’s perspective, so much as from man’s
perspective. In short, Paul’s statement to the Ephesians does not start with God; rather, it starts with the body of believers, and progresses until that Body grows up into its Head (v 15) and becomes, in its maturity and fullness (v 13), the true children of the “one God and Father of all” (v 6). So even the order of Paul’s seven “unities” is significant:

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

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

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

This last statement is the longest of the seven “unity” statements:

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

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

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

- If there is only One God and Father, then He has only one family, and that family must be completely (in all, or altogether) humble and gentle, patient, and bearing one another’s burdens in love (v 2).
- They must work in His family to fill (finish, or complete) all of the Father’s work in this world. It is not up to them alone, because the Father will work
with them. But they must never give up on that work (v 10).

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

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

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Joints

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

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

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

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

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

Dear Bro John,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“The letter of assurance from the Unamended brethren which accompanies
Dear Brother Peter,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(From the Original Ecclesial Guide, 1883)
Guyana Visit 2015

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

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

We were so blessed with the outcome of the Vacation Bible School in New Amsterdam. We started with 16 children and had 32 children by the last day. We started each day with prayer, our week’s songs, a Bible lesson, questions, crafts,
lunch and some discussion, and then it was time to go home for the day. Our kids listened very well and had great participation, especially with the crafts. We were so blessed to have our favorite friend, Sis. Laurie Wilkenson help us out and provide us with some top-notch crafts that went along with our lessons. It was uplifting having the young people Brian Kellawan, Sonia Rupenarine, Imraz Khan, Susan Arjune, Sarah Khan, Gilbert Ndjelekulu help from the Kilcoy and New Amsterdam CYC's, along with the children at the Vacation Bible school. We couldn’t have done it without their help. We had a fantastic time being pampered by Sister Bibi and Brother Robin Rupenarine; they really make you feel at home, specially being able to hang out with tiny beautiful Isabella (Sister Dilean’s baby daughter).

Going out to the Plegt Anker Ecclesia was extraordinary! We did a CYC class out there. There were 25 young people who came from near and far to hear the classes on Micah 2 and 3, also a presentation on Shiloh and information from The Promised Land Youth Conference going over Israel. Talking with the locals there we found around seven young people who want to take baptismal classes! It’s amazing how many people you touch and influence on your travels there and how many new people you get to meet. It’s worth going to see all the lovely, friendly faces!

We visited the widows from the Georgetown Ecclesia, Lorraine and her sister, Glancy, they are such a breath of fresh air, always full of such a joyful spirit for our Lord. Sisters’ classes in New Amsterdam and Georgetown were most enjoyable, all the sisters had such great input.
Caribbean Youth Conference 2015 was huge with many new faces. It was on “Youth At The Crossroads”. The brothers, Tyron Smart and Ian Mcfarlane, had incredible classes that moved everyone. We had such a great group of people this year; it was a blast! Sis. Dawne Semple helped drive us around everywhere while we were there. She always amazes me with something new every time I go there. Dawne is such a big help to the ecclesias. She always wants to do more and more, helping as many in the ecclesia with anything she can. She is a wonderful lesson in how to use the gifts God gives us. I love having fellowship time with such wonderful and humble brethren and friends.

We had a tragic departure the day our flight was leaving this amazing place. We got a phone call saying Bro. Timothy Barnwell was in the hospital; he’d been in a serious car accident. He fell asleep in the Lord a few days later, and all I know is that I cannot wait for the Kingdom to see his smile from ear to ear again. May God be with his family, fiancé and loved ones who he impacted by his life.

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

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

Trudy Stuchlik

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

The following poem from: www.THISISYOURBIBLE.com
Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity
How Hast Thou Spent Thy Time?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A dream you say? But oh how real; and what relief to wake To find I still have unspent time, ‘ere the judgement morning break. For us the Savior scourged and scorned, up Calvary Hill did climb. What shall we say, when he shall ask “How hast thou spent thy time?”
As the sequel to “On the Way,” this book is the album of a spiritual journey, offering encouragement and food for thought to fellow travelers along the Way to the Kingdom. Its pages present in-depth studies and thoughtful exhortations, as well as lighter meditations and musings. The subject matter is wide-ranging: practical issues of life in the Truth, Bible exposition, biographical sketches, reflections on today’s world, personal viewpoints, and much more.

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News and Notices

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

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

BEDFORD, NS

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

Dale Crawford

CHICAGO, IL

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

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

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

Dan Richard

HONESDALE, PA

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

Stephen J. DeMarco

SUSSEX, NB

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

Paul Baines
Thoughts on the Way:

Constraining Love

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

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

The Scriptures give several answers. We are baptized:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

George Booker

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

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

Gary Burns, Richmond VA. The Tidings, 2000 p. 390
Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

JUNE, 2016

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

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

JULY, 2016

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

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

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


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

23-30 Eastern Bible School **New Location This Year** Franklin Pierce University, Rindge, NH; Theme: “Let Us Consider One Another to Provoke unto Love and Good Works.” Bro. Dennis Bevans (Baltimore, MD): ”Jonah and Nahum: Christ’s First and Second Advent” (adults), and “Philippians: Christ Our Everything” (teens); Bro. Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD): ”Peter: A Living Hope” (adults and teens); Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA): “Family
Life Lessons from Genesis” (adults), and “Ecclesiastes: Lasting Happiness Can Only Be Found with God” (teens). For registration information contact Sis. Cindy Nevers at 18 Sibley St., Auburn, MA 01501, or cindynevers@verizon.net.


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


AUGUST, 2016

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

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

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

SEPTEMBER, 2016

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

24-25 Kouts, IN Fall Study Weekend at Woodland Park Community Center, 2100 Willowcreek Rd., beginning at 10:00 a.m. The speaker will be Bro. Bryan Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI). Theme: “Peter’s Conversion.” Please contact Bro. Joe Bennett at 219-762-2704, or jkb8275@comcast.net.
OCTOBER, 2016

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


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

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Exhortation
The Greatest Commandment

Reflection
One in Seven, Seven in One

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The Trinity, Idols

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Doctrines to be Rejected
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Our Opponents

“I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them” (Rom 16:17).

Introduction

Over the years, I have been exposed to many of those who have opposed our Christadelphian community. As I am sure is common to many of my readers, I have been both verbally challenged and read many tracts written by those who consider our beliefs apostate. Although the Internet has allowed us to spread our message, it has also allowed those who disagree with us to spread their own messages. In addition, I have received quite a few communications from our members asking for help when they have been attacked for their beliefs.

The aspect that has interested myself, and led to this editorial, is how, by and large, the arguments used on me many decades ago are virtually identical to those used today. The only (although major) difference is that the Internet allows these views and diatribes to be far more widely dispersed and readily available. Simply typing in “Christadelphians” often brings up one or more of these opposing websites, quite high among the almost 400,000 sites indexed by Google which mention “Christadelphian”. Decades ago, you might find the occasional pamphlet in Christian Bookstores, and some mentions in the more comprehensive encyclopedias, but you would have to be a very diligent researcher to find much more than this.

However, when I looked at these arguments, they seem to be based upon the same “research”. With rare exceptions, then, the approaches used by both those who oppose and those who defend have remained the same, and the lack of success of the opponents has likewise remained the same. Our community has not been exploding in size like those of the mega-churches around us, but our faith and our beliefs have remained unchanging. We all sometimes encounter those who create obstacles for us, and particularly those who are young in their work towards the Kingdom, but we can draw comfort, knowledge, and guidance in the fact that most of the challenges of those who oppose have been met long ago.

In the beginning

There have always been opponents of the Christadelphian faith, and those who were opposed the most vigorously became the most important in the development of our beliefs and community. However, I will concentrate on the attacks that have been most often repeated, and date back the furthest. I am not including any of the great debates of the past conducted by Bro. Roberts and others in which they directly challenged individuals who defended the false doctrines of Christendom, or even those of atheists. Some of these debates are still in print, and reflect Bro. Roberts’ mastery of this form of preaching.
It was not long after he commenced publishing *The Ambassador* (later *The Christadelphian*) that the nascent community was assaulted by David King, a Campbellite. This was not surprising, because a number of the members of his denomination formed the nucleus of the emerging Christadelphian denomination from 1849 on, including about half the congregation in Aberdeen where Bro. Roberts, as a boy of about 10, heard John Thomas speak.

The attacks continued, although David King refused all offers to debate with Bro. Roberts. There later was a broadside, written by him in 1881, entitled “A glance at the history and mystery of Christadelphianism”, and this is actually still being used by our opponents. To quote from what Bro. Roberts wrote at the time:

“It is not a history of the truth, but an unfriendly representation of certain incidents, over 30 years old, of no manner of moment to those who desire only to know what the Bible teaches. They are incidents connected with the visit of Dr. Thomas to Britain in 1848–9, incidents which were naturally galling to those whose fellowship he was leaving, but which in no way affect the question of Christ’s coming and Kingdom. They are incidents of which those who cherish Dr. Thomas’ memory need in no wise be ashamed. The Tract has been answered and the incidents explained long ago.

“As for ‘mystery,’ there is none in Christadelphianism. It is the outcome of a reasonable and frank acceptance of the Bible as the word of God. Studying this for himself, Dr. Thomas discovered that its teaching was at total variance with recognized theology in all points and particulars. He set himself to work by voice and pen to make this manifest. Others examined to see if it was so. They found it was so, and they in turn have done the same towards others. In this there is no “mystery,” but a very straightforward and obvious operation of reason and truth.”

It does seem strange to me that some episodes from over 150 years ago are used to attack a community whose foundation relies on the evidence of the Bible: although Bro. Thomas indeed developed much of what we believe, we only rarely cite any of his writings when we teach. And although it must be admitted a few of his prophetical views have not been fulfilled in the way he expected, we can still read his works with profit.

**A common pamphlet**

I first came across a pamphlet attacking the Christadelphians in the 1960’s, while browsing a religious bookstore. I did not know it at the time, but it was first published around 1910, and fully answered by Bro. Walker in 1912. The basis of Pollock’s attacks was a copy of “The Declaration”, in which each statement, of which there are 36, is followed by the appropriate Bible verses. Pollock chooses to address ten or so of these topics: as the whole reply would run to twelve pages or so of this magazine, it is impossible for me to even summarize the arguments. However, these are common to many who attack our doctrines: a list (as in bold) will probably suffice, because all these items are well covered in our literature,
and we all should be prepared to answer for our beliefs in each of these areas.

- “Son Of God,” Not “God The Son”: or The True Nature of Christ
- Christ And Creation: Or the Preexistence Of Christ
- The Atonement: or Representation not Substitution
- The Gospel: “The Power of God unto Salvation”: We must believe the Gospel to be Saved.
- Baptism: And Why It Is Essential To Salvation
- David Is Not Ascended Into The Heavens: There is no Heaven as a Place For Our Souls
- The Thief On The Cross: The meaning of “Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise”
- The Holy Spirit: the Power of God, not the Third person of the Trinity
- The Devil: A Symbol For The Temptations That Overcome Mankind
- “Soul” And “Spirit”: The Immortality of the Soul

Christadelphian prophecies

This is another area in which our opponents have assailed us, although in some cases you can argue they might be somewhat justified. There is an unfortunate tendency in our community to engage in speculation as to the time of Christ’s return, and this has persisted from the time of John Thomas to now. In writing “Anatolia” in 1854, (later published in a modified form as “Exposition of Daniel”, he was convinced that Russia would win the Crimean War. In the same year, he forecast:

“When this appointed time shall have elapsed [that is in 1866], the work of establishing the Kingdom’s economy in the land promised to Abraham and Christ, and to all constitutionally in them, will be commenced”

Of course, this date, which has often been regarded as the end of the temporal power of the Pope, can be regarded as significant, but certainly did not fulfill the expectations of John Thomas. And this tendency to set specific dates has continued: I can remember quite a few of them even in my short time. Famously, an Australian brother, Charles Wauchope, actually had his prediction of Armageddon in 1934 entered into the Australian Parliamentary record in 1921. Some (although not all) were hedged by “we cannot be sure, but the signs of the times seem to indicate that...”. Of the return of our Lord we can be sure: but of the date, not so. So we should keenly look at the “Signs of the Times.” But I believe he will return when we (or at least most of us) least expect it. We need to be ready to make our defense before our opponents, and pray that, by the grace of God, we will be admitted to the Kingdom of our Lord.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:
2. The Christadelphian, 1912 p. 457, 487
3. Herald of the Kingdom, 1854, p. 225
**Exhortation**

**I will walk at liberty...**

**Clear your minds**

The heart that is ‘deceitful above all things’ rarely lets us enjoy our moments. It’s always reminding us what we don’t have, what we do poorly, that we aren’t as respected as some other person, what tasks we’ve left undone. The list goes on.

This situation is compounded by our feelings. Happy circumstances tend to promote (but do not guarantee) happy thoughts. But if we’re anxious, we obsess and inflate our often imagined woes. Whether feeling or thinking, our moments are quite an unreliable continuum: babble mixed with vanity and a dose of self-pity, not to mention thoughts completely inappropriate for polite conversation.

Scripture asserts strongly that what we think about will dictate every aspect of our lives. Simply put: “Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things...” (Rom 8:5 NLT).

None of this is in accordance with the high calling we’ve received. The expectation of scripture is that we think and feel differently from those governed by the flesh. So here’s the question: How do you usually feel and what do you spend most of your time thinking about? And, does the summary above reflect your existence? Are your thoughts and feelings a basket case?

Mark Twain said this: “We all do no end of feeling, and we mistake it for thinking”. Precisely the point. We tend to exist in the matrix of confused emotions rather than clear thinking, and confuse this with measured reflection. Think about this translation of a passage in James: “Clean up your lives, you sinners, and clear your minds...” (James 4:8 NAS).

Here’s another dimension to our thoughts and feelings: We can get better at managing our thoughts and feelings, and getting better would do nothing but serve our interests, but we tolerate our weakness because that’s what we’re used to. This is our brutal reality. We know there is better, but our natural resistance to change and attraction to mediocrity limits us. I’ll never forget this quote by CS Lewis:

“We are half-hearted creatures... when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea... We are far too easily pleased.”

Whatever else, we all have to agree, living presently in the glory and appreciation of the things around us and the high calling we’ve received is not likely our normal state of being. Being frenetic, distracted, emotionally fragile (guilt! shame!) and self-indulgent more likely defines our existence.
This is the dilemma: Scripture insists we think and feel differently from those around us, but just how do we go about that? Delightfully, scripture insists that this is both possible and necessary for us to improve the quality of our discipleship.

**God wants us to be free**

A perfect summary I wish I learned decades ago is this: God wants us to be free. This is a perfect distillate of scripture’s message of emancipation. In fact, it would be hard to find a better summary of how our faith should impact us.

There’s a reason scripture uses slavery as a metaphor. Our adherence to the thinking of the flesh, though we know that it is not our best interests, is a brutal truth. It is true enslavement. We are kept against our will; slaves to the feeble thinking. And, most of the time we forget that we are slaves.

**Slavery**

Paul writes at length of the Jewish inclination to slide back into the slavery of the law: “…how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements?” (Gal 4:9). It was hard for new Jewish converts to shift their psyches to something that they and their forefathers would otherwise have scorned: The idea that faith, alone, is the divine criteria.

It is near impossible to which to make the ideological shift to freedom. It’s in Jewish (read: human) DNA to be legalistic: religion is what everyone else can see you doing. Such futile thinking. In fact Peter refers to it as the “…worthless ways inherited from your forefathers” (1Pet 1:18). And even more cuttingly, Jesus says “They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules” (Matt 15:9). And, let’s keep in mind, Jewish culture is a deeply religious culture. That is, being deeply religious is not a guarantee of sound divine principles.

Imagine inserting the words ‘vain’, ‘futile’ or ‘worthless’ into a conversation you are having with a colleague or friend about their work or religious principles. Think of the reaction those words would garner. That gives us an idea of the abrupt language scripture is deploying.

Knowing that scripture uses Israel as a foil with which to see ourselves, it is no surprise that our own faith can be just as futile. Think of all the hours we spend in classes, Sunday school and meetings. Hundreds of hours each year. If from all that time we are awash in human thinking - distraction, pride, comparativeness, shame and discontent - we, just as futilely, miss the point.

It is a perfect comparison: Some deeply religious Jews had converted to Jesus’s teachings but were still enslaved by the law. Even more caustically, some able Bible students, often deeply religious, can be enslaved by a similar cycle of vanity: pride, anxiety and the reverence of men’s opinions.

This is a travesty. We are to be free! And that means in our thinking. Our God is a God of our minds. If our thinking is self-indulgent God is not there. “I the L ORD search the heart and examine the mind…” (Jer 17:10)
The proof

Here’s the resounding proof that God wants us to be free. All of the principles and commandments we are to live by do nothing but make our lives better. Given this, it is bizarre how opposed the flesh is to divine guidance. Fleshly thinking has it that it’s our ‘obligation’ to serve. But every principle of scripture makes us more like saints. Honestly speaking, what else is there? Does anyone actually want to be greedy, fear-laden, distracted, bitter, petty, or entitled? It is not an obligation to serve. It is a privilege.

Hopefully we all get to the place where we loathe our flesh and are humbled by the divine direction scripture gives us. Then we come to a wonderful realization: Of course! All the ‘obligations’ of scripture are deep-seated sources of freedom:

- The purpose of each teaching is to make our lives better.
- The purpose of eliminating pride is so that we live without feeding our own egos and can focus on honoring the creator in the here and now.
- The whole point of us being forgiving is so that we are free of the bitterness which is caused by holding a grudge. We are to be loving as that promotes the relationships that give our lives meaning.
- We are to study and reverence scripture because the more we can recall the principles, the more fulfilled we are in this life. It doesn’t matter what teaching of Christ we think of, it serves our own interests; our freedom.

I walk at liberty

The principle that God wants us to be free is a pointed scriptural teaching. There is one passage of scripture that cements this for me: “I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts” (Psa 119:45). This verse says much. It is telling us that if we are putting first the things of the kingdom of God, then we are free. It is telling us that we are free because we are actively trying to live by God’s laws, not our own. It is telling us we can, right now, be free.

We needn’t fear (read: reverence) what others think, or whether we are regarded highly by those around us, or if our appearance or occupation is meeting society’s approval. I keep coming back to trying to appease others because our flesh is so focused on this, while scripture insists on the opposite. There are a dozen passages that echo this one: “Why do you esteem mere men...and so forget the LORD...?” (Isa 51:12,13).

We know what to do!

The second part of the above verse in the Psalm is the best part: “for I seek thy precepts”. It’s telling us we know how to act. We have no end of direction as to the people we ought to be: gentle, patient, sober, content, and deeply careful that we aren’t being deceived by the flesh. This consciousness, that we are called to manifest God’s character, and are told how to, is the greatest gift of our lives. Literally, scripture is ‘a light unto our paths’.

It is preposterous that we tolerate the chronic doubt, guilt and distraction that we do. Intellectually we know better. We can actually do the things expected:
reverence, discipline, gratitude and dedication. If we are active in the ecclesia and honestly trying to manifest God’s character in every part of our lives, there is little that is wanting from us.

Here’s where the trouble starts: our flesh has trouble acknowledging that we are doing as we ought. So, if we are about the master’s work, we must learn to call it and let go of the perennial doubt and shame that normally hinders us and be thankful for the direction, even divine success, we have been given in this life.

Here’s the point: scripture is full of direction as to the person we ought not to be. So, if we aren’t the bitter, thoughtless, reactionary fool of scripture, and are the self-regulated, deliberate servant of Christ, then what would we possibly have to be unsure of?

The expectations of scripture are neither unclear nor unattainable. We can be excellent spouses. We can be good parents. We can be diligent workers. We can be worthy examples in our communities. We can be respectful ecclesial members. We can be devoted to the high calling in our youth. We can live free of fear, distraction, self-loathing and shame. The list, happily, goes on.

For I seek thy precepts

I repeat: Living presently in the glory and appreciation of the things around us and the high calling we’ve received is not likely our normal state of being. But it is the expectation! It is a relief that our problem is the norm. Most of us are not in control of our thoughts and feelings. This is a fundamental problem of our existence. We are actually enslaved, and are naturally attracted to our own enslavement. It’s like we suffer from the Stockholm syndrome.

Remember, the ‘deceitful’ heart rarely lets us enjoy our moments, even if we have nothing to be concerned about! We often think of our ‘obligation’ to serve. This is part of our enslavement. Scripture is not an onerous, demanding message. It is a source of daily salvation. The point here is that all of God’s laws invariably serve us. And, we can get better at living principled lives!

The expectation of scripture is that we think and feel differently than those governed by the flesh. Scripture does not ask us to do anything we cannot do. We can ‘walk at liberty’ with confidence knowing ‘we seek (his) precepts’. And, these precepts are not a forever-evolving mystery: we know how to act. If we’re doing wrong, knowingly, then, of course, we are not free. If we are doing the things of life, in the reverence and gratitude that comes from scripture, we have it all.

All the more reason to meditate on this passage: “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; keep standing firm and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1).

Dana Kohlman (Rolling Hills, AB)

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.
First Principles

Doctrines to Be Rejected — (12) Hell

Doctrine to Be Rejected # 9 — That the wicked will suffer eternal torture in hell.

This can be positively stated as: The wicked are destined to eternal oblivion in the grave, excepting only those of their number who are answerable to God and will be raised to condemnation, to return eternally to the grave.

This doctrine, associated with is as that of conditional immortality or the sleep of death, goes back in the history of our community to 1835, when John Thomas wrote his “34 questions”. They include, in part:

8. If, as soon as the breath is out of a man’s body, he be instantly translated to heaven or hell, how can he be said to be dead, and to rise again from the dead; is a man in heaven or hell, dead and alive at the same time? If so, where do the scriptures teach this?

9. Do the scriptures teach that men and women, and children, come from heaven and hell when they rise from the dead; or, do they not rather teach, that men’s mortal bodies will be made alive, i.e. re animated by the spirit, i.e. the power of God, as the body of Jesus was?

It is interesting that the earliest Statement of Faith by Robert Roberts, written in 1868, says:

That the popular belief in heaven and hell is a delusion, therefore, the wicked will not suffer eternal torture, but will be engulfed in total destruction after resurrection.

The first part, concerning man’s conscious existence in death, was covered last month.

Origin of hell

The concept of hell held by most professing Christian’s does not come from the Bible. Accepting the distorted ideas from this world, cut off from God, their beliefs originated from pagan philosophy. Before proving the truth about hell from God’s Word, we need to take note of the world’s traditional beliefs.
The New Jewish Encyclopedia comments on the subject of hell in a very definitive manner:

“Judaism does not teach a specific concept of hell. It is assumed that evildoers will be punished, but the manner and place of chastisement are left to the justice of God.”

Other religions exercise much more imagination to fit their concept of eternal punishment. One of the most concise summaries of man’s traditional concept of hell is found in the Encyclopedia Americana:

“As generally understood, hell is...whither lost or condemned souls go after death to suffer indescribable torments and eternal punishment...It is the place of divine revenge, untempered, never ending. This has been the idea most generally held by Christians, Catholics, and Protestants alike.”

As to the similarity of the concept of hell among various religions, the article continues, “The main features of hell as conceived by Hindu, Persian, Egyptian, Grecian, and Christian theologians are essentially the same.”

The writings of Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) made a strong impression on Catholics during the later Middle Ages. His work The Divine Comedy provided vivid details of sufferings in the dismal setting he described as hell or “Inferno”. His influential writings describing this inferno were inspired by many influences, including those of the Greek philosophers and strangely, it has been argued, the philosophy of Islam. All these ideas were from sources other than the Bible.

Strangely, the Catholics have recently repudiated this concept of hell as a place. Pope John Paul II, in a statement published on July 28, 1999:

“The images of hell that Sacred Scripture presents to us must be correctly interpreted. They show the complete frustration and emptiness of life without God. Rather than a place, hell indicates the state of those who freely and definitively separate themselves from God, the source of all life and joy.”

**Bible usage — Old Testament**

In the Authorized Version of the Old Testament the word ‘hell’ appears thirty-one times, however, in the Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament the word ‘hell’ does not appear in any of these verses. Instead the word ‘Sheol’ appears. What does ‘Sheol’ mean? Sheol is a transliterated Hebrew word that means “a hollow and subterranean place, full of thick darkness”(Gesenius). The New International Version of the Old Testament does not use ‘Sheol’ or ‘hell’ in any of these verses but rather ‘grave’, ‘death’ or ‘the depths’.

In none of the verses where Sheol appears is there any association with the idea that this is a place of torment or punishment. The verses that do comment on what is experienced in Sheol, indicate that there is a complete lack of conscious thought or deliberate action there. For example:
“For in death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave [sheol] who shall give Thee thanks?” (Psa 6:5);

“there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave [sheol]” (Eccl 9:10);

“the grave [sheol] cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth” (Isa 38:18).

‘Hell’ in the AV of the Old Testament is, therefore, to be understood as referring to that place to which all are gathered at death.

**Hell in the New Testament**

In the Authorized Version of the New Testament the word ‘hell’ appears twenty-three times. This may cause confusion because in the original Greek three different words are to be found. These are *Gehenna, Hades*, and also *Tartaros*, which once occurs in 2Pet 2:4.

The confusion is compounded in the New International Version, which renders *hades* as ‘hell’ in Luke 16:23, as ‘grave’ in Acts 2:27 and as ‘hades’ in Rev 1:18. In the Revised Standard Version there is less confusion and more consistency because *Gehenna* is always translated ‘hell’, and *hades* is left as ‘Hades’ (Matt 16:18 uses ‘death’, but the margin indicates ‘Hades’).

What do these Greek words mean?

*Gehenna* means ‘the valley of (the sons of) Hinnom’. In the Old Testament it is associated with idolatry, fire rituals and child sacrifices (2Kgs. 23:10; Jer 7:31,32; 19:1-6; 32:35).

The normal Christadelphian view is:

> In New Testament times it was still associated with fire and death. It was the place where the bodies of convicted criminals were thrown and where waste materials were deposited to be destroyed by the ever-burning fires. With the exception of James 3:6 it is used only by Jesus, and in passages in which he is stressing the certainty of annihilation at death if behavior and attitudes are not changed. “Hell fire” is not, therefore, speaking of the nature of the punishment for those adjudged as wicked but is a picture of what will happen to the unworthy. As the hot and corrosive conditions in the valley of Hinnom utterly destroyed anything left there, so the unworthy will cease to exist.

Hades is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew sheol and generally refers to that which the dead occupy: the grave. It is translated as ‘grave’ in the AV in this passage: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave [hades], where is thy victory?” (1Cor 15:55). This appears to be quoting Hos 13:14, where, interestingly, sheol is translated ‘grave’: “O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave [sheol], I will be thy destruction”.

The treatment of Hades is essentially quite correct. The discussion of *Gehanna* is essentially that repeated in almost every Christadelphian source we have seen.
There is no doubt that Gehanna, the valley of Hinnon, is undoubtedly the place of burial of convicted criminals as well as the location of “80 burial caves, most of which date to the time of Jesus, what archaeologists and other scholars refer to as the Herodian period (37 BC – 70 AD). Some of these tombs are in magnificent condition, still standing to their full height”. But it probably did not gain this association because the garbage of the city was burned there: this is a very late tradition, recorded only in around 1200 AD by Rabbi David Kimhi.

However, the association of the valley with unquenchable fire in the minds of the Jews that Jesus was addressing is almost certainly correct. The theme of the “accursed valley” is developed in extra Biblical literature after the close of the Old Testament. In these writings, Gehenna represents an eternal, but still localized, place of judgment (1Enoch 27) bearing that name (2Baruch 59:10, 85:13; 4Ezra 7:36). Isaiah, in a tradition parallel to the judgment in Jer 19:11-14, states, “their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched” (Isa 66:24 NIV). Though the two symbols (the valley and the unquenchable fire) do not refer to each other directly, they are associated with each other in these extra Biblical texts. Within the New Testament, these symbols are largely interchangeable metaphors (Mark 9:43). The association is likely due to the intertestamental synthesis of Jer 7:32 and Isa 66:24, the original (burnt) sacrifices offered in Hinnom, or the tradition that the Maccabees burned enemy corpses in it.

Thus the Christadelphian view that hell (Gehanna) represented burning and complete destruction at the time of Jesus, and hence for our interpretation of the Bible, is correct. But the explanation that it was a place of the burning of garbage, and hence of perpetual fire and destruction, is based upon a dubious tradition of a millennia later than the time of Jesus.

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

Notes:
1. See the Wikipedia article on “Divine Comedy”.
2. These two sections are based upon the Testimony “Basic Bible Principles, on “Hell”.
3. See http://christadelphianbooks.org/agora/art_less/h08.html, among several other sources
5. Based on the entry on Gehenna in The Lexham Bible Dictionary. The same information is included in some modern major Biblical commentaries.
Dietary commands are traditions of men
In the Roman Catholic Church, we are instructed to fast at Lent and to abstain from meat on Fridays. However, the Apostle Paul warns us:

“...Why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations - “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” which all concern things which perish with the using — according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh” (Col 2:20-23).

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth” (1Tim 4:1-3).

I have thus learned that the Lenten and Friday fasts are from men and not from God. God clearly told us in Isaiah 58 what type of fasting He desires of us: “Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?” (Isa 58:6-7; read all of Isaiah 58 for a more complete understanding).

Marian piety
In the Roman Catholic Church, we are taught that Jesus’ mother, Mary, is “Queen of the Universe”, who was crowned Queen of heaven and earth on her arrival at the throne of God after the “assumption”. One rosary booklet states/prays to Mary that,

“Just as all creatures are subject to your Son and God by the rule of the Sacred heart, so he has placed all under the rule of the Immaculate Heart. You are Queen because you are “full of grace,” the mother of Christ, the Co-redemptrix, and because you triumphed over the devil, sin, concupiscence [intense sexual desire] and death. Christ, the Mediator between God and Man, has made you the Mediatrix of all Graces, permitting you to dispense all Heavenly blessings to us sinful creatures. Your most powerful prayer is the Beads. May we say them every day of our life,” (“Novena of Our Lady’s Rosary: with Meditations and Indulgences” by Bernard A. McCaffrey, p. 57.)

I must say that I used to say the rosary every day, with fervency and devotion. However, I do not engage in this practice anymore.
In the Catholic hymn “Immaculate Mary”, we sing: “Immaculate Mary, your praises we sing, you reign now in heaven with Jesus, our king... In heaven, the blessed your glory proclaim; On earth, we your children invoke your fair name... Your name is our power, your virtues our light...”. In an “Ancient Prayer”, we pray to Mary thus: “We turn to you for protection, holy Mother of God. Listen to our prayers and help us in our needs. Save us from every danger, glorious and blessed Virgin” (Family Book of Prayer, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, p. 30). However, scripture proves that the above is not correct:

Mary as mediator
Concerning Mary being a Mediatrix, having power, and able to dispense heavenly blessings to humans, the Bible says unequivocally this is incorrect.

“For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (ITim 2:5).

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

“Whatsoever ye ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it” (John 14:13).

Jesus never said that we could ask anything in anyone else’s name, including that of his mother. He even goes on to tell us about the “helper” He will send. It is not his mother, but God’s Holy Spirit:

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another helper [Comforter], that he may abide with you forever — the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; but you know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:16-18).

Jesus Himself did not exalt His mother, Mary, in the three times he is recorded as speaking to or about her:

- In the first instance, Jesus was a boy of 12 and stayed behind in the temple after his parents had left the Passover Feast at Jerusalem. His mother said, “Son, why have You done this to us? Look, your father and I have sought You anxiously.’ And he said to them, ‘Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?’ But they did not understand the statement which he spoke to them” (Luke 2:48-50).

- Another time, Jesus was preaching and healing. “Then His mother and brothers came to him, and could not approach him because of the crowd. And it was told him by some, who said, ‘Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.’ But he answered and said to them, ‘My mother and my brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it’ ” (Luke 8:19-21).

- As he was dying on the cross, Jesus took care of his mother by giving her to his disciple as the disciple’s own mother. (John 19:25-27).
Mary as a “Saint”

Regarding Mary’s supposed triumph over the devil, sin, intense sexual desire and death:

• Jesus had earthly (blood) brothers and sisters (see Luke 8:19; Acts 1:14; Gal 1:19; Matt 13:55; Mark 6:6; Matt 12:46; Mark 3:31). In Mark 6:3, they are even named: “Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us?” This is to be expected, since Joseph and Mary were married, and had normal marital relations after Jesus was born: Joseph “took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.” (Matt 1:24-25 NIV). This proves that Mary is not “ever virgin”, and that she did not “triumph over concupiscence”.

• In 1Cor 15:20-28, Paul explains how everyone dies because of Adam, and all can have life because of Christ. And, “the last enemy that will be destroyed is death.” (See also Rev 20:13-14). How could Mary triumph over death if Christ Himself had not yet destroyed death? Also, the writer of Hebrews explains that Jesus destroyed the devil. No mention is made of Mary doing the same. “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb 2:14). Nowhere in the Bible does it state that Mary never sinned, nor that she triumphed over the devil. The only one who was made of flesh yet did not sin was Jesus (IJohn 3:5; Heb 5:15).

• In the Bible, Mary is not mentioned as having been “assumed” into heaven. In fact, scripture says, “No one has ascended to heaven...but the son of Man who is in heaven” (John 3:13). The Bible teaches that Mary is, as is every human who has passed away, asleep, or dead. If she is “asleep in Christ”, that is, if she has been faithful to the gospel, she will be raised to eternal life when Jesus comes again (see 1Thess 4:13-18; Acts 2:38; 2Tim 4:1; John 12:48).

In some rosary booklets, the “coronation” of Mary is “proven” by Rev 12:1: “A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars”. However, the woman here is not Mary (please see the rest of chapter 12, and note that the book of Revelation is a very figurative book, and one can see that the “woman” is not a real woman, but represents something else). The woman is the ecclesia (church/people) who are likened to a “chaste virgin” (2Cor. 11:2; Eph 5:23). But, as sections of the ecclesia had been guilty of unfaithful (Rev 2:20-23), the onetime “chaste virgin” is now represented as being with child, pregnant with the seeds of error (Acts 15)” (The Book of Revelation; Verse by Verse Exposition, by H.P. Mansfield, p. 149). One can see the parallel of God’s virgin bride (Christians) falling because of unfaithfulness, and the virgin of Israel falling “The virgin of Israel has fallen; She will rise no more,” (Amos 5:2).

Thus, the doctrine that Mary was ever-virgin, that she did not die, that she was assumed into heaven and crowned Queen of heaven, is a teaching of men.

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Prophecy

Isn’t It Time To Discuss Revelation? (1)

Introduction

One of the tragic characteristics of our community over the past 160 years has been repeated divisions. Time and again, different groups of brethren have revealed a deplorable tendency to allow their zeal for the Word to degenerate into unbrotherly squabbling, which frequently produced damaging separation. Even if it is true, as is sometimes claimed, that the process resulted in a closer definition and refinement of our doctrine, it was nonetheless obtained at a high price and through a denial of a central theme of the preaching of Jesus Christ.

In my own time in the Truth, during much of the second half of the 20th century, the old problem reappeared in a slightly different form. Particularly from the 1970’s two distinct schools of thought emerged in the brotherhood as to how to understand the book of Revelation. This did not, as it might have done a century earlier, lead to an open split. The accompanying behaviour of individuals and groups within the ecclesial world was, however, the same as before. Old friends ceased speaking, families, ecclesias and groups of ecclesias became estranged. Ironically, the first appearance of this tragic phenomenon in our community, the break between Robert Roberts and his formerly close companion from Edinburgh days, George Dowie, had its origins in a disagreement over Revelation and the subject of a personal devil. (Wilson A.R. The History of the Christadelphians p. 321, citing Wm. Norrie’s Early History)

The real tragedy was that it was almost impossible to discuss the problem except with the likeminded. The old injunction: “Come let us reason together,” (Isa 1:18) which had so often before helped brethren to resolve other differences, seemed to have been neutralised. Any attempt at discussion invariably produced more heat than light. The subject of Revelation became like a Victorian family secret, always referred to in veiled terms and never brought into the open in unfamiliar company.

Choose a side

What made matters even worse was the unspoken expectation that you should belong to one side or the other. Like characters in an old-time western movie, you were expected to show your allegiance by the color hat you wore. Or like English teenagers in the 1960’s, you were expected to be a fan of either Elvis Presley or Cliff Richard. Nobody, least of all myself at that time, saw the obvious resemblance to the childhood tale in Gulliver’s Travels, about the Big-enders and the Little-enders of Lilliput, in a community divided over which end of a boiled egg should be opened at breakfast.

On looking back, it was the classic situation facing all members of a society riven by internal conflict; the dilemma of all citizens in a civil war. But this is a
perspective that came only with old age and a little experience. At the time it was confusing, frightening, disturbing for a young person anxious to do the right. Small wonder, then, that many of us avoided coming to terms with the book of Revelation, keeping it at a safe arm's length to avoid unwanted consequences.

And all the while, I am now convinced, we were unable to find the right answer because we were repeatedly asking the wrong question: which way of understanding Revelation is the correct one? It was at the time, through a combination of custom and circumstance, the only question that suggested itself: it seemed to be the only choice we had. It took me decades to realise that we were looking in the wrong direction: that an answer lay not in narrowing our vision but in broadening it. We are dealing, after all, with a product not of fallible men but of the Maker of heaven and earth, whose thoughts are far above our thoughts (Isa 55.8). What is more, He gave it to His Son Jesus so that it could be passed on to his servants for their enlightenment (Rev 1.1). So we avoid it to our own detriment.

It was an insight that would lead me to a very different understanding of the book and its power.

The sad thing about not coming to grips with Revelation is that it is such a wonderful book. What a pity that the atmosphere of discord that has come to surround it is such a powerful deterrent to trying to understand it.

Even at a purely human level, Revelation is full of excitement. The ongoing struggle between good and evil and the climactic triumph of right could easily be turned into a stirring film of the kind made by Stephen Spielberg. The human tragedy of the fallen bride reminds one of a novel by John Steinbeck. I have often thought that Revelation could provide the basis for a motivational movie aimed at disciples. It gives ample warning of the hardships ahead, but these are always interspersed with encouraging glimpses of future joy and final victory.

But, of course, the book of Revelation is so much more than just an exciting story. We sometimes forget that it is the only book in the whole Bible from Jesus Christ himself and that it was written expressly for his servants. Sometimes, too, we overlook the exhortation in the first chapter: “Blessed is he that readeth.” (Rev 1:3) Jesus himself encourages us to apply our minds to his message, complicated though it may be, and promises a reward to those who respond.

Find your ecclesia!

Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation contain the letters sent by Jesus to the seven ecclesias of Asia Minor. In them we see a picture of the entire ecclesial world in every age. Read them carefully and you will be sure to recognize your own ecclesia, with its particular strengths and its own weaknesses. What is more, Jesus himself points the way to improvement and reform. It would be a wonderful idea for the Arranging Brethren of an ecclesia to make a check list from these letters and to review it in full each year at a general meeting of the members. Notice, however, that this evaluation does not include finding fault with the ecclesia down the road!
Even if your own elders don’t take kindly to this idea, there is nothing to stop you from making a list of your own, to test you own discipleship (and never anyone else’s). The seven letters are as much a primer for the individual Christian as they are a guide for ecclesias. Either way, they enable us to identify problems and set about solving them, which seems to me to be a good working definition of the business of discipleship. So the seven letters provide a helpful way of starting to unravel the message of the book.

**The visions**

These letters are followed by a vision given to John of a throne in heaven. If we accept that *Revelation* is a book of symbols, as we are clearly told in the opening verse, one teaching of this vision is quite clear and applies to every disciple of every age. It repeats the lesson of Daniel’s prophecy: God is in full control of our world (Dan 4:17). John’s vision, however, provides the additional information that God has delegated authority to Jesus, the Lamb slain yet now alive (Rev 5.12). And, to the Lamb, God has also given the power to open the scroll Daniel was told to seal (Dan 12:4). In this way Jesus can reveal to his servants the shape of future events.

If in the past we have avoided the book of *Revelation*, the time has surely come for us to tackle the problems that surround it. Perhaps, as we read it, a first step towards a solution lies in recognizing that a question which has not produced a useful answer in a generation needs to be abandoned. What we must learn to do, surely, is to begin asking the right questions about it.

**The interpretations**

Over the centuries, four main ways of understanding the book of *Revelation* have been suggested. Much of the debate over the book has centred in three of these and over the problem of which of these explanations is correct. It may be helpful, therefore, briefly to review the different interpretations, without at this point endeavouring to assess their merits.

**Preterist.** Traditionally, the writing of *Revelation* is dated at the end of the first century, about 93 A.D, although some Bible scholars, like Isaac Newton, have suggested that perhaps the book was intended to prepare believers for the tragic events in Palestine in A.D. 70, when Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem. Either way, the political opponents of the early brethren came from Rome. The forces of evil portrayed in symbol, therefore, can be taken to represent the power of pagan Imperial Rome which, at the time the book was written, had placed the fledgling Christian community under great pressure. Part of this persecution was the exile of the apostle John to the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea (Rev 1:9). No matter which starting date one prefers, this understanding of the book, because it places focus upon past events, is often labelled the *preterist* (from the Latin for *‘past’*) interpretation.

**Continuous Historical.** Later, however, another view of the book emerged. Particularly from the time of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, when the monolithic power of the Roman Catholic Church was broken by
dissenting Christian groups in Europe, a different understanding of Revelation became popular. This explained the book as a portrayal of historical events from the days of John to the time of the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. It was this understanding that, through the writings of John Thomas, became, for about a century, the standard Christadelphian explanation of Revelation. It is often referred to as the continuous historical interpretation, to distinguish it from the simpler historical explanation referred to in the previous paragraph.

**Futurist.** The third way of explaining Revelation argued that the book is to be understood as directing attention to the events immediately surrounding the Second Coming. It is therefore seen as a presentation of predicted events, not in the distant past, as the preterist explanation suggests, nor in the immediate past, as the continuous historical view claims, but still in the future. Because of this emphasis, the label often attached to this interpretation is futurist. Its first appearance in the literature of our community appears to have been as early as 1865, when, according to Bro. Christmas Evans, (writing about 1959) two members of the Galashiels congregation in Scotland were expelled because they argued that the Apocalypse referred not to past events but to those still future.

**Spiritualist.** The fourth interpretation perhaps has its roots in disagreements that arose in Christian circles over the relative merits of the three opinions outlined above. It argues that the book is not intended to be literally understood. It is, rather, a timeless and universal portrayal of the Christian’s perpetual struggle against adversity. It gives the ultimate assurance that, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, good will eventually prevail and virtue will at last be vindicated. This is often described as the idealist (or, by some the spiritualist) interpretation, but is almost unknown in Christadelphian circles.

On the face of it, this brief overview may have made the problem appear worse. It may seem that one now faces an embarrassment of choice but that the pressure to choose has been intensified. It is as well then to observe that, if we are to understand the size and nature of the problem that faces us, we need to gather as much information as we can about it.

But, even considering the matter of choice, we have to wonder once more if we are asking the right question.

**Continuous historical view**

As the continuous historical view has been the standard Christadelphian explanation for so long, it may be helpful to understand a little more about what is known of its origins. The Protestant Reformation generated in Western Europe a great interest in Bible study. The book of Revelation particularly came to be understood as revealing the decline of apostolic Christianity into a counterfeit system of religion which had entirely abandoned the principles of the original gospel. This understanding was fundamental to that Protestant opposition to Rome which had motivated the breakaway from papal control.
Joseph Mede, a Puritan scholar at Cambridge, after a careful study of *Revelation*, published *Clavis Apocalyptica* ("The Key to the Apocalypse") in 1627. In this work he laid the foundation of the understanding that would come to be known as the continuous historical interpretation. More than half a century later, Pierre Jurieu, a French Protestant, wrote a study called *Accomplissement des Prophetes*, in which he followed the same line of explanation as Mede but in addition saw particular significance unfolding in the French monarchy, whose fall he foresaw as a result of what he read in *Revelation*. By the 19th century, the continuous historical understanding of *Revelation* was generally accepted in the Protestant world.

In 1832 a young Englishman named John Thomas emigrated to the New World, where he began a search for religious understanding. He was soon brought into contact with the movement in North America now sometimes referred to as Restorationism. Its aim was a return to the basic values and principles of biblical Christianity. In the course of his investigation, Thomas spent some time in association with Alexander Campbell, founder of what later became the Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ. Then Thomas broke away to develop his own understanding of Bible teaching. In the process he came to see the significance of the nation of Israel in God’s purpose. In 1849, after a lecture tour of Britain, he published his ideas in *Elpis Israel*.

**John Thomas**

As part of the process of refining what he had learned, Thomas became interested in the prophetic efforts of William Miller, who prophesised the return of Christ in 1844. As a result he began a detailed study of *Daniel* and *Revelation* and of books that had been written about it. As a result, he read the works of Joseph Mede and of Pierre Jurieu, as well as the most recent study in English, Edward Elliott’s *Horae Apocalyptica*, which had appeared a few years earlier in 1844, as well as the work of James Bicheno, who had written extensively on the restoration of the Jews. Part III of *Elpis Israel* was devoted to a preliminary exposition of *Revelation* in a way that harmonised with Thomas’s understanding of the Hope of Israel. This exposition was developed and expanded in the great work of his *magnum opus*, which he triumphantly entitled *Eureka* ("I have found it!") published in three volumes between 1865 and 1868.

In the meantime, John Thomas’s teaching had attracted attention in the United States and in Britain. The result was the growth of a religious community that, during the American Civil War of the early 1860s, adopted the name ‘Christadelphian’, at the time explained as “Brethren in (or of) Christ”, although the Greek ‘adelphoi’ signifies siblings of either gender. By the time Thomas died in 1871, there were Christadelphian ecclesias in several parts of the English-speaking world, all of them acknowledging the role of *Elpis Israel* and *Eureka* especially in helping them to understand Bible teaching.

The growth and development of this community was nurtured by Bro. Robert Roberts, first editor of *The Christadelphian* magazine and a devoted adherent of the expositions of Bro. Thomas. In 1869, Roberts wrote: “I got the Truth from
reading Dr Thomas’s works 15 years ago. That event put me on the track of bible (sic) study which I have ever since followed. I discovered nothing for myself. There was nothing to discover.” Another revealing comment by the same writer appears in his account of Thomas’s life: “Dr Thomas’ political prognostications, based on prophecy, have been too signally realized to admit of the supposition that he was radically mistaken in his chronological scheme.” (Cited in the introduction to Elpis Israel, 1990 edition.)

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.

(To be continued, God Willing. We will next discuss the beginnings of the differing views of Revelation in the Brotherhood, beginning in the 1950's.)

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Notes:
1. A comprehensive account (in four volumes) of the history of this interpretation is LeRoy Froom’s “The Prophetic Faith Of Our Fathers”, to be found on the Internet. It covers Bro. Thomas.

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Isolated Sunday School Children

“This is the will of the Father who sent me, that of all He has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day” (John 6:39).

When the Apostle Paul visited Lystra he made a happy acquaintance with Timothy, whose father was Greek and mother and grandmother, faithful Jewish women. He observed the young man’s character and found him a more Christ-centered disciple than any other he had met in his travels With a keen eye for the next generation to continue Christ’s work, he eventually drew Timothy into his special team of missionary workers.

“For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church” (1Cor 4:17).

“I have no one else like him [Timothy], who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ” (Phil 2:20-21).

“And the things you [Timothy] have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2Tim 2:2).
The Apostle John’s approach was similar; he wrote to the “elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth” (2John 1). She was so hospitable that being alone, she was vulnerable to brethren of perverted doctrine if invited into her home. Though an old man himself, John was especially concerned for the spiritual well-being of these isolated children who could be adversely influenced by ungodly visitors (vv. 9 – 11). “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth” (v 4).

**Regional ecclesias and the challenge elsewhere**

In many (but not all) of North America’s larger cities, our young people find many Christadelphian friends in their own or nearby ecclesias. This social experience is not the essence of our life in Christ but it does provide the support of friendship and encouragement that makes the Truth more attractive. While certain small, isolated, ecclesias have grown in recent years, history shows that such ecclesias often struggle to maintain numbers and this limits the opportunities in Christ for adults and their families.

Consider a family of four children, with a local ecclesia of 10 members that meets 30 miles away. Father works long hours, contact with any brother or sister during the day is unlikely, mother would rarely see her fellow sisters mid-week, a sisters’ class is unlikely to exist, the children are the only Christadelphians in the local school, Sunday school has multi-age classes and the chances of always having enthusiastic teachers are not high.

These children live in a different world as far as the Truth is concerned. If they are making a healthy stand for their beliefs then they invite a cold isolation. It is inevitable that the events of the town and area will have more relevance to them than if they were in the company of an active and warm ecclesia and youth group. All children seek friends of their own age group but as they reach teenage years the strong likelihood is that these contacts will expose them to dangerous temptations that could quickly compromise their spiritual life. It is rare to find Christadelphian families in isolation whose children mix with principled friends of their own age, even of other denominations, outside the Truth.

These are the latter days and we knew that this general deterioration would come. Consider the challenges facing Christadelphian parents in semi-isolation. Wise advice is challenged most days by strong allurements at school and about the area. It is hard for our isolated children to avoid the sporting and social interests of their school friends.

**How can we help?**

Some would say “it’s just too dangerous to live in isolation with children. They need company beyond their family and worldly attractions are likely to influence their minds and take them away”. It is not hard to agree with these sentiments. But must all such parents pull up anchor and move to a city where the ecclesias are readily at hand? And if they did, our witness in the regional areas would be even less than it is now; not to mention the increased isolation of those who could not move.
In the earliest days of Gospel preaching there were ecclesias in relatively isolated areas. “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel” (Mark 16:15) does not sound as though the Truth was to be only found in a few large congregations with nothing in between. Family connections, employment, business opportunities and inheritance are all factors that ensure that there will always be some members living in isolated areas and this is important for a continuing witness to the Truth. Are there ways we might better help families in isolated areas? Answers to the following questions may enable us to hold out a strengthening hand to our brothers, sisters and children in isolation.

1) How could our ecclesia develop a “special” relationship with one in isolation?
2) How could our ecclesia conduct occasional joint events with the young people or Sunday School of an out-of-town ecclesia?
3) Could our ecclesia provide staff for correspondence Sunday school?
4) Could our ecclesia contribute to a roster of visitors to isolated ecclesias?
5) When visiting distant ecclesias do we remember the children of that meeting and ensure we take our own children with us?
6) Does our young people’s group ensure that young people in isolation are regularly informed of the youth program and accommodation is offered to encourage attendance?
7) What gifts could we take to isolated families? What recordings of talks, what books etc., are suited to the ages and needs of the family?
8) Has our Sunday school and young people’s group ‘adopted’ children in isolated areas so that they enjoy frequent contact with larger ecclesial families and their children? Involving mother, father and their children in spiritual relationships between larger and smaller ecclesias is likely to increase the success rate.
9) What can isolated brothers and sisters do to enhance contact between themselves, their children and families in larger ecclesias? Fraternity is a two-way street. Is the isolated ecclesia an attractive site for an occasional ecclesial camp?
10) Could our ecclesia offer accommodation to isolated young people who are coming to their local area for study or work?

**Conclusion**

In this busy age those in distant places may be easily overlooked. Let us bear in mind the wider Christadelphian community and in particular respond to the anxieties of those parents in outlying areas who pray for their children to be in the Truth and not be swept up in the passing interests of their local community. When we care for isolated children, we strengthen whole families and benefits accrue at several levels; the family’s spiritual health increases which can lead on to vigorous preaching in their local community. When the Truth is preached with enthusiasm, ecclesias grow, if God wills, to His praise and glory.

**Notes:**
The Bible Truth and Gustav Aue

Occasionally, you might come across little old issues among the dusty relics of an old collection of magazines in a Christadelphian household. And if the box was old enough, it might contain a few issues of one called “Bible Truth”. It was almost entirely the work of one brother, Gustav Aue, who seem to have published it largely by himself. You might almost call it one of the “lost” Christadelphian Magazines, because few copies survive, nor is it referred to. Even though it had a circulation larger in North America than any other Christadelphian magazine at the time, because its focus was strongly on carrying the message of The Truth to the public, it was rarely kept. Over the first 12 years, 400,000 copies were printed: so over its run from 1911 to 1935 probably close to 1 million copies were circulated. I have managed to accumulate copies of most of the issues, thanks to many individuals, and it does fill in some information about our community in North America. It also has an abundance of many interesting first principle articles, for this magazine was first and foremost a preaching magazine. Rather like the “Glad Tidings” of today, (which has actually been published in the UK since 1885) its focus on being a preaching magazine, so few were retained for any period of time. And because of its focus on preaching, its discussions of affairs of the brotherhood is very limited. There are a few obituaries, a smattering of ecclesial news, and many samples of lecture topics from around North America.

There are, however, a few topics of interest in the pages of this little magazine, and some of the “first principle” articles are worth reprising, so I will on occasion hopefully reproduce a few sample over the coming months. It also of interest that, a few years after the demise of the Bible Truth in 1935, the “Dawn” magazine was started in England as a successor preaching magazine. This was probably partially because Bro. Aue, along with many others at the time, became part of the Berean Fellowship in the division of the 1920’s, and the Dawn magazine only later became the fraternal magazine of a group the divided out of the Berean Fellowship. This is what was written about the start of the “Dawn”.

“This effort is a continuation of the noble work commenced by our late beloved Brother Gustav F. Aue, of New Jersey, U.S.A., who a few years ago laid down his pen in death. Many faithful brethren were fellow labourers with him in the distribution of his little work, “Bible Truth,” and they, with us, were impressed with his untiring efforts in this direction and the ultimate results of his work, under the Hand of God, in bringing many sons and daughters unto the Father.”

When first published, it was to supplement the public lectures which were being given by the Christadelphians in Jersey City, NJ, and vicinity, by sending the truth to those who were interested, and to others who did not attend the lectures. It was not long before there were requests to send it to other parts of
the U.S.A., and; then to Canada and foreign countries.

The magazine ceased publication on the death of Bro. Aue, who died on July 20, 1935.

**Gustav Aue**

Bro. Aue first heard the Truth in Jersey City, and he obeyed it in baptism on March 20th, 1899, and met with the Jersey City Ecclesia, Bro. Aue devoted his entire life to the work of preaching the Gospel. He was born in New York City, NY August 19, 1869, and married Florence Atkinson, who died after the birth of their son Paul. He later married his wife’s best friend, Sister Pauline Hamlin Walker (born November 28, 1872 & Died February 14th, 1964). Gustav Aue was Vice President of the McCawl Coal Company in New York City. Since there was a huge demand for coal at this time, he traveled a lot in search for new sources of coal to such places as Nova Scotia, even importing coal to America from Wales, all along devoting himself to the study and preaching of the Gospel Message. This wealth appeared to have given him the resources to publish the Bible Truth for 24 years.

Gustav’s son George Aue moved to California in the early 20's and met Sister Kathleen Norris, formerly from Birmingham England, in Los Angeles where he was working. They were married June 6, 1924. They were a driving force in whatever ecclesia they were members of from Los Angeles, Glendale (Eagle Rock, Dana Point and finally, In their retirement years, the Rogue Valley Oregon Ecclesia in Grants Pass Oregon for 20 years until their deaths. Brother George exhorted and lectured up until the week before his death at age 92. Their daughter Sister Shirley-Ann married Bill Stickney, and they had four children, all who have been baptized into the household of faith².
The contents

In almost 300 issues, most of which have 20 pages, the magazine produced an enormous quantity of articles on Bible Topics and first principles. There are many interesting articles

- A long series of articles on “Messiah in the Psalms”, by Bro. Aue himself. He goes through almost every one, pointing out all the direct references, allusions, echoes, and types to be found throughout.
- Several transcripts of the radio addresses given in Los Angeles from 1930 on.
- There are many moving obituaries of the brethren and sisters who did so much to spread the gospel in this country in the early years.
- The issue of September 1916 is a comprehensive account of the way the community in the USA united in objection to military service (although there are no later accounts of the trials to which those who so objected were subjected.)
- Long accounts of the visit of Frank Jannaway to the USA in 1914 – 1915.

Although there was some news from the ecclesias in the early years, and more so during the war years, by 1921 almost all such information dwindled away, as the total focus was on reaching out and conveying the first principles. In addition, many issues include copies of flyers advertising bible lectures, such as the one enclosed from 1919. The ecclesias in California seem particularly active.

Conclusion

It is a little sad that the little magazine “Bible Truth” disappeared as the only direct preaching magazine in North America. The Glad Tidings comes to us from the UK, and is widely distributed, but I believe the end of this work, conducted as it was almost entirely due to the drive and vision of one brother, leaves a gap in our preaching effort. Perhaps such is not needed in this Internet age, but I would hope its memory and its influence can encourage to carry on our attempts to spread the gospel with renewed vigor and determination.

Peter Hemingray (Detroit Royal Oak, MI)

P.S. I anyone has old copies of the Bible Truth, perhaps they can send me details of which issues they have. I do have quite a number, either physically or electronically, but there are gaps.

Notes:
1. The Berean Christadelphian — February, 1941, p 62.
2. I must thank Bro. Craig Stickney and his mother, Sis. Shirley-Ann, for much of this information.
The Hero’s Journey: a Story from the Lord

A standard mythology

Have you ever heard of the hero’s journey? Perhaps you recall your middle school English class going over it at some point or perhaps you are a bit of a literature nerd like me.

The hero’s journey is often referred to as the monomyth, mono meaning one, and myth being short for mythology. One mythology. The idea is that most, if not all stories follow a similar path or structure from the beginning to the end. This has been a topic of some discussion by many a mythology enthusiast or student of popular culture. Opinions vary as to which parts count and which parts need to be revised but on a whole, the hero’s journey is a fairly fascinating study.

Chances are you have heard it before. Let’s see if you can tell what story I am referring to:

A character is told that he or she has been chosen by some force to go on an adventure to save their world. At first, the hero doesn’t want to, but bad stuff happens that forces them to go on the adventure. Along the way they find friends who help them on their quest while they overcome various obstacles and temptations.

Towards the end of the journey, the hero is defeated by their nemesis and must give up on everything they love. They are left to die. When all hope is lost though, they find the strength within themselves and rise to face their conflict. This time, they succeed and embody the hero they were told they would be. Then, villain defeated, they return to their home, with knowledge or wealth or whatever force they needed to save their world from disaster.

Now, what story did I just tell you? That was The Lego Movie. Wait what?

Let’s look at it again and I will replace the words with Indiana and other appropriate locations or events:

Emmit is told that he or she has been chosen by the “piece of resistance” to go on an adventure to save their world from Lord Business by stopping the Kraggle (crazy glue). At first, the Emmit doesn’t want to, but bad Cop
and Lord Business chase him which forces him to go on the adventure. Along the way he finds Wild Style (love interest), Princess Unikitty, Benny the Spaceman, Metalbeard, and Batman (friends) who help them on their quest while he fights Lord Business and Bad Cop.

Towards the end of the journey, the Emmit is defeated by his foes and must sacrifice himself so that his friends will live. He falls out of reality and thus is dead to all his friends. When all hope is lost though, he returns with new confidence in himself and understanding of what makes him special. He uses this knowledge to convince the bad guys that they too can be special and unites his world in peace. Or piece.

But of course, I could have also been talking about lord of the Rings. Or Harry Potter. Or Star Wars, Star Trek, Mad Max, The King’s Speech, Guardians Of The Galaxy, The Hunger Games, any Disney film or any number of popular stories with this same structure. I basically copied and pasted names and places and events in the correct spots and outlined a popular kid’s movie. It’s like a giant game of Mad lib. Now, obviously not every single story follows this exact formula. Parts, as I said before, are often replaced or left out altogether. And obviously this doesn’t work on other genres, such as horror or comedy. This works mainly on adventure stories or quests.

**The memo**

But this is a formula and it is one that works. Seriously. Look at the list a couple paragraphs above this. Star wars is one of the, if not the highest grossing film series of all time. Harry potter also made millions in books and in film as did the hunger games. Mad max and Kings Speech are some of the most popular picture nominees/recipients. And Disney simply cannot be matched as far as number of quality films that were also insanely popular. Seriously, there’s an actual formula they use, sent in a Memo in 1975.

Why does it work? Numerous studies have been done on this question and the closest answer people have come up with is how relatable these stories are. Most have been asked to do something they didn’t want to only to be forced into the quest of some sort. Many of us have been in situations where we were tempted or tried and had to rely on our close friends for support. Some, if not most have felt despair or hit rock bottom, facing death or loss in ways we never thought possible. And many have risen from those challenges, or we hope we will at some point. In a way, the hero’s journey is a beacon of hope. A message

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that all challenges can be overcome and we respond to it. We love to see that others made it, even if those others are fictional characters.

Now there are arguments that this formula is not really applicable to all adventures. For many stories, such as Beowulf, The Epic of Gilgamesh, and many other stories from various cultures feature unlikable heroes, or stories that end poorly for the heroes. Opponents of the Monomyth point out that not all personalities are represented, not all lifestyles shown.

While this may be somewhat true, it is important to look at the numbers as evidence of the hero’s Journey’s effectiveness as a narrative tool: the epic of Gilgamesh has never seen a film adaptation (and is likely unfilmable due to its nonlinear nature and lack of protagonist) and most adaptations of Beowulf have not been commercial successes. Even the 2007 animated version was only moderately successful, but nowhere near the success of say, Star Wars. So yes, while the hero’s journey model is not perfect, nor does it represent all factions of life, one cannot argue it is, at the very least, the most popular model of storytelling.

The words of the Preacher

So, what’s my point? Well, I’d like to turn to an interesting verse that applies directly to all that we’ve written so far:

“The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after” (Eccl 1:1-11).

I’ve always loved these verses because they display a futility of human achievement. Don’t get me wrong: I am a huge fan of ingenuity and creativity. I watch expos every year, learning what I can about upcoming software and gaming advances. But these verses always remind me that all the things that mankind makes are merely repeats of old creations, or perhaps expansions or evolutions of the original concept.

And when it comes to storytelling, the same is true. These stories have been passed down from generation to generation, with details getting adjusted or
tweaked to fit various morals or ideals. Yet despite, or perhaps in spite of that, the basic story telling structure has remained the same. And there is not better proof than in scripture itself. Take, for example, the story of Joseph.

“And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying” (Gen 37:7-11).

Hero's in the Bible

Now here we have the hero’s calling, these dreams that would tell Joseph of the things that were to come, that he would rule over his brothers and sisters and parents. And while we do not have recorded the “refusal to be called,” we do see events forcing Joseph along a rather unpleasant journey.

“And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? 7 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt” (Gen 37:24-28).

Here our hero is taken away from his home, forced on his journey. He leaves everything behind. Along the way he makes friends, in the form of Potiphar, the jailer, the baker, and the butler. He resists temptation by getting away from Potiphar’s wife. This is where he is cast into prison, a form of death. He is buried and forgotten, until one day, when the Pharaoh is plagued by relentless nightmares. These remind the butler of the man who understood dreams and Joseph is resurrected. He, is brought before the Pharaoh and upon interpreting the dreams, he is raised to a position of ultimate authority.

He uses this authority, or boon, to deliver the land out of turmoil and rescue his brothers, the same ones who had abandoned him so many years prior. Through this, his hero’s journey is complete.
Now, here the fascinating part: this journey is used repeatedly throughout scripture. We can trace this journey through the life of Moses (he outright refuses the call at one point), David, Elijah, Daniel, Samson, and many others. Beat for beat, each of these characters go through the stages of the Hero’s Journey.

Growing up, we think of these individuals as characters in grand stories, complete with epic battles and dynamic choices. It’s only as we grow up that it begins to dawn on us that these were real people with real lives that went through these real problems and grew through them. That being the case, one must ask, why did God make them go through such similar situations, failing or feeling like they had failed at similar points in their spiritual journey? Why follow such a structure that repeated itself so many times?

I think it was for us.

True accounts
First, think about the human brain: for the most part, we like to predict things, and we like to be correct. When we hear a story, we like to know where it is heading. We like to guess at the end results, and when we guess correctly, our brain rewards us. It sends a message that basically says “you are smart, good job.” The same is true in film: of the 10 most successful films in history, adjusted for gross income, at least six feature some form of the Hero’s Journey within their stories. That’s likely due to the fact that our brains enjoy predicting the outcomes of these films. As we said, the structure works, and our brains like it.

And back to scripture, we must realize that as God made us the way we are, he knows what our brains like. He knows how to reach us, and telling us stories in a predictable way, a way our brains will latch onto and feel good about makes sense. And why must they make sense? Because we are to learn from these stories. The stories are relatable, especially for those seeking redemption through Christ.

(Perhaps we should call them accounts, because even the word “story” might imply an element of fiction, although the dictionary definition is “a narrative, either true or fictitious, in prose or verse, designed to interest, amuse, or instruct the hearer or reader”.)

Our own spiritual story
We are called: “For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt 22:14). And many refuse the call. But our lives often force us to reconsider and take up the journey towards God. We make that choice, in this case, baptism, and our journey truly begins. Along the way we meet friends and allies:

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt 18:20).

We face trials and tribulations, and many of us will die, literal deaths.

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: But we wait
that coming day that we will be literally resurrected. We will enter into the kingdom of God and bring with us treasures stored up in heaven, incomparable to the things of the world” (Rom 5:12-13).

Our lives were meant to follow the hero’s journey. That is a huge part of God’s plan for us. If you need further proof, look no further than Jesus Christ. Christ was called by God to serve him, to be a fulfillment of the law. He was tempted in the wilderness, a refusal to answer his calling. But through his trial he made a conscious decision to follow his Father’s will and begin his journey. Along the way, he gained followers, but none closer than his 12 disciples, who strengthened him in the times he needed them. But he faced his death alone, save for the angels God sent to comfort him. He laid down his life, literally dying. But it would not be the end, for in three days he was resurrected and brought to his disciples both then and now, a perfect example of how a true hero returns, not for their own honor or glory but so that their people, their friends and family may thrive.

Christ is the reason the hero’s journey exists. God wasn’t just creating a rhetoric that could be easily followed, he was tracing his plan and purpose for us to see throughout the ages. HE was painting an image that we could follow, a map that would lead us to the kingdom. God has called us, arguably he has called everyone in the world to him, and he knows we may indeed refuse that call. But he knows also that we must be the ones to make the choice to begin the journey, just as it was Christ’s choice to answer his father’s call. He wants us to make friends and family that will support us on our journey, just as Christ had his closest friends to strengthen him. And God wants us to know that we will face downfall, and that we must do so willingly. God wants us to know that this is part of the journey, that most of us will face such hardships that we may feel as though there is no recovery. But at the end of our journey, there is hope.

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb 11:13-16).

This story, old as human history, is one of hope and deliverance. It is told in a way that we can enjoy, grasp and share. Told by a God that knows his creation through the actions of the faithful of old. Told so that we might follow and pattern our lives after them, that we might seek that country, one better than anything under this sun.

**Ethan Bearden (Austin Leander, TX)**

Have an exhortation, devotion or article you would like posted in the Tidings Youth? Email Brother Ethan Bearden at ejbearden1988@gmail.com, or find him on Facebook.
The New Testament Church, (12) Meeting Places

Upper rooms

There is a similar growth, and a rather interesting one, apparent in the use of the buildings for Christian worship. The first meeting place seems to have been “the upper room” (Acts 1:13) — the definite article being used as you will find in the margin and in new versions, which would be the room in which the first breaking of bread took place, the Lord’s supper, when Jesus met with his disciples “in the upper room.” (Probably loaned to him by one of his sympathizers, almost certainly by Mary the mother of John Mark.) And this upper room, if it were the house of Mary the mother of Mark, is still in use in Acts 12:12. This is the occasion when Peter had been released from prison: “And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.”

Now we have already seen previously that the numbers of the disciples in Jerusalem had grown marvelously in these early days, and though a number of the disciples were met in the house of Mary, clearly there would have been many other places where the Christians were meeting in Jerusalem at that time, though it is possible that this house still remained the headquarters of the Christian church. There are some indications in the New Testament, even in the Acts of the Apostles, of the establishment of regular meeting places other than people’s homes. We know that a great many of the Christian churches were able to meet in the homes of their wealthier brethren: “The church that is in thy house,” is a familiar phrase in the epistles.

In Ephesus, however, we find Paul either renting or being offered the use of the school of Tyrannus.

“And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years” (Acts 19:9-10).

So for two years Paul’s headquarters for his preaching was in the school of Tyrannus, which may not, of course, have been a building, it may have been a portico or grounds in which Tyrannus, probably some philosopher or teacher of the times, used to assemble his students, or disciples. But Paul by hook or by crook (by some of the means by which Christadelphians have acquired Oddfellows halls and all manner of strange places to hold their meetings) found himself holding his meetings in the school of Tyrannus, and he used it for two years.
There is an interesting verse in James where, you will remember, James is upbraiding the brethren because they had the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with partiality. And he said: "For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" (James 2:2-3).

Now the interesting point for our study is that the word James uses here for assembly is "synagogue." We have already seen how James, the leader of the church at Jerusalem, in New Testament times, certainly in the Acts of the Apostles, was very much influenced by his Jewish background. Now here is James using the word synagogue of the Christian meeting places, which suggests that the church by this time was meeting in halls or public places, or churches of some kind that were probably based upon the synagogue worship with which they were already so familiar.

Dr. Blunt makes an interesting point, which I would not attach too much importance to, but which I thought was very interesting in tracing out the development of the church in the first century. Paul says "What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not" (1Cor 11:22).

Here he is upbraiding the brethren because of their disorderly conduct at the Lord’s Table. As we know they used to have a “love feast,” which they used to bring their food to, and in the course of the meal they remembered Jesus. But, of course, like all human things it got out of hand. As soon as men start touching the loveliest and holiest of things they seem as though they have to spoil it in some way; so that which began with the purest idea, that the brethren (and especially probably the poorer brethren) should be able once a week to have a good meal together and in the course of the meal to remember the Lord Jesus Christ, now degenerates, and we find rich men bringing, as we should say today, their cold chicken and bottles of champagne, and really living it up, while the poorer brethren had not enough to eat.

Blunt makes the point that there is a distinction being made here by the Apostle between the houses that they customarily eat and drink in and the house of God. This is holier than their houses. This is the place where they meet to worship God and remember him. As I say, I am not going to press the point, but I think it is interesting as a straw in the wind as to what was developing. Clearly, it seems to me, towards the end of the first century the church was meeting in buildings, which they had erected or taken over for that purpose. In some cases it would be the homes of wealthy brethren, and in other cases it would be buildings such as the school of Tyrannus, or other places such as the “synagogue” of James where their services would take place. Perhaps it is in this context that we should understand “Let your women keep silence in the church,” which you will find the New English Bible translates “keep silence in church,” taking the church here as meaning the place where the ecclesia met together.

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Eusebius, when he wrote his history in the 4th century, relates rather interestingly that between 200-250 AD “the old edifices” were replaced by more splendid buildings. In other words, by this date the church had grown opulent, grown in organization, developed a hierarchy, become much more popular and numerous, and they were pulling down what Eusebius calls the old buildings and putting up more splendid edifices, probably more like the churches we are familiar with today (in England) which often date from Mediaeval times. It suggests that the church buildings’ originally were less ornate and more functional in these earlier days. It suggests, too, that if between 200-250 they were pulling down the old buildings, then those old buildings must have been up fairly early in the beginning of the second century. It is probably a similar story to our own.

**Christadelphian Halls**

Those of you who have read Wilson’s *Sects and Society*, in which he describes the growth and organization of the Christadelphian community, will remember that he is somewhat out of date, because he is talking about “the creaky little wooden stairs and the funny little buildings at the top”, that Christadelphians meet in, and little back alleys and Oddfellows Halls and things like that, which, of course, was true a generation or two ago. It is still true, of course, of some of the ecclesias, but we have grown, as the first century church had grown. We have replaced these in a great many cases.

As a community we now meet in very nice Christadelphian halls, functional buildings. Not ornate, but functional. Splendid little buildings in which we delight to worship God and to hold our meetings. And so in our own history the thing has changed quite rapidly. In my early days in the truth it was fairly unusual for a Christadelphian ecclesia to meet in their own hall. They might have a tin hut somewhere, a Scouts Hall that they had managed to buy up, but to have a splendid purpose-built Christadelphian Hall was almost unheard of. Now this is nearer the norm, and those ecclesias that have not got one look rather enviously on their better-off brethren.

The lesson that we can draw from the history of the early church is that there should be a necessary balance between the one and the other. It was not very long before the functional buildings, perfectly adapted to the needs of the church towards the end of the first century, became the ornate churches, the cathedrals, the “livings” of the bishops and archbishops of the third and fourth centuries; and although I think the balance is generally well observed today, I do believe this needs watching. It gladdens my heart to see these lovely Christadelphian halls being built, perfectly suitable for what they are wanted for, yet we must never lose sight of the fact that the ecclesia is essentially the membership and not the buildings in which they meet. That is what happened, and it could happen again.

**Church services**

There are gleanings in the New Testament which give us some idea of the way in which they conducted their meetings and I want to look at this a little more
closely. In many respects, as I think we saw earlier, they were not unlike our own meetings. They had a president, e.g. Acts 1, Peter was president; Acts 15, James was president. Probably later on, one of the elders would act as president, or some of the elders might have shared the duty, just as we ourselves elect some of our more able brethren to be presidents of the ecclesia and these often double-up as arranging brethren. They met for the breaking of bread, and as we have already seen, in primitive times they shared a meal together — the “love feast” — which quite clearly was dropped before the end of the first century, probably for the reasons we have already seen.

There was preaching and teaching of the word of God and reading of the Scriptures. “Give attendance to reading”. Here 1Tim 4:13 seems to mean, and the new versions certainly take it to mean, the public reading of the word of God: for example the NET reads “give attention to the public reading of scripture”. The Roman Governor Pliny writing to the Emperor Trajan at the end of the first century refers specifically to the meeting of Christians in their churches in which he says they “sing hymns in honor of Christ.” And we have already seen that as part of their meeting they used to have a collection.

**Breaking Of Bread**

I would like to speak a little more about the breaking of bread. The fullest account we have is the one in 1Corinthians 11, and there is the implication that the church met regularly to remember the Lord’s death. But the New Testament does not seem to have institutionalized the communion as the later churches did. In a book called *A History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, Dr. Priestly enumerates, for example, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul as one of the corruptions of Christianity; similarly, the doctrine of the Trinity, and many other things with which we would be quite familiar and in which we would agree with him. But he also includes the breaking of bread, or the communion service, as one of the corruptions of Christianity, his reason being that the church in the second century at least, if not earlier, had “institutionalized” the Lord’s remembrance. The breaking of bread was not ever intended to be a kind of “sacrament” of the church. It was intended to be a simple remembrance of Jesus, and all the ornate paraphernalia which the church invented to go with this Dr. Priestly sees as a corruption of what was originally intended, and what was originally practiced, when in those delightful words of Acts. “*they continued in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and prayers; and with gladness and joyfulness of heart did eat their meat and break bread from house to house*” (Acts 2:42). The church came to regard it as some kind of magic rite, as though by attending at the communion service and taking the “sacraments” a man was magically transformed in some way.

Now I am not suggesting that we are doing anything of that kind, but I do think it is worth noting that this is what happened, and we must not “institutionalize” the remembrance of the Lord and the breaking of bread. It is an expression of our daily discipleship, not a substitute for it.
Hymn singing

I have already mentioned the way hymn singing developed and you will gather that I find it particularly interesting. There are several references to hymns in the New Testament. “And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives” (Matt 26:30). In Acts 16.25 when Paul and Silas were put in prison, what did they do? “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.” According to Young’s Concordance, the word “praises” is “hymns”, and the same Greek word is used in Heb 2:12 “Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee”. They sang hymns at midnight. Col 3:16 and Eph 5:19 essentially say the same thing, so we will only look at one of them. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col 3:16).

Hymn singing clearly, therefore, was a familiar exercise to worship in the New Testament church. It would be part of their meetings, we may be sure of that. (As, in fact, Pliny writing to Trajan says it was.) And there are several interesting references in Paul’s letters to the popular Christian hymns that they were singing at that time. Some of these are rather interesting to follow out, because Paul quite often used in his letters such phrases as, “This is a true saying,” which are thought to be a reference to some of these hymns that they sang at this time. Who wrote them? I do not know. I wonder if Paul wrote any himself? I wonder who was the hymnologist of the early church? But certainly they used to sing hymns, and it seems quite reasonable to suppose that it is from these hymns that Paul is quoting in these passages that I have mentioned. In those early days I suppose it would have been simple congregational singing. (“Making joyful noise,” as we say when we cannot sing the parts!) Choir singing was developed much later, about the fourth century according to Dr. Lamson. And the congregation then took a back seat. I think we can learn a little from this, without making any special point. Of course, it is nice to sing the parts, and, of course, it is nice to have good singers among us, but there is a danger in making things too “professional.” That is what happened, you see, as the church grew and developed, when it became a little bit obscene to hear people croaking away with funny voices and not being able to sing properly. So they said scrub it, and let us have a choir! And the choir took over, and there was this breach again made between the ordinary congregation and the choir who could sing nicely. So let us not despise our vociferous singers, even if they do sing a bit out of key sometimes. I would rather have that, myself, than become so professional that we are ashamed to lift up our voices in praise to the Lord because we do not happen to be very good singers.

Len Richardson

Notes:
1. My observation is that this change occurred in the Central Fellowship when they united with the Suffolk Street Fellowship in 1956, Most Suffolk Street ecclesias owned their own halls, while those in Central largely rented. [Editor]
2. See chapter on “Hymnology of the Ancient Church” in “The Church in the First Three Centuries” by Alvan Lamson
2016 Jamaican Easter Youth Camp

The Jamaica Easter Youth Gathering was underway at Camp Hope. Inside, Brothers Joel Suntz and Nathan Giordano led the group of teens and twenty-somethings through the topic of ‘The Book of Ruth - Searching for Your Beloved’, and the lessons we can glean from the relationship of Ruth and Boaz. Outside, in the shade of a nearby mango tree, the rest of the North American visitors were catching craft supplies as they were blown every which way by the breeze, twenty little pairs of hands reaching out to help. With the turquoise waters of the Caribbean just down the hill, the setting was idyllic, even if not particularly conducive for crafting.

The kids we taught, from Sunday schools all over the island, were a wonderful group. We thought for sure, as we prepped for our trip, that we’d go to Jamaica and teach them something about the book of Ruth. What we learned was that they already knew the story inside out, could recite perfectly Ruth’s epic words to Naomi. Knew how the story ended. And they weren’t even a bit bored to hear it all again. They couldn’t wait to answer questions and show us how very much they understood.

On Friday, they were strangers to us, faces we couldn’t quite find the names for. By Saturday, their individual selves were starting to shine. Chloe loved pink. Lovena loved a cuddle. Romaine’s crafts were creative and immaculately made.
Teeny tiny Tessann knew the entire story of Moses and wanted to tell us all about it.

This was a really good weekend. From Rise & Shine exercise each day as the sun was coming up, all the way through the evening devotion at the very end of the day, God’s name was praised. Every morning, a group of young people led Morninspiration with music, a thought for the day, and a Bible reading, and we started our day giving thanks to God as a group.

In the kitchen, an amazing group of ladies worked all day for us, cooking up the most fabulous food — curried goat with rice and peas, callaloo and salt fish, fried plantains and juicy watermelon, and escovitched fish (eyeballs included). We ate so well.

During the afternoon of the team cook-off, four open cook fires blazed in the kitchen courtyard. Little kids milled around the flames, offering moral support to the teens as they worked together to create what they feverishly hoped would be the winning meal. (Fried potatoes won the day. What can I tell you? North Americans were judging the contest.) Races were run. Treasures were hunted. We splashed in the sea and hunted for crabs. Sis. Letisha taught an etiquette session and everyone dressed up in their finery for an evening in the hall, beautifully decorated by Sis. Kay. Young men pulled out chairs for the ladies and we ate a splendid formal dinner with knives, forks and dainty outstretched pinkies.

The younger kids loved their weekend of beach and Bible lessons. Doing crafts, eating abundant candy and playing with their friends was a welcome break from the grind of real life. The teens told us over and over how much they enjoyed the classes, as they learned so much about relationships — the importance of seeking a godly partner, and how to conduct themselves as they head towards the ultimate goal of a godly marriage. A weekend in a peaceful place with friends who believe the same as you can do a lot to clarify what’s truly important in life.

The North American visitors had a great time. Several were visiting the mission field for the first time, and soon realized that what we gain in visiting our brethren, and experiencing the Truth in a culture different from our own, is so much more than we can hope to give. Our brethren and young people in Jamaica focus so well on love and thankfulness. They were thankful every morning because God had woken them and they had another day to give praise and glory to him. Meeting brothers who exhort every other week because there are only two brothers in their ecclesia — and consider that work a joyful privilege, not a burden — will give you a perspective on your own service. Getting to know those little kids who were so open with their love and so excited by little things like crafts and candy filled us up with gratitude for the opportunity we’d been given to share this experience with them.
It was a typical January day in Ontario, Canada. Snow! It was snowing when we wakened at 0515. It was snowing when we left for a rather messy drive to the airport. It was snowing at the time we were due to take off (at 0930) and we were still in departure lounge! We boarded the plane a short while later, but it was still snowing therefore the plane had to be ‘de-iced’ (as the saying goes) so by the time we were off the ground we were ninety minutes late. But that is the risk of winter in Canada! However, Bro. Andre George and our taxi driver, Keith Philip were at the airport to meet us.

It was the start of a five week visit to St. Lucia. A busy time with plenty of Bible discussions with members of the ecclesia and contacts. On this visit we focused on the “Bible Enrichment” program. We had not decided on what topic to base the classes on but a very stimulating book by Bro. Stephen Irving entitled “Studies in the Gospel of John” which we had been reading provided the idea.

The first class began with about five visitors attending and the approach was to begin at John 1:1. Rather than getting bogged down with a lot of discussion.
that would prevent us from preaching the gospel, our approach was to teach as opposed to raising points for discussion. Any question that was raised was quickly answered and if not relevant to the point it was deferred to another time.

The size of the classes grew and by the end we had ten visitors attending and most had been to all the classes. By the conclusion of the eighth class we had reached the end of chapter three. The group said they wanted to carry on and suggested stealing our passports so that we would have to stay!

In addition to these classes we presented some videos of lectures on the Middle East and a movie on the time of the Reformation. We were pleased that fourteen visitors came to these presentations. Then of course there are the exhortations each week followed by lunch and discussions at the CBMC apartment. We were encouraged that one of our contacts came along to all of the memorial services we attended and lunch afterwards.

We also continued (from our last visit) to have baptism discussions with the sister of Bro. Eddie Anthony. Jessica’s knowledge of the Bible is growing and we pray that it will bring forth fruit to the glory of God.

The day came for us to return home. But it was a typical winter day in Ontario, Canada. Snow! Yes, the situation was the same as the day we left, five weeks earlier. The outbound flight from Toronto had to be ‘de-iced’ before take off and was therefore ninety minutes late. This delay of course meant that the return flight (the plane and crew go and return on the same day) was also ninety minutes late. It was well past midnight by the time we were home. We were deeply thankful to our Heavenly Father that our trip was so blessed.

But the work has to continue. We pray that the Lord will send labourers into that part of his vineyard.

Written by Martin and Lois Webster, Link for ST. Lucia
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity
Fifty Years In Spanish Speaking South America

2015/2016 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the start of Christadelphian Bible Mission activities in Spanish speaking South America. On the 22nd of April 1965 Brethren George Smith and Gordon MacRae moved from Panama to settle in Bogotá, Colombia’s capital. Gordon from Edinburgh had spent the last night with us in England before we saw him off on the boat from Southampton to Panama...”Aye”, he later remarked, with wry Scottish humour, “that was my first night in a foreign country!” (Leaving Scotland for England).

In the next three years the work around Bogotá was blessed with sixteen baptisms, beginning with Sis. Carmen, an elderly but very lively lady. A small ecclesia was formed. Many of those early members were well advanced in years and have now passed off the scene to await our Lord’s return; also five younger members married and moved to England.

Last year saw three members of those earlier times meet up in Restrepo (Meta) 80 km from Bogotá. We travelled by bus with Bro. Juan Pablo Ospina, down winding Andean roads, dropping more than 2000 metres through splendid mountain scenery. The bus seemed to be going excessively slowly, for which one might have been more than a little thankful, except that in due course the warning siren indicated that the pneumatic brake system was failing! We were blessed in the end with a late but safe arrival and soon the three Colombians were full of talk of earlier times, of the days of their baptisms in 1967/68. Bro. Juan Pablo now lives in the UK whilst Luis and Rosa soldier on in Restrepo with not very good health. They share one good eye between them; Luis being blind, and Rosa being partially sighted.

Communication with the couple in Restrepo is maintained by mobile phone and by e-mail. The man at the internet is a good friend of Luis; he is serving a prison sentence “casa por carcel” and so, although under house arrest, has opened his home to offer this internet service. Luis sits at the internet, with all the other clients listening whilst our messages/ exhortations are read out loud, or whilst Luis with his booming voice dictates his replies.

After a moving service with bread and wine in their home, we reluctantly, the next day, returned to Bogotá. Quite recently Luis and Rosa have been visited by Bro. David Vine from the UK and also the Christadelphian Meal a Day team who were down from the States to review projects in that area.
In 1972 about five years after participating in the start-up work in Bogotá, Bill Rawson and his wife Carol, moved to Medellín some nine hours away by bus. Again the work was blessed by baptisms; some eight in total in 1974/75.

In January 2016, the group in Medellín met up for the day, and a Bible study “The Arrival of the King” was undertaken. It is remarkable that the group still meet and care for one another. They had almost no contact with other Christadelphians during the late 1980s and 1990s when Medellín was suffering over 30 drug related murders per night.

Today everyone is getting older. One sister works in the informal sector selling her “empanadas” which she cooks each day; another brother, an ageing artist, often struggles to make ends meet, and Bro. Jaime a university lecturer, who is about to retire himself, keeps an eye on the more elderly couples in the group.

The preaching work has continued and progressed further south into Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Chile and Argentina. This does not mean however that there are not yet opportunities in Colombia to communicate the good news and the hope we share. One long standing contact in Bogotá is still visited, and a very caring family of four adults regularly see Bro. Jesús and Sis. Julia Realpe, who are over 90 years old, to share time in prayer and scripture reading.

Written by John and Mélida Burton
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity
Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 91781, Austin, TX 78709-1781, www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, V3R 0J7

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110. Phone: 818-842-2868 jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Heritage College c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, N3P 2B1

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Rick Szabo, P.O. Box 1528, West Caldwell, NJ 07007-1528 www.wcfoundation.org

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923. Phone: 732-381-4590 Fax: 732-499-8415 christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. 626-303-2222, e-mail: jdhunter@gte.net

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to P.O. Box 146, Three Rivers, CA 93271-0146, or 97 Twenty Place Blvd., Mount Hope, ON L0R 1W0 or via website www.agapeinaction.com e-mail: agapeinaction@rogers.com

Christadelphian Indian Children’s Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CBMA earmarked for CICH, c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy children in mission areas www.christadelphianchildren.com

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Jonathan Farrar, 140 Whitwell Way, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0

Joy Fund, Inc. provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Alcohol Help Line provides fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. Phone: 866-823-1039

Christadelphian Care Line provides fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems, as well as family issues. Phone: 866-823-1039
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.

HONESDALE, PA
Bro. David Cheetham (Mooresetown, NJ) visited us on May 15, 2016, to give us a stirring exhortation and to share fellowship with us. Our sisters made a wonderful luncheon for us all.

Stephen J. DeMarco

NANAIMO, BC
Due to uncertain family travel and vacation arrangements by our small membership, we have, with regret, decided to suspend our regularly scheduled breaking of bread at our ecclesial hall from July 31, 2016–September 4, 2016, inclusive. Any visitors in our area at that time who wish to do so may be able to break bread by arrangement using the contact information in the CALS diary, or the notice on the hall door.

Our thanks go out to the brethren from near and far who have given us exhortational support over this past year. They include: Horace Macpherson, Joe Myren, Peter Lawrence, Clive Daniel, Bob Stodel and Jonah Knorr (Victoria, BC); Dave Snobelen (Saanich Peninsula, BC); Jim Hestermann (Maple Ridge, BC); Shaun Budden, Art Bull and Dan Orsetti (Vancouver, BC); and Graeme Alexander (Seattle, WA).

Once again we would encourage anyone contemplating moving to the west coast of Canada to consider the Nanaimo area which offers a temperate climate, but with snow covered mountains, reasonably priced real estate, and waterfront activities in a smaller city offering big city amenities. It also is a central location for many vacation activities. Our ecclesia is blessed with our own easily kept and accessible hall. For further information, please call or e-mail the above noted recording brother.

Tom Alexander

SARASOTA, FL
Bro. Patrick Brown and Sis. Carol Brown have transferred their membership from the Sarasota, FL Ecclesia to the Largo, FL Ecclesia.

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 in December 2015, Bro. John Billington (ON, Canada) spoke to us on “Events Leading to the Return of Israel’s King,”
Understanding our Time”. 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; 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 SNOBELEN 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.


Jeff Gelineau

MEMORIAL TABLEWARE

We have items used for memorial service at the Florida Christadelphian Bible School and will send them to anyone interested in having them. There are 12 glass cups, plates and table cloths and collection bags. Anyone interested, should contact me at the phone number or email provided. Walt Dodrill (727-410-0896) (walt dodrill@ msn.com). In our Lord’s service, thank you.
How Did the First Day Replace the Sabbath?

Why Sunday, and Not Saturday?

“Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made” (1Cor 16:1,2).

“On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight” (Acts 20:7).

Since so many in the early ecclesias were Jews, and since they were already in the habit of observing the Sabbath, why were their regular meetings at this time held on Sundays rather than Saturdays?

The obvious answer is that “the first day of the week” was plainly associated with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1,19), and that the breaking of bread was a commemoration not just of his death but especially of his resurrection.

At the very beginning, and perhaps for a couple of generations, the Jewish Sabbath, that is Saturday, was set aside and observed by many Jewish Christians. They may have frequented the synagogues (Paul and his companions did this regularly) for the purpose of meeting with friends and relatives, and probably also for the purpose of preaching the gospel to their fellow-Jews.

Of course, when they attended a synagogue, they could scarcely have a breaking of bread service there which was exclusive to believers. Nor could Gentile believers be expected to attend the synagogue at all. So they would have to meet later, probably after synagogue services (morning and evening?) were finished.

Therefore, if Jewish Christians wanted to attend synagogue services, this would leave Saturday night available, after the Sabbath had officially ended, for memorial meeting. This may account for Paul, in one instance, speaking until midnight (Acts 20:7). It is not likely that Paul began speaking in the morning or even at midday, and continued thereafter until midnight, but rather that he began at 8 pm or 9 pm, and the service continued until midnight.

Regular evening services, as soon as the Jewish Sabbath ended, might help explain why Paul calls the breaking of bread “the Lord’s Supper” (1Cor 11:20). The word he uses for “supper” is the Greek “deipnon”, which means exactly that: an evening meal, and quite often a banquet. This also supports the idea that the earliest believers celebrated the breaking of bread on Saturday evening (right after the Jewish Sabbath ended), and not Sunday morning.
Because it was an evening service, and because it was for partaking the bread and the wine, such a “supper” would evoke both the Jewish Passover and traditional Jewish Sabbath services, as well as Christ’s own evening “Passover” which he kept with his disciples before he suffered.

Jews would keep the Sabbath by refraining from work. This was presumably allowed in most places in the Roman Empire because their religion was usually recognized by the authorities. But by Sunday morning they may have had to follow local custom and be available for work, market, and other business activities. Nevertheless, this would leave Saturday night, after synagogue services were finished, for Christians to meet together.

Keep in mind, also, that by Jewish reckoning, the “first day”, or Sunday, began when the sun went down in the evening after the 24-hour Sabbath finished.

Later, when Christianity became a recognized religion in parts of the Roman Empire and elsewhere, Sunday would likely be recognized as a day of rest also. By then, Christians might have begun to hold meetings at various times on Sunday (as we now define it, from midnight to midnight). But in the beginning, and for several generations, Saturday evening (as Gentiles saw it), but very early on Sunday (as Jews saw it), may have been the most convenient time for the Lord’s Supper.

George Booker

NEW BOOK: PART OF THE FAMILY
CHRISTADELPHIANS, THE KINDERTRANSPORT, AND RESCUE FROM THE HOLOCAUST
IWASPARTOFTHEFAMILY.COM

In 1938 and 1939, the Kindertransport occurred — a movement to bring thousands of Jewish children out of Nazi occupied territories to safety in Great Britain. These children came without their parents, almost always without a knowledge of English, and also little experience with English culture. They came to a new family, a new country, and a new life. Approximately 250 of these children were sponsored by Christadelphians. They came and lived in houses with Christadelphian families, or lived in hostels that the Christadelphians had started.

So often the Holocaust is considered in terms of statistics — how many perished and how many were affected. Yet it is often the individual stories that provide the most powerful human connection and the opportunity to learn. Rather than focus on the statistics, this book examines the experiences of these people, who came to England as children, and lived with Christadelphians.

Ten of the former Jewish refugees, and their families, were contacted and collaborated in this effort to bring about this first volume. These are their stories.


Jason Hensley
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

JULY, 2016

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

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

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


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

23-30 **Eastern Bible School **New Location This Year** Franklin Pierce University, Rindge, NH; Theme: “Let Us Consider One Another to Provoke unto Love and Good Works.” Bro. Dennis Bevans (Baltimore, MD): “Jonah and Nahum: Christ’s First and Second Advent” (adults), and “Philippians: Christ Our Everything” (teens); Bro. Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD): “Peter: A Living Hope” (adults and teens); Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA): “Family Life Lessons from Genesis” (adults), and “Ecclesiastes: Lasting Happiness Can Only Be Found with God” (teens). For registration information contact Sis. Cindy Nevers at 18 Sibley St., Auburn, MA 01501, or cindynevers@verizon.net.

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


AUGUST, 2016

20-21 Largo Tampa Bay, FL Study Weekend to be led by Bro. Steve Cheetham (Echo Lake, NJ). All are invited. Please contact Bro. Walt Dodrill at 727-410-0896 for further information.

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

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

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

SEPTEMBER, 2016

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

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

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.

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

14-16 Women at the Well Retreat, Palm Springs, CA. Sis Mary Styles (Shelburne, ON) will be leading our classes on the topic of 'Renewal'. Sponsored by the Simi Hills, CA Ecclesia. For information regarding the weekend contact Sisters Sandy McLeod sandramcleod@gmail.com or Denise Sisco denisesisco@outlook.com. For registration contact Sis Bonnie Sommerville kenandbonnie@simihills.org.

NOVEMBER, 2016

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 yet to be determined. Contact Ken Green, 443-497-3497 or e-mail Ken at Hashawha@gmail.com for additional information.
Living
the
Word of God
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Instructions for Living the Word of God

Introduction
This special issue is devoted to two interlocking topics:

1) How to look at the Bible, and ways to study the Word of God
2) The purpose of Bible study: how to Live by Faith in its message

The inspiration of the Bible is assumed in this Special Issue: “The Bible is God’s word and the only message from him. It is without error, except for copying and translation errors.”1 So our only source of knowledge of God’s ultimate purpose for mankind, His atoning work through His son, and His plans for this earth are revealed to us through its pages. The Bible was written in several languages, by many individuals, and over a period of many centuries. It was written against quite different cultural backgrounds, to hearers with different amounts of knowledge of their past history. It was indeed written for ourselves, but its message is best appreciated by understanding its meaning and relevance for the audience at the time of its writing, and the words it was written in. And its message is all the more relevant today, as in many areas the Christian Faith is being submerged by the materialistic culture of our times.

People of the Book
This term is quite often used in our times by our community to describe itself both in lectures and in exhortations. In this we are is not the only group which does so. A quick survey, both of our literature and that of others, shows2

• Among Christian religions, the most common use is by the Seventh Day Adventists, although many in the missionary regions of this world, especially Africa and Asia, refer to any Christian denomination by this term.
• The Catholic Church rejects the similar expression “religion of the book” as a description of the Christian faith. They prefer the term “religion of the Word of God”, since the faith of Christ, according to Catholic teaching, is not found solely in the Christian Scriptures, but also in the Sacred Tradition and Magisterium of the Church.
• Among our literature, the most common use of the term for many years was of the Jewish nation: it only gradually that the most frequent use was to refer to our community, if a quick survey of The Christadelphian archives is any indication. After about 1960 the majority of uses was to refer to our community, mainly questioning whether such a use was correct.

The Bible Companion3
Most Christadelphians, when asked about any sort of daily Bible reading schedule, will cite what is known as the Bible Companion. Many know that it was originated by Robert Roberts, and quite a few will know he developed it as
a teenager. Indeed, some will have read the passage in his autobiography, where he describes its development.

“...finally came down to three at one sitting — which I have continued ever since. At the commencement of my Bible readings, I trusted to memory for the next chapters to be read. But after several years’ experience, I found it convenient to have a written guide. So I made a calendar of the entire readings for the year, in a penny pass book, which greatly facilitated the process. Friends got to know of this, and first one and then another asked me to provide them with a copy. I did this with much pleasure, until I had written 18 copies. Then I came across a printed little work of the same character, which suggested the idea of having my guide printed. This was done, under the name of The Bible Companion, which, with some modification, has continued in use ever since.”

The schedule takes one through the Old Testament once, and the New Testament twice in the course of a year. If you look at my Bible, it has 1298 pages, with the Old Testament taking up 1021, which is about 80% of the total. So simple logic would say if the two portions of the Old Testament each take up 40% of the whole, in the time it takes to read one Old Testament portion we can read two New Testament portions. Note the divisions in practice are not quite this simple: the first portion (Genesis-Job) has about 379,000 words, the second (Psalms-Malachi) has 230,000, and the New Testament has 179,000 words. Thus we read about the same number of words for the first and last portion, as we read the last portion twice in a year.

Of course, there are other Bible Reading planners, some of which quite simply take you through the whole Bible once per year. However, one of the advantages of the Bible Companion is that it often illuminates the resonances typical of the way the inspired authors dwell on similar themes, and stresses the inter-dependence of the whole word of God. In addition, the fact that most Christadelphians have and do use the Bible Companion gives it a special place among all of the available Bible reading guides.

**The People of the Book revisited**

As I have said, we often claim we are the “people of the Book”, and base this on our “diligent” readings as based upon the Bible Companion. This is most often seen in our Bibles in the form of a set of three inserts, one for each portion. The actual booklet is much rarer, but is of some interest for Bro. Roberts’ introduction. He says, in part:

“Salvation depends upon the assimilation of the mind to the divine ideas, principles, and affections, exhibited in the Scriptures. This process commences with a belief of the gospel, but is by no means completed thereby; it takes a lifetime for its scope and untiring diligence for its accomplishment. The mind is naturally alien from God and all His ideas (Rom 8:7; 1Cor 2:14), and cannot be brought at once to the Divine Likeness. This is a work of slow development, and can only be achieved
by the industrious application of the individual to the means which God has given for the purpose, namely, the expression of His mind in the Scriptures of truth. Spiritual-mindedness, or a state of mind in accordance with the mind of the Spirit as displayed in these writings can grow within a man by daily intercourse with that mind, there unfolded. Away from this, the mind will revert to its original emptiness. The infallible advice then to every man and woman anxious about their salvation is — READ THE SCRIPTURES DAILY. It is only in proportion as this is done, that success may be looked for. The man, who sows sparingly in this respect, will only reap sparingly.”

These are valuable reminders of the necessity of frequent and deep familiarization with the Word of God, but perhaps some of the choice of words is a little unfortunate. We must remember

- Salvation is not by works: not all are capable of absorbing all the words, and indeed familiarity can lead to a skimming of the readings, not a contemplation as to how the words can act in our lives.
- Mere Bible knowledge is no pathway to the Kingdom. We remember that the Jews of Jesus’ day were famous for their knowledge of the Old Testament, and many could recite much if it, if not all, from memory. But they were condemned by Jesus for their lack of grasp of the message of hope, of forgiveness, of the grace of God.

So although the greater part of this special issue concerns the Word of God, how to study it and learn from it, we will also consider how it should act in our lives: “works”, the fruit of the Spirit, shows how this knowledge has resulted in actions. Not only that, but faith without acknowledging our need for repentance in baptism is also departing from the words of Christ. Faith without works is dead: but faith alone is also insufficient.

So in this Special Issue we will also include discussions on

- The way our “first principles”, as derived from the Word of God, should cause a moral reaction as well as an intellectual assent.
- How to use the Bible to live like a King.
- The way the Word, the logos, of God finds its true meaning and fulfilment in our savior, the Lord Jesus.

It is our hope and prayer that all will find help in this issue, whether it is to improve our Bible study habits, to strengthen our faith, or to ensure our faith has a deep hold on our beings through our actions.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:
2. The easiest source is Wikipedia, along of course with our own literature
3. The section is extracted from my editorial in The Tidings of July 2010.
How to Study the Bible

Many of us learned what it means to be a Bible student by reading Bro. Harry Whittaker’s *Exploring the Bible*.¹ For a decade or more, I used to read this little book in the first week of each year, just to remind myself of the methods he describes. His promotion of “do it yourself” Bible study methods and his lifelong example of applying them remain an inspiration to me. My thoughts will do little to add to his wisdom.

This article is divided into two major sections. The first section emphasizes the importance of regular reading of the Bible. Bible students read seriously, carefully, thoughtfully, and analytically. They observe, interpret, and apply the teachings of the Bible. It isn’t like a novel you read once. Rather, the Bible is like the essentials of life, like the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, so we must read it routinely. The second section highlights the importance of context in understanding the Bible. It uses the book of Exodus as a source of examples to illustrate some Bible study methods that use context as a key to interpretation.

Read the Bible

**Read the Bible**

**Elementary reading and more.** To study the Bible you must first read the Bible. There are multiple levels of reading.² Elementary reading answers the question: “What does the sentence say?” We learn to read at this level in elementary school. Of course, we learn to read in our native language, which, for most of my audience here, is English. The original texts of the Bible are mostly in (Biblical) Hebrew and (*koine*) Greek. Unless we learn these ancient languages (and few of us have the time or inclination to do so), we will need to read the Bible from a translation. There are many excellent English translations of the Bible.³ A good Bible student will want to read from multiple translations. I use the AV/RV Interlinear as my primary study Bible. It has both the King James Version and the (English) Revised Version, and the best marginal references of any Bible I know. I also read from the New International Version (NIV), the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), the English Standard Version (ESV), the Message, the New English Translation (NET), and others. The New English Translation (NET) has the best translation notes of any Bible I know.

The major difference between a Bible reader and a Bible student is that a student reads with additional purpose than merely determining what the text says. Knowing what the Bible says is critical, but it is only the beginning. From a cognitive perspective, we should also strive to understand, apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what the Bible has to say.⁴

**Bible marking and notes.** While you are reading, you should mark your Bible:

- Highlight repeated words; the syntactic structure of sentences; the logic of paragraphs, chapters, and books.
- Number the patterns for lists (e.g., the “3 + 3 + 1” pattern of creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3; the “3 major + 12 minor” pattern for the patriarchs, for the judges, for the prophets, and, approximately, for the kings of Judah; the “12
+ 1” pattern in Mark’s gospel for Jesus and the 12 apostles, the 12 Jewish + 1 Gentile healings, and the 5 + 7 + 1 loaves for the 5,000, the 4,000, and Jesus’ loaf in the boat and at the last supper; the multiple sevens of Revelation.

- Identify parallel texts (e.g., Chronicles with Samuel and Kings; the gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the epistles with Acts; Ephesians with Colossians; Jude with 2 Peter; 1 John with the gospel of John).

- Mark elements of type scenes (e.g., engagement at a well in a foreign country).^5

- Note poetic parallelisms and contrasts in the Psalms and Prophets^6 and in the sayings of Jesus.\(^7\)

You should also keep a notebook handy for jotting down questions, comments, thoughts, lists, etc. Some of you may prefer to do these things with modern electronic devices. Regardless of the technology, a good Bible student always takes notes.

A three-step process. Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, in their book, *Living by the Book*, suggest a three-step process for Bible study: “Step 1, Observation; Step 2, Interpretation; Step 3, Application.” They give good advice for each of these steps.

For the **Observation** step, they recommend ten useful strategies: “Read Thoughtfully; Read Repeatedly; Read Patiently; Read Selectively; Read Prayerfully; Read Imaginatively; Read Meditatively; Read Purposefully; Read Acquisitively; Read Telescopically.” They also identify six things you should look for: “Things that are... Emphasized, ... Repeated, ... Related, ... Alike and Unlike, ... True to Life.” They encourage their readers to summarize their observations, often with a chart or table.

For the **Interpretation** step, they point out that it is critical to identify the type of literature a text is. That is, what is its genre? In my opinion, this is perhaps the most important aspect of being a good Bible reader or student. There are significant differences in how we read narrative texts versus poetry, and historical records versus legal tracts versus prophetic writings versus apocalyptic literature. Misjudging the genre or applying the wrong methods to a genre can prevent us from properly grasping the meaning God intended in the various kinds of literature He gave us in the Bible. The results can be disastrous. One author uses the movie *Galaxy Quest* to illustrate what can happen: the premise of the story is that a group of aliens under attack reach out to the cast of a now off-the-air science fiction television show, thinking that the episodes were a historical record of events that had actually happened and so expecting that the cast of the TV show could actually help them in their current perils. The parody is easy to see which is why it is funny. Unfortunately, many miss the analogous misinterpretations of the Bible caused by genre errors.

They list five keys to interpretation: Content, Context, Comparison, Culture, and Consultation. Content is based on the observations made in Step 1. We will look at some of the other keys in the second section of this article.
For the **Application** step, they list four steps: Know, Relate, Meditate, Practice. They identify nine questions to ask: "Is there an example for me to follow? Is there a sin to avoid? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a prayer to repeat? Is there a command to obey? Is there a condition to meet? Is there a verse to memorize? Is there an error to mark? Is there a challenge to face?"

**Recap.** Read the Bible. Read it over and over again. Read it in different translations. Read it for different purposes. Observe. Interpret. Apply. These ideas are illustrated in “Hearing the Word: Studies on the Parable of the Sower,” *The Tidings*, Special Issue, August, 2009, which presents six studies, each of which applies a general method of studying. The epilog summarizes:

“These studies encourage readers to seek the full meaning of God’s Word. There is no end of searching, because God’s Word has no limits. Examine a passage in its immediate context. Study it in conjunction with its parallels, seeking exhortation from their similarities and their differences. Find the allusions to Old Testament Scriptures. Memorize passages and meditate upon them, especially foundational passages like the Shema and the Parable of the Sower. Draw exhortations from the examples of Bible characters. Apply these lessons in your daily life.”

**The importance of context**

A brother once said that most Christadelphians will never be great textual scholars, but we should all strive to be great contextual scholars. I agree with this sentiment and hope to illustrate it in the following examples based on Exodus.

**Outline of Exodus.** In his book *Explore the Book*, J. Sidlow Baxter has four lessons on Exodus, and for each of these he recommends reading some or all of Exodus; in particular: "(1) Read Exodus 1-40 through twice, and Exodus 1-18 a third time; (2) Read Exodus 19-24 three times; (3) Read Exodus 25-34; and (4) Read Exodus 25-31; 35-40." Baxter provides the following outline (p. 74):

“The Book of Exodus: The Divine Power, Holiness, and Wisdom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. The Exodus (1-18)</th>
<th>II. The Law (19-24)</th>
<th>III. The Tabernacle (25-40)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Projected (1-4)</td>
<td>• ‘Commandments’</td>
<td>• Designed (25-31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Obstructed (5-11)</td>
<td>(Moral)</td>
<td>• Delayed (32-34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Effected (12-18)</td>
<td>• ‘Judgments’ (Social)</td>
<td>• Completed (35-40)&quot;10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bondage</th>
<th>Deliverance</th>
<th>Journey</th>
<th>Covenant</th>
<th>Tabernacle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exod 1-2</td>
<td>Exod 3-13</td>
<td>Exod 14-18</td>
<td>Exod 19-24</td>
<td>Exod 25-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israelites</td>
<td>Ten Plagues</td>
<td>Cloud &amp; Fire</td>
<td>Mount Sinai</td>
<td>Outer Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numerous in Egypt</td>
<td>Passover</td>
<td>Red Sea</td>
<td>Theophany</td>
<td>Holy Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Pharaoh Moses</td>
<td>Exodus</td>
<td>Manna</td>
<td>Book of the Covenant</td>
<td>Most Holy Place</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Water from Rock</td>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Filled with</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Glory</td>
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The following table gives an alternative outline:
The preceding context: Continuing where Genesis left off (Exod 1-6). The opening chapters of Exodus explicitly connect it to Genesis, as illustrated by the following links. The family tree in Exodus 1:1-5 repeats the one in Genesis 46:8-27. The death of Joseph (Exod 1:6) echoes the last verse of Genesis (50:26). The emphasis on the increasing population of the children of Israel (Exod 1:7-9, 12, 20; cf. Acts 7:17) starts the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that his seed would become a great nation, increasing almost without limit (Gen 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 22:17). The affliction of Israel by the Egyptians (Exod 2:23-25; 3:17; 6:5) fulfills the prophecy to Abraham that his seed would be afflicted in a strange land (Gen 15:13-14) and Joseph’s faithful expectation based on it (Gen 50:24-25). This prophecy to Abraham is also echoed in Moses’ naming of his son Gershom (Exod 2:22) and in the Israelites leaving Egypt with the wealth of their neighbors (Exod 3:21-22; 11:2-3; 12:35-36). The references to God taking them to a land flowing with milk and honey (Exod 3:8, 17; 6:4; 8; 33:21) pick up on the promises to the patriarchs (Gen 12:1, 7; 13:15, 17; 15:7, 18-21; etc.), including the list of current inhabitants. When God appears to Moses, He emphasizes that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod 3:6, 15-16; 4:5; 6:3). How can one discover these connections? Most of them are in the marginal references of any good Bible. Others will ring out as you become more familiar with the text.

The call of Moses, the prototypical reluctant prophet (Exod 2-7). On eight separate occasions, Moses challenges the call from God (Exod 3:11; 3:13; 4:1; 4:10; 4:13; 5:22-23; 6:12; 6:30). Read Exodus 2-7 to find out God’s responses to these objections, and to see how serious the situation was. At one point it says that God was angry with Moses (Exod 4:14) and at another that God attempted to kill Moses (Exod 4:24-26). On the other hand, it also states that God assured Moses by guaranteeing that He would be with Moses; by declaring His name and its meaning; by providing signs as evidence; by reminding Moses that He is the maker of man’s mouth; and by promising that He would put His words in Moses’ mouth. This pattern of reluctance and reassurance is also exhibited, for example, by Isaiah 6, Jeremiah 1, Ezekiel 1-3, and, of course, Jonah. Have you ever been hesitant to fulfill God’s calling for you? You know, the assignments He has clearly prepared you for, the ones you may have been less than eager to do, the ones you tried to get out of by providing any number of lame excuses? I know I have, and I find comfort that despite Moses’ reluctance, God still reckons him to have been faithful (Heb 11:23-29; cf. Acts 7:17-44).

The “3 + 3 + 3 + 1” pattern of the ten plagues (Exod 7-12). The LORD provides “3 + 1” signs to Moses (Exod 4:1-9, 21-23), foreshadowing the ten plagues, which follow a “3 + 3 + 3 + 1” pattern. For the first plagues of each series (1, 4, 7) Moses is to go “in the morning” and he is to “stand before Pharaoh” when he comes to the water. For the second plagues of each series (2, 5, 8) Moses is to “Go in unto Pharaoh”, that is, at his palace. There is no warning for the third plague in each series (3, 6, 9). Aaron is the agent for the plagues in the first series (1, 2, 3); Moses is the agent for the third series (7, 8, 9); for the second series, God is the agent for the first two plagues (4, 5), and Moses for the third (6); and God is the agent for the tenth plague, the killing of the firstborn. The Egyptian magicians
are able to mimic the first two plagues (1, 2), but not the third (3) or the sixth (6). The purpose of the plagues is stated multiple times: “That thou shalt know that I am the LORD”, which applies to both the Egyptians and the Israelites. It is highlighted that plagues 4-10 do not come upon the Israelites. For each of plagues 7-10 it is emphasized that there is “none like it” either before or after. Pharaoh hardens his own heart for plagues 1-5 and 7; whereas, God hardens his heart for plagues 6, 8, 9, and 10. Pharaoh promises that he will let the Israelites go after plagues 2, 4, 7, and 8, only to renege on his word. It is useful to put all this information in a table including the supporting verses for each of the details (see the table below, patterned after Sarna, Exploring Exodus, p. 76). The plagues are referred to in the Psalms (Psa 78; Psa 105) and the language of the plagues is used in Revelation (Rev 8-9 trumpets; Rev 16 vials).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Ten Plagues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plague</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Frogs</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Lice</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Flies</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Rocks</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Hail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Locusts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Darkness</td>
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**Liturgical contexts** (Exod 12-19). Over 25 years ago I stumbled upon a book that had a profound influence on me; it added a whole new aspect to my study of the Bible. The book was Midrash and Lection in Matthew by Michael Goulder. He emphasizes the Jewish calendar and the reading plan associated with it. The results are astonishing. To give just a couple examples, the readings for Passover include the special festival reading Exodus 12-15 (Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea), the third weekly Torah reading, Genesis 12-17 (Abraham), and readings from the book of Joshua in the Former Prophets. There are many connections between these three passages. Genesis 12:10-13:2 is a microcosm of the Exodus: Abram goes down to Egypt because there is famine in the land just like Joseph and family would later go down to Egypt because there is famine in the land. Abram sojourns just like Israel would be a sojourner in a strange land. In both cases, God inflicts plagues upon Pharaoh. Abram comes out of Egypt with great wealth just like the Israelites would. Further, as mentioned above, Genesis 15:13-14 is a prophecy of the Exodus.

Also, the record in Joshua 1-5 is told in a way that highlights the parallels with the Exodus. Joshua is to be a prophet like unto Moses. God would be with Joshua.
as he had been with Moses. Joshua leads Israel through the Jordan River on dry ground just as Moses had led their parents through the Red Sea on dry ground; the connection between these two events is stated explicitly in Joshua 4:23. After they are circumcised at Gilgal, they eat the Passover just like their parents had eaten it 40 years earlier. Like Moses, Joshua is told to take off his shoes because the ground he is standing on is holy. The parallels are obvious and abundant.

The liturgical context for Passover also includes Psalms 105-118 and the latter chapters in each of the gospels, which make it clear that Jesus was crucified and raised at Passover time. Comparable results can be found for the feasts of Pentecost (e.g., Exodus 19-20; Psalm 119; Daniel 2-7; Matthew 5-7) and of Tabernacles (e.g., Psalms 90-106; Isaiah; Matthew 13).12

“When studying a book of the Bible, we are used to asking questions like: Who wrote it? Who was it written to? When was it written? Why was it written? Where was it written from? Answers to these questions help us to understand the book better because they give a setting for the book, a setting which almost certainly influenced what was written and how it should be understood... Michael Goulder... caused me to see the importance of two other questions that require answers: When was it read? What was it read with?”

The subsequent context: Leviticus and the Tabernacle (Exod 19-40). The floorplan of the Tabernacle is repeated seven times in Exodus (Exod 25-30; 31:1-11; 35:1-19; 35:20-39:32; 39:33-43; 40:1-16; 40:17-38). In her book *Leviticus as Literature*, anthropologist Mary Douglas observes that the layout of the Tabernacle acts as a spatial mnemonic for the literary structure of Leviticus. The following diagram overlays the chapters of Leviticus on the layout of the Tabernacle. Leviticus 1-17 corresponds to the Outer Court; Leviticus 18-24 corresponds to the Holy Place; and Leviticus 25-27 corresponds to the Most Holy Place. These three zones of holiness also correspond to the three zones of holiness at Mount Sinai. All of this is a reflection of the gospel with shadows of Christ’s sacrifice and our baptism portrayed in the Outer Court (Lev 1-17); our current life of fellowship in the Holy Place (Lev 18-24); and our future immortal life in the Kingdom in the Most Holy Place and the Year of Jubilee (Lev 25-27).13

Conclusion
Reading and studying the Bible is like compound interest, the more you do it, the more it pays off. You will never read a book or chapter the same way twice.
Each time you read a passage you will have a new outlook based on what you have experienced since the last time you read it. As you read and study the Bible over and over, you strengthen the neural pathways in your brain; you are almost literally filling your mind with God's word. This makes it easier to recognize patterns and connections, and to see passages in all their contexts.

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

Notes:
1. Exploring the Bible is still available in print from the Christadelphian Office and other book sellers. Bro. Whittaker’s follow up book, Enjoying the Bible, is also full of methods with lots of examples. The Joy of Bible Study, by Harrington Lee, published in 1910, is another book comparable to these, but it is long-since out of print; a kind brother gave me a copy when he was pruning his library.
2. In their excellent book, How to Read a Book, Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren identify four levels of reading: Elementary Reading (just being able to read the words, sentences, etc.), Inspectional Reading (preliminary skimming and preparatory reading), Analytical Reading (serious study of a text), and Syntopical Reading (reading multiple texts together). Their ideas have influenced many students of literature, including myself and this present article.
9. The examples in this section are based on years of reading the text and have also been influenced by many writers and speakers. Among others, these include: Avigdor Bonhek, Studying the Torah: A Guide to In-Depth Interpretation; Michael Fishbane, Biblical Text and Texture: A literary reading of selected texts; Nahum M. Sarna, Exploring Exodus: The Origins of Biblical Israel; Mark Vincent, The Exodus: A Commentary on Exodus 1-15; as well as others mentioned below.
10. Baxter provides additional, more detailed, outlines on pages 84 and 99.
11. The word “liturgical” means things associated with public worship services. For Israel, these revolve around the annual calendar of feasts and fasts (Passover, Pentecost, Ninth of Ab, Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles, Purim, Hanukkah) as well as the weekly synagogue service. For each of these days, there were and still are special readings, psalms, activities, and words of prophecy (like our exhortations), which together make up the liturgy. There is evidence that the New Testament ecclesias developed liturgies around the same Jewish calendar, adding appropriate material about how Jesus fulfilled the liturgical themes, thus proving his claim, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” Similarly, Paul states that the holy days are “a shadow of things to come; but the body [substance, reality] is Christ.”
The Use and Misuse of Concordances

Context is all

The Bible was written “for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom 15:4), but we should not make the mistake that the Bible was written to us. It was written for us and the distinction is important because one of the main elements of Bible study is to ascertain what it meant to the original audience. Only then can we apply the lessons to ourselves. In order to facilitate determining the original message various tools are at our disposal including concordances and lexicons, which are useful for understanding the use and meaning of words in Scripture. Scripture was not written in 21st Century English or even of course English at all, so the words employed in the Bible need to be understood within their original historical context. That’s where a concordance and lexicon can prove useful.

However a big mistake Bible students can make is failing to read the Bible in context, especially when it comes to the study of words. Contextual Bible study is the biggest key to good exposition and without it, well, not only do you miss the intended message, you can almost make it say anything you want. This is especially the danger when taking single words out of context. In fact most words have little meaning unless placed within a context. Even nouns like “bear” (meaning the furry animal) could mean a number of things without understanding the context. Does it refer to the animal itself or what the animal might represent? For instance saying, “The bear is eating a salmon.” Is quite different from saying, “That exam was a bear!” Even though both might refer to the animal as far as the original etymology of the word is concerned, one use of the word refers to a literal bear, whereas in the other example the word “bear” has morphed into a completely different meaning. We would never read the second of those two sentences as someone saying their exam literally was a bear, but when approaching the Biblical text many Bible students do make this sort of mistake.

Words, then, only have meaning with their Biblical, historical, cultural and linguistic context. A word on its own is ambiguous and only takes on meaning when it forms part of a sentence, and understanding the use of the word within that sentence can mean different things to different people in different times. For instance, the word “grace” means one thing to an average 21st century audience, but the word meant something different to its original audience in Bible times. We need to find out what it meant originally in order to learn the application of its meaning to ourselves.

Concordances

With these things in mind what sort of tools are available for concordance and lexicon work? The most commonly-used concordance is of course Strong’s, and also much use has been made of Young’s, Englishman’s and to a lesser extent Cruden’s. With the advent of computer and online Bibles the use of hard copy concordances is becoming obsolete, but the heritage of Strong’s is found in most
electronic Bible study resources and this article concentrates on the use, and misuse, of Strong’s and Englishman’s, the combined use of which is mimicked a lot of times in electronic Bible word and phrase searches.

To do a simple concordance search, for instance if you’re looking for a verse or list of verses with a particular word or phrase as translated into English, it is a simple matter of typing in the word or phrase and hitting the button. In a flash, when performing this search on a computer, you are presented with a list of verses, but herein lies the first danger of using a concordance. Just because a word is used in a number of places doesn’t necessarily mean that those passages are connected together. They might be, especially if you find the same phrase in different passages, but don’t assume, just because similar words are used, that you can do Bible study simply by stringing together a list of verses which uses the same word. A more accurate way of searching for a word is to look it up using the Hebrew or Greek original rather than an English word. You can do this in computer software usually by typing in the Strong’s number. What you are presented with is what Englishman’s would present you with if you were to use that concordance on its own; a list of occurrences of a Hebrew or Greek word. But again the Bible student should not assume that passages are linked simply because the same original word is used.

One of the keys to Bible study is letting your study lead you to conclusions rather than reading things into the text. The former is called exegesis (reading out of the text) and the other is called eisegesis (reading into the text). Unfortunately eisegesis is extremely easy to perform when doing word studies. We tend to like finding patterns and connections and the temptation is, when finding two or more verses that use the same Hebrew or Greek word, to make up connections when none really exists. This can especially be the case with unusual words only used a handful of times. We might assume that every occurrence of the word is connected together and we can, if we don’t perform contextual Bible study, force connections and end up making up a Bible study point that wasn’t part of the text’s intended meaning. If the connection is not truly contextually there, we are not finding out what God is communicating to us but what we have invented for ourselves.

Having said that there is nothing wrong with noting down where a word occurs. If you do this real patterns can emerge as you go through the passage you’re studying. For instance, you might find that a particular word in the passage you’re looking at is used in another book of the Bible. Note it down but don’t assume anything yet. Later on in your study let’s say you find other words that are used in both of these passages and you soon realize that they both use similar language. Now it’s time to compare the contexts to see if they mesh together. For instance, the book of Malachi uses the word translated “healing” in 4:2. From doing a concordance search we find the exact same word is used in 2Chron 36:16. Does this mean something? Not necessarily. But upon further study we find out that it’s not the only word shared by the two contexts, and also the two contexts match as far as the general message of the texts. Then by looking at the contexts we find one refers to the generation that went into captivity and the
other the generation that fell away after returning from captivity. A conclusion we might reach from this connection is that Malachi is telling the people of his day they are no better than those who went into captivity in the first place. Contextual study needs to be the overarching principle in our Bible study and word connections need to be governed by it.

For another example consider the word translated “rib” in the passage about the creation of Eve. When doing a concordance search on this word we find out that nearly every other occurrence refers to the “ribs” or “sides” of the tabernacle, Solomon’s temple and the temple of Ezekiel’s prophecy. Looking at the context of Eve’s creation we also find out that the word “made” in Gen 2:22 is the word used for the building of a house. So we might come to the conclusion that Eve represents, in some way, the house of God. And we would be correct because that’s a theme taken up in places like the epistle to the Ephesians where the body of Christ is also described as a temple. So the use of the word “rib” when it comes to Eve is interesting. However not all occurrences of the word are to do with the house of God. There are a few other times the word is used and the danger is, having found out this original interesting link with the house of God, we look for connections in the other passages. If we can’t find something obvious the temptation is to force a connection. Again, we must always be led to conclusions and not force them.

**Strong’s word definitions**

Perhaps the biggest danger of Strong’s concordance, however, is the use of the word definitions that accompany the concordance itself. Each word in Strong’s has an associated number and the number stands for a particular Hebrew or Greek word. In Bible talks we often hear the speaker talking about this or that “Strong’s number” when referring to a word in text. However there are two things we need to remember about the word definitions in Strong’s, definitions that have found themselves in most computer software.

Firstly Strong’s is not a really a lexicon or dictionary. Rather the definitions Strong’s gives, in the main, are a very brief definition followed by how the word is translated in the passages it is found. For instance:

6113 יָצָר, âtsâr; a primitive root; to inclose; by analogy, to hold back; also to maintain, rule, assemble:—x be able, close up, detain, fast, keep (self close, still), prevail, recover, refrain, x reign, restrain, retain, shut (up), slack, stay, stop, withhold (self).

One problem with this very brief definition is that it is, in itself, open to interpretation. A good lexicon will provide more details beyond the lemma (root word) but Strong’s doesn’t go beneath the surface and is really just a glossary. Also, what are we to do with this information? Strong’s gives several different meanings of this word: maintain, rule, assemble for instance, and the word is translated in a number of different ways, including recover and reign. There are several logical fallacies often committed in relation to the use of Strong’s definitions:
Illegitimate Totality Transfer — where all the various meanings of a word are forced into a passage without regard to context. So we might find a passage using Strong’s #6113 and say that the word means all of the above — rule, assemble etc. This is to read a text without regard to context and without considering the nuance of the word that best fits that context.

Selective Use of Meaning — this is illegitimate totality transfer in reverse where the Bible student selects from the range of meanings the one he or she likes best. Again this is to disregard the context and is a form of eisegesis that seems more legitimate because you’ve looked up the meaning of a word in a concordance.

The other main logical fallacy committed when using Strong’s definitions is called the root word fallacy or the etymological root fallacy. Often in Strong’s concordance you will get a definition like this:

6114 רֶצ ‘etser, eh’-tser; from 6113; restraint:— magistrate.

The word “from” denotes that this particular word has a root (the word used in the previous example), and most words, unless they are what is called a “primitive root” have root words associated with them. Again in Bible talks you’ve probably heard a speaker say something like “and the root of this word is Strong’s number such-and-such” and some sort of conclusion is drawn. However, while root words can be meaningful there is a very great danger of taking things completely out of context with root words and once more inventing a Bible point where none exists. It’s easier to understand the root word fallacy from an example in the English language. Take the word “butterfly” which is made up of two words “butter” and “fly” so we can say that the word comes from two root words joined together. However whereas the word “fly” might have some meaning in this context the word “butter” is entirely meaningless and to try and say this insect has anything to do with dairy products is ridiculous. But Bible students are guilty very often of doing such things with Bible words.

Ecclesia

One of the most common examples of the root word fallacy among Christadelphians is from considering the word ecclesia. Here is Strong’s definition:

ἐκκλησία ekklesia, ek-klay-see’-ah; from a compound of G1537 and a derivative of G2564; a calling out, i.e. (concretely) a popular meeting, especially a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both):—assembly, church.

Notice Strong’s gives two roots – Strong’s numbers 1537 and 2564 which mean “out of” and “to call” respectively. So it is that some would say that the word ecclesia means “called out ones” as if it is a word that specifically means a group of people
called out and separated from the world. But that’s not what the word actually means. What it actually means is this:

1711 ἐκκλησία (ekklesia), : n.fem.; DBLHebr 7736; Str 1577; TDNT\(^1\) 3.501—1. LN 11.32 congregation, an individual assembly of Christians (or OT believers Ac 7:38; Heb 2:12), usually with leaders who conform to a standard, and have worship practices, with members interacting, more or less local (Mt 18:17; Ti 3:5; 1Co 11:16–22; Jas 5:14; Rev 1:4; 1Pe 5:13 v.r.); 2. LN 11.33 church, the totality of all congregations of Christians at all times (Mt 16:18); 3. LN 11.78 assembly, gathering of persons for a purpose, even riotous (Ac 19:32, 39, 40)\(^2\)

The word means “congregation”, “church” or “assembly” as any good lexicon will tell you. The word means no more “called out ones” than butterfly means “a fly made out of butter”.

**Classification of Hebrew words**

Another problem with Strong’s definitions is that they ignore the *binyan* of a Hebrew verb. A *binyan*, of which there are seven in Hebrew, is a way in which a Hebrew root word is classified. Consider Strong’s number 6113 (*atsar*) that we looked at above but this time in another lexicon:

6806 רַצָע (*a sar*): v.; Str 6113; TWOT\(^3\) 1675—1. LN 68.34–68.57 (qal) hold back, restrain, stop, i.e., have a state or condition cease (Ge 16:2; 1Ki 18:44; 2Ki 4:24; 2Ch 14:10[EB 11]; Job 4:2; 12:15; 29:9+); (nif) stopped (Nu 17:13[EB 16:48],15[EB 16:50]); 25:8; 2Sa 24:21, 25; 1Ch 21:22; Ps 106:30+); 2. LN 87.76–87.86 (qal pass.) be enslaved, be constrained, i.e., be made personal property or force into indentured service (Dt 32:36; 1Ki 14:10; 21:21; 2Ki 9:8; 14:26+); 3. LN 37.108–37.110 (qal) detain, i.e., impede the movement of a person, and so have one’s movement controlled (Jdg 13:15, 16; 1Ki 17:4+); (qal pass.) be kept from (1Sa 21:6[EB 5]; 1Ch 12:1; Ne 6:10; Jer 33:1; 36:5; 39:15+); (nif) detained, in custody (1Sa 21:8[EB 7]+); 4. LN 79.114–79.117 (qal) shut up, i.e., close up an object so there can be no passage of a mass or collection (Ge 20:18; Dt 11:17; 2Ch 7:13; Isa 66:9+); (qal pass.) be shut up (Jer 20:9+); (nif) be shut up (1Ki 8:35; 2Ch 6:26+); 5. LN 37.48–37.95 (qal) govern, formally, restrain, i.e., rule over a people with a focus that the rulership restrains and controls the behavior of the people (1Sa 9:17+); 6. LN 74 (qal) be\(^4\)

Notice how much more descriptive this entry is. Left to the Strong’s definition we could very easily be guilty of exegetical fallacies when selecting a meaning that we like. However a good lexicon will split a word up into its verb forms, or *binyanim*. Notice the words in parentheses like ‘qal’ and ‘nif’. Each one tells us the *binyan* of the verb, and often these definitions are very different while retaining a connection to the root. The *qal*, for example, also called the *pa'al* is
the simplest form of the verb, while the nif (or niph’al) tells us that the word is in the passive voice. None of this is detailed in Strong’s.

For more information of the use and misuse of Strong’s concordance it is well worth taking a look at http://www.armchair-theology.net/bible-study/how-not-to-use-strongs-concordance/ and also meta.hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/923/strongs-is-a-concordance-not-a-lexicon. What most of us need to realize is that we are not Hebrew or Greek experts. We rely on the tools provided by others, such as Strong’s, but it is very easy to misuse these resources and come up with fanciful ideas simply because we can look up words in a concordance. We must always default to contextual Bible study as main method.

Another problem with Strong’s word definitions, which is also true of older lexicons like Thayer’s, is that very often those definitions are out-of-date. In fact when Strong’s and Thayer’s were first published Koine Greek (the Greek of the New Testament) was considered to be a strictly Biblical language. Not all New Testament vocabulary could be found in secular writings and so many meanings had to be figured out without any historical or cultural context. However after these works were published many secular writings were found that did in fact use the Greek words of the New Testament and later lexicons reflect these discoveries. As more linguistic research is done it is always best to try and find more up-to-date resources for our Bible study.

Remember that the list of definitions in Strong’s concordance is a glossary, not a lexicon, and only provides brief definitions of the lemma (root word). To get a proper idea what the actual occurrence of a word means it is wise to find a modern lexicon such as Louw-Nida or Swanson. However sometimes these lexicons are not as accessible as the Strong’s and Thayer’s, both of which are extremely cheap to buy and often free in Bible software. So if you do use Strong’s use it with care and don’t let it lead you down the path of eisegesis. And remember that those who translated the Bible for us into English have done the spade work for us. Getting a good modern translation, or range of translations, is often better, and has fewer pitfalls, than using a concordance or lexicon. In particular it is worthwhile obtaining a copy of the New English Translation (The NET Bible). This version of the Bible can be termed a transparent translation since the team who put it together included thousands of footnotes that explain why a particular word has been translated a certain way with copious references to the lexicons and other tools that they used.

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[Editor] The “Logos Research System” is the same one in which The Christadelphian is available: it is not cheap, but almost required these days for serious Bible Students.

Notes:
3. TWOT 1675 refers to “The Theological Word Book of the Old Testament” by Harris et al.
How to Put Together a Bible Study Presentation

“How until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you” (1Tim 4:13, 15-16)

Making the effort to prepare and give a good Bible presentation isn’t simply a means to share the results of our own Bible study. As Paul told Timothy, it is a matter of salvation, both ours and those who hear us. It is something that requires attention and perseverance. Becoming effective communicators of God’s word takes time, but if we are absorbed in it, progress will be evident to all. In this article I will share some guidelines I have found helpful when preparing public addresses, exhortations and in particular Bible classes.

1) Prayer

“Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people...” (2Chron 1:10).

Perhaps it should go without saying that prayer should be the first step of any endeavour, and yet in the looming deadline of a talk (or an article for The Tidings!) we can all too easily rush in without first sitting still, meditating and appealing for guidance from him who gives wisdom “generously and without reproach” to assist us.

2) Chapter/Book vs. Thematic/Word studies

“Preach the word” (2Tim 4:2).

Pick a section of Scripture and stick to it. In recent years I have become increasingly persuaded that studies that primarily focus on an individual unit of Scripture are to be preferred over thematic studies.

The main reason for this is because this is how the Bible was written and how it was received by its original audience. In most cases the original audience did not have access to other books. Even in later times when the Canon was nearing completion, they did not have the ability to skip from verse to verse across the entire Bible as we can with bound Bibles or electronic tablets. Their primary contact with God’s word was in the individual letter, prophecy or book that was addressed to them. Our presentations of God’s word ought to follow this approach, where we explain first what the text meant to the original audience and only then finding applications to the 21st century. The Bible was written for us (Rom 15:4) but not “to us”.

Therefore, aim to have your audience understand what the original audience would have heard as it impacted their lives. Try to restate it in your own words, giving careful attention to the context and the logical flow of the text. The goal
is to let the word speak (exegesis), and not for us to impose our thoughts on it (eisegesis). Explain who wrote, to whom they wrote and why they wrote.

Word studies, where one relies on following the use of a particular word using Strong’s concordance, or thematic studies on a particular subject that rely on topical Bibles or books like the Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge may seem quicker to prepare, but pose the danger of selection bias where we unconsciously pick and choose the verses that suit the destination we have in mind. This can be seen especially in some expositions of prophecy that string together a selection of verses without any consideration as to what the original audience would have understood. Chaining references together without considering the context can lead to us to conclusions that were never intended. Certainly there are times where authors such as Paul would use a list of verses to establish a point that he was making (e.g. Rom 3:10-18), but this is not common. If you find you are assigned a thematic title, try to find one particular passage of Scripture that will serve as the backbone of your talk.

It is important to have a logical structure to your presentation. This should come from the passage of Scripture you are presenting. One of the first steps in your preparation should be to identify this structure in a few bullet points. At the beginning of your presentation, either share this structure, or pose a question that will be resolved in the passage you are speaking on. Then, keep to that flow with minimal digression. It is very difficult for an audience to follow a class if they don’t know where it is going.

Many brothers find it helpful to consider a chapter from the daily readings when preparing an exhortation. This is a positive way to encourage all to engage in the daily readings and helps unify the ecclesia in a common endeavor. A word of warning though, resist the urge to artificially tie all three portions into a common theme unless they are genuinely connected.

3) Speaking with Conviction

“I am full of words;
The spirit within me constrains me.
Behold, my belly is like unvented wine,
Like new wineskins it is about to burst.
Let me speak that I may get relief;
Let me open my lips and answer” (Job 32:18-20).

One of the most important ways to effectively share God’s words with others is to speak from conviction and with zeal. Enthusiasm is infectious. On the other hand, a flat presentation where it looks like the speaker is not engaged with his subject will dishearten all present.

Remember the following when preparing your class:

- There is no reason to be nervous. Your brothers and sisters want you to succeed and they are all willing you on to do well.
- Pick a subject that interests you and let your audience see the enthusiasm you have for it.
Speak as you naturally would in a conversation. There is no one best way to talk, and you will be most effective if you use language and tone that you are most comfortable with. Therefore:

- Avoid using words you wouldn’t normally use. Use of jargon or pioneer phraseology can create a false impression about a speaker’s knowledge while also impeding comprehension.
- Avoid including Hebrew and Greek words. Never quote Strong’s numbers! Better to just tell your audience what a particular word means.
- Don’t try to mimic the style of other speakers. I remember growing up in Australia there was one particularly exuberant brother who was very effective in presenting God’s word, both because he was a good expositor and he was sharing his excitement for the word. But it led to some other younger brothers trying to adopt that same style when they spoke, even if though it was completely unnatural to them. It was not effective.
- If you are comfortable with it, sparing use of humor can help you engage your hearers. But remember, keep it sparing and respectful.
- Also helpful for engaging an audience, if used sparingly, are the use of stories that are relevant to the Biblical topic, like the way our Lord Jesus used parables.
- Don’t read your notes.
- Make eye contact. Pick a few people in various parts of your audience that you look at.

Those last two points require you to be completely familiar with your subject matter. This takes time, so don’t leave preparation to the last minute. Spend time reviewing your material — either by directly practicing it or freeing yourself from other distractions to mentally run through your presentation. Going for a walk (or in my case a swim) is a great time to do this. Remember, you are not putting on a performance — a successful presentation is one where the hearers remember the message, not the messenger.

4) Know Your Audience

“I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some” (1Cor 9:22).

An exhortation is not a public lecture, nor is it a Bible class. It is important to consider the purpose of your presentation and prepare accordingly. It is also important to remember who is in your audience. A public lecture needs to assume the audience may know very little about the Bible. Avoid Christadelphian clichés and phrases like “as we all know”. Often your audience will be mixed. There will be some who have never heard about your subject, others who have heard it many times. Remember both groups as you prepare, you want to not go over the heads of the former, and yet at the same time you do not want to bore the latter.
5) Length and Interaction

“On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together. And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead” (Acts 20:7-9).

Rather than indicate what Paul spoke about as he usually did, Luke seems to be implicitly critical of Paul in that:

- He was talking TO them
- He prolonged his message until midnight
- He kept on talking, despite the fact that the room was hot and his audience were drifting

Clearly it is possible to talk too long. A good Bible presentation must avoid this. There is no right length, as it depends on many factors such as the subject and style of the presentation. I have been enthralled by some presentations that lasted two hours. At other times ten minutes seemed too long! It is better to finish earlier than your audience expects. Don’t overestimate your ability to continue to enrapt an audience.

“When he had gone back up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak, and then left” (Acts 20:11).

Note the difference when Paul resumed his presentation. Now he talked “with them”. The Greek here implies a more interactive style, a dialogue rather than a monologue. Asking occasional questions of the audience and inviting feedback at the end will help maintain their attention. Other effective ways to engage an audience are to make use of worksheets and encouraging them to take notes.

6) Multimedia and Object Lessons

“Then you are to break the jar in the sight of the men who accompany you” (Jer 19:10).

Visual aids can be a powerful assistance to ensuring that the main points of a presentation are remembered. Many of us will still have a “Round Tuit”. Brother Bob Lloyd’s style of object lessons was very memorable, though it is likely not the style many of us would use ourselves. Today the most common tool used to visually enhance a presentation would be PowerPoint. Used well, it can add significantly to a presentation. But like any tool, it can be used poorly, leading to “Death by PowerPoint”.

WWW.TIDINGS.ORG
PowerPoint should not be used as a substitute to speaking notes. You should not read your presentation from a screen — people can read faster than you can speak and your audience will simply read ahead and tune you out. If you are going to make extensive use of PowerPoint, remember that to do it well it will add significantly to your preparation time. A picture tells a thousand words — the best situations to use PowerPoint are when showing a slide will be quicker than explaining something in words. For example:

- The outline of a presentation and the closing summary
- Showing parallels between two or three passages
- Using colour to highlight key words in a passage
- Quickly showing how a Hebrew or Greek word is used elsewhere
- Timelines and chronologies
- Graphs, photographs and maps
- Quotes from other sources that you want to read

7) Improving your presentation skills

"Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all" (1Tim 4:15).

No one starts out a great presenter. All of us have room to improve, and it will require effort and practice to do so. There are several additional ways to improve:

- Seek feedback, before and after your presentation. Even if you have been speaking for decades, when chatting with others after your class seek constructive criticism. If someone tells you it was a great class, seek specifics and ask what you could do to improve it further.
- Listen to a recording of yourself, or even better, watch a video recording. This can be very uncomfortable, but it is a powerful method to help you improve and overcome nervousness. When you do it, try to imagine you are watching someone else and focus on the positives
- Listen to others. Websites like www.livoniatapes.com have a large selection of classes. While you want to develop your own style, it is still helpful to listen to others to see what is effective.

8) Call to action

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice..." (Rom 12:1).

The main reason you are presenting is to encourage, comfort and inspire. Your presentation is not merely to impart information, it should also inspire transformation. All talks should have a practical impact that should help change the lives of those who hear you, something they can take away. You are not there to simply demonstrate how much knowledge you have.

Often in the Bible, when doctrinal truths are expressed, they are coupled with the expected impact on our life. When Jesus was asked which the greatest commandment was, he highlighted that the first principle of God’s oneness requires the complete response of all of our love. The letters of Paul are another
example of this — Paul often concludes a doctrinal section such as Romans 1-11 with a call to action (look at how Paul uses the word “therefore” to introduce these appeals in his letters).

So whenever you are preparing a class, ask yourself the “So What?” question and be sure to provide the practical implications of the passage you are looking at. A good way to do this (especially when preparing an exhortation) is to consider what you yourself need to hear. The conclusion of your presentation should reaffirm these appeals.

9) Am I a teacher?

“Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation...” (Rom 12:6-8).

“Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment” (James 3:1).

The body is made of many parts (1 Corinthians 12). All roles are important and all are needed. But they are not all the same. Teaching is such a role that we may or may not be equipped for. Sometimes an expectation exists that all brothers should teach, despite the fact we would never expect all our ecclesial members to take on other roles such as playing the organ. As ecclesias we need to be providing opportunities for all our members to discover where their talents lie. But as individuals we also need to be aware of where our strengths are, and devote our service to those, rather than trying to live up to the expectations of others that may frustrate and discourage us.

It’s been said that assigning speaking roles to all is a way to encourage them to study. Not only does this logic contain the implicit assumption that sisters do not need to study much (as they tend to have less opportunities for teaching), it is also my experience that the one of the best encouragements to study for myself comes from hearing a well-prepared presentation from a brother who passionately engaged. I must confess that, a presentation by a brother whose talents are not in public address can actually discourage.

Conclusion

So let us all not put speakers on a pedestal, as if it is the most important role a brother can perform. It is simply one of many serving roles that we can fulfill. Wherever our talents may lie, let us all resolve to devote our selves to developing them with all of our heart and soul, strength and mind, with a focus on edifying our brothers and sisters and helping them on the path to the kingdom.

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Notes:
1. All quotations from New American Standard Bible: 1995 update unless otherwise stated.
The Purpose of Bible Study

Under the knife

Why would you read a book that puts you, the reader, under the surgeon’s knife or, even more unsettling, slices through to your blood soaked entrails like a sacrifice on the altar?

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb 4:12-13).

If you read God’s living word for all its worth, it’s got the power to cut through to the hidden plans and intentions that make up the real you. It exposes the contradiction between your public façade and the inner person. And the result? You become vulnerable to God’s critical scrutiny and judgement. Maybe not the kind of book that will feature on your must-read list.

But if we want the good news of the gospel first we have to hear the hard news of the gospel. Scripture mirrors back to us just how degraded the image of God, formed in us in Eden, has become. We have stopped living in accordance with our maker’s instructions. We have failed in our stewardship of His Creation. And the “word of the truth, the gospel” (Col 1:15) sets out our predicament in plain sight: we “are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account” (Heb 4:13 ESV). The experience of the Jews at Pentecost shows there can be no short cutting this uncomfortable process. First the word hits its mark (“when they heard this”): then, stage two, the scalpel’s incision to uncover the disease (“they were cut to the heart”): only then is a way forward possible:

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37).

But why the need to study these things? Surely hearing bad news just once is enough? …..it’s because we forget. We walk away from the mirror and blank out of our minds the reflected image of the stains of sin on our cheek. For as James said:

“For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was” (James 1:23-24).

And, as the image of the truth fades, we smuggle back into our hearts the idols of money, sex and power which tell us that they will make us happy. Knowing this is our fatal flaw, we have a genius for self-deception: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer 17:9). So God has initiated a protective fix as only He can, if we: “humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls” (James 1:21 NLT).
**The map for us**

*Study* may sound unappealing. Think more of the child with a book and a torch under the covers entering new worlds of wonder and possibilities: it’s God’s redemption-story-cum-repair-manual. Through its pages we see the way men and women can escape cold death and how God’s right ways win out in the end. And stretching our imaginations we are offered tantalizing glimpses of a future prepared for His children by a loving Father. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1Cor 2:9). And there is a life changing promise for each student-reader; if we give ourselves over to its healing influence and grasp the hope it offers, God will work through His word, to rewire and renew us and save us from ourselves.

The Scriptures do not just set us on the grid map of where we are (sinners, lost in a fog with no compass) but they also point us in the direction of travel (a redeemed cosmos where evil has been eradicated). So we had better be sure we know how to read the map and, crucially, what we should be looking for. The Pharisees believed they were the authoritative travel guides but willfully ignored the directions on the road:

> “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life” (John 5:39-40 ESV).

The word was not just written down: it became flesh. Just as John the Baptist steered his hearers to Jesus, the Scriptures point beyond themselves. The word is a lamp to guide our feet to the Christ: this must happen, it is non-negotiable and we cannot pay lip service to it. The Scriptures are not just a sourcebook of true propositions about God and His purpose. They do contain such truths but Scripture is not structured that way. Nor is the Scripture just to be looked on as a mine of intertextual links — a puzzle quest — where we are left merely marveling at its intricacy. Study must usher us into the presence of God. And we make a profound mistake if we imagine mastering the Scriptures is the same as reaching our destination. The Scripture points away from itself and towards God. God is the source of truth and His Son speaks the truth he has heard from his father. “...a man [Jesus] who has told you the truth that I heard from God” (John 8:40 ESV).

One of the sweetest truths the Son utters, as he prepares to leave his disciples, is his word about new creation living: “And this is the way to have eternal life — to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent...” (John 17:3 NLT). We cannot content ourselves that our study has merely enabled us to know the truth about the Father and the Son. Such knowledge is vital but it is not connected to eternal life. The connectedness and relational intimacy of ‘knowing’ the Father and His Son is suggested by Jesus earlier in John’s gospel:

> “If anyone loves me, he will *keep my word*, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and *make our home* with him” (John 14:23).
Loving Jesus means knowing the word and keeping the word, his words in particular, meditating on them, and allowing them to become part of us. But this is a means towards a wondrous end: we look up from our studies knowing that we are bound up in an unbreakable intimate bond of love, and that we have been invited into a home set up for us by the Maker of the World and His Son the Lord of Life. The Bible of the serious student may take a beating, sliding aside or perhaps to the floor, as he suddenly falls to his knees in prayer or in tears or as she springs up spontaneously from her studies to dance with joy.

Our transforming journey

Our Bible study is a journey which moves us on from knowing to becoming, from information to transformation. The Bible answers the knowledge question: who is the Light of the World? It is Jesus. (John 9:5). It positions him at the pinnacle of the Creator God’s plan. The narrative tracks God as He works that plan through history, demonstrating His unshaking commitment to His covenant to redeem a world broken by sin through His Son. Creation, Fall, Israel, Exodus, Exile, Return, Resurrection, Second Appearing: the great arc of God’s plan curves down to Jesus who “when the fullness of the time was come” confirmed the “promises to the Fathers” as all of those promises “find their ‘Yes’ in him.” And he — the bright and burning light of the world — will one day spread abroad the healing effect of sun soaked righteousness from sea to sea. “But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings” (Mal 4:2). So far so clear. But our first answer was incomplete — omitting to address the ‘so what’. Yes: Jesus is the Light of the world — but so is the disciple. “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matt 5:14). The truth about Jesus must become a truth about us. Knowing the light, we are called to become the light. The first word to the disciples after resurrection is: you have a job to do: flood the world with the gospel of salvation: be ambassadors of the kingdom. “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21). As the Scriptures change our worldview, we recognize that to be loyal to that call will involve a re-alignment that puts us at odds with the workaday attitudes around us, of wanting and getting and spending. The Scriptures depict the high functioning disciple-community as a “colony of resident aliens” surrounded by a culture that is hostile to it. To shine as lights the Scriptures appeal to us to stop looking inwards, to stifle our community quarrels and to look outwards, beckoning to the world, offering it something it doesn’t know and doesn’t have: a way of living, a way of loving and an assurance of peace with each other and with God. We cannot become part of God’s heavenly commune on earth if we have merely a drive-by acquaintance with His word. We are called by the gospel to be the advance guard of the kingdom, the outriders heralding the coming king, and are expected to wear his colors, speak his language and know his laws now. God’s agent of change for equipping the “children of the kingdom” (Matt 13:38) to respond to this profoundly challenging call is the Spirit in Scripture. The same power that fired up the prophets and inspired the psalmist is just as powerful now in energizing the disciples of today in service of their king. The Bible is weaponized with God’s Spirit, and can embolden the disciple to take on the “desires of the
flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life” (1John 2:16) and win. When we immerse ourselves in the Scriptures we become collaborators with God and trigger the power that God has planted there enabling it to play out in our lives — transforming our minds so that we can think more nearly the way God does, be able to identify what is pure, and to wrestle with and overcome what is error. What God is, His word is: what God wills, His word wills.

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 15:4-6).

From despair to hope
The aim of Scriptures is to instruct us so that despair gives way to hope. And the way that they do that is to grant endurance and encouragement to live in a way which honors God. Note how the language describing the power of Scripture to sustain us when we are prone to waver is then used, without change, to describe God’s direct activity. God and His word are as one. If the Bible is in our head and our hearts, as well as in our hands, Paul’s assurance is that we can have the courage to outface our fears. This is because the full forces of the one true God stand behind His word. And lest we think the aim of Scripture study is ‘all about me’ — how I can escape
death and how I get saved — Paul concludes with a necessary corrective: the aim of God is to create a people who live in harmony with one another and with once voice glorify God. We are saved as part of God’s great plan “to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations” (Rom 1:5).

“Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32 NIV). That is what we all want but of course it doesn’t happen by magic. Nothing will happen if the book remains closed. We have to invest the effort of an Ezra who dedicated himself (lit: set his heart) to study and to do. (See Ezra 7:10.) If our study has as its objective to soak ourselves so deeply in God’s words that we cannot but come away changed by them, then this will involve going beyond skimming the surface. Although this article is not concerned with ‘how’ we study but ‘why’, the link is unavoidable:

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Josh 1:8).

Regular interaction, mulling over, pondering leads to close familiarization (the how). Then follows the changed way of life, the careful practicing of all that is written (careful to do). Finally, and importantly, there is the outcome (good success) in the sight of God.

Our study of Scripture takes its place as one element in the range of activities that the thriving body of Christ-disciples put their hearts and hands to:

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

This description of the earliest set of believers gives a balanced portrayal of what the new-born church considered vital for its survival, health and growth. Teaching is but one discipline among others and should not be privileged to the detriment of the balance of the whole. What is striking from all Paul’s letters is his absolute delight in the transformation he had witnessed in the lives of those in the ecclesias. The precise mix of how this has come about — through study, fellowship, the work of the angels, answered prayer — is not something he spends undue time analyzing.

• He delights in the news of the faith of the Ephesians and the Colossians in the Lord Jesus and their love toward all the saints (Eph 1:15).
• We listen as he provides a breath-taking account to the Corinthians of the Macedonians’ generosity towards the poor saints in Jerusalem, describing how they urged him to be given the privilege of contributing even when they had nothing themselves (2Cor 8:1-4).
• And he calls out how the love and faith of Philemon for Jesus brims over in the way he ministers to other disciples (Philemon 5).

What does interest him is ensuring that he reminds his recipients it is the work of God among them that has produced these heartening changes:
“I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him” (1Cor 1:4-5).

Our Bible study fits in to the many part mosaic of the living breathing, praying, good-work-performing life of the church under the good hand of the Lord.

As Paul wraps up his second letter to the Corinthians, in what might seem to us a startling and unexpected move given the sometimes bruising nature of what has gone before, he blithely sums up what he wants from the believers in Corinth:

“Be perfect” (2Cor 13:11)

And why should we not take this as our strap line as the purpose and outcome of Bible study? If you are a new creation then your study of the Scriptures should see you living like a new creation. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2Cor 5:17 ESV). Be what you are. Forget compromise. This is not about making a go of it — doing your best. Jesus likewise sets the bar high: “be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:48). Being perfect is what we were presumably designed for. This of course we fail to achieve. We remain sinful people. Selfish. Broken. Defective. We are not perfect.

The Greek word behind Paul’s exhortation to be ‘perfect’ can come through into English with the meaning of ‘mending’ — in fact it is first used of the disciples mending their nets in Matt 4:21. “And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.” It means to make fit for purpose and if necessary repair what is defective so that it can fulfil that purpose: the ESV translates Paul’s words “Aim for restoration”.

God is not, in Paul’s words, demanding we become perfect, so much as issuing a recall. We need to be repaired and he is calling us in for the work to be done. And like any recall, it is the manufacturer’s responsibility to repair the defect. And this is what God’s Scriptures can do through Christ. They are God’s recall notice. They tell us that God doesn’t love you just as you are. In fact, He really can’t stand you just as you are. That’s why Jesus died. Through Christ and through His word, God begins the change from a sinner into a saint. He repairs your defects. The old is gone and the new is made fit for future glory.

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Notes:
Jesus as the Word of God

The Bible is the Word of God. In that Bible, God has revealed — and continues to reveal to each passing generation — Himself and His purpose for the world. But most especially the LORD God has revealed to us His unique Son Jesus Christ. Since God has made His Son Jesus the greatest embodiment of Himself and His purpose, then it is quite reasonable to speak of that Son as “the Word of God.”

Therefore, if we understand that “the Word of God” is one of the titles of Jesus, then we may come to a better understanding and appreciation of Jesus. To do this, we will focus on the Prologue of John’s Gospel. Particularly, we will start by considering two key ideas which help to define that “Word of God”:

the beginning, and
the “creation”.

1. The Beginning

“In the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1).

The word for “beginning” is the Greek “arche”, signifying “first in order”. “The beginning” is a characteristic phrase of John referring almost invariably to the beginning of the new creation in Christ:

“Jesus had known from the beginning which of them [the disciples] did not believe and who would betray him” (John 6:64).

“Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning” (8:25, KJV).

“You also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:27).

“I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first [‘at the beginning’: KJV] because I was with you” (John 16:4).

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life” (1John 1:1).

That last reference is particularly insightful. Here, in the very first verse of John’s first letter, he speaks of the “Word of life” not as a mere concept but as a man “from the beginning”, physical and tangible, capable of being heard and seen and touched. Surely this is a significant pointer for how we ought to read the first verse of John’s Gospel also. Continuing with John’s first letter:

“I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him [that is] from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one [better, ‘evil’ as a human characteristic]. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him [that is] from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you” (1John 2:13,14, KJV).
Notice in this last passage that the phrase “that is” (twice, and shown in brackets) is italicized in the KJV, indicating the words were added by the translators, supposedly to enhance the meaning. In fact, they are unnecessary. It was not only Jesus who existed from John’s “beginning”, but the “fathers” also — the original disciples, who first heard Jesus speak. These “fathers” were with him “from the beginning”. By contrast, notice that the “young men” and “little children” are not described as having known Jesus “from the beginning”, since they would have become believers later. We see that John’s “from the beginning” is specific, but it is specifically not about the Genesis creation.

This special meaning of “the beginning” seems to be generally consistent in John’s writings (see also 1John 2:7,24; 3:11; 2John 1:5).

As John uses the phrase in his Gospel and letters, “the beginning” is obviously patterned after “the beginning” of Genesis. As a consequence, there is great similarity of language, and connection of ideas. And undoubtedly John wished his words to be read as alluding to, and echoing, the Genesis creation — but not actually referring to the Genesis creation. By using such language, he implied that the principles by which the LORD God worked at the very beginning — separating light from darkness, love from hate, life from death, Spirit from flesh, and order from chaos — would also be the principles by which He would work in the next stage of His ongoing “creation”. The apostle John’s “beginning” is not the Genesis “beginning” but the beginning of a new, or spiritual, “creation” in Christ.

In the Genesis-beginning, God ordained the Sun in the heavens when He decreed, “Let there be light.” So likewise, “In the (new, spiritual) beginning”, God testified of Christ: “Let there be light” (cp Gen 1:3 with 2Cor 4:6; Matt 4:16,17; Mark 1:1; Luke 1:1,2; Acts 10:37), and this time a new spiritual Light came into the world. So God ordained His Son Jesus Christ, and from that “beginning” — from that first act — comes God’s new spiritual creation (Rev 3:14).

It is significant that not only John’s gospel but all four Gospels begin, quite sensibly, with a “beginning”:

“A record of the genealogy [‘generation’: KJV; Greek ‘genesis’] of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1).

“The beginning [‘arche’] of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1).

“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first [‘the beginning’: KJV; ‘arche’] were eyewitnesses and servants of the word... I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning [‘anothen’: from the top, or the beginning]” (Luke 1:1-3).

The beginning of Luke’s Gospel has a wonderful connection with the first verses of John’s Gospel: Luke writes of himself and his companions, who were “from the beginning [Greek ‘arche’] eyewitnesses... of the Word [Greek ‘ho logos’].” This combination of words (“arche... ho Logos”) is identical to the very first phrase of John 1:1: “beginning... the Word.”
It is useful to note that Luke also puts the “beginning” and “the Word” firmly in New Testament times. For him and his fellow-believers, the beginning was not a nebulous one, or even a very ancient one, long before their births. It was in their own time and place, the first-century Greek and Roman world; there they became eyewitnesses of “the Word of God”, Jesus of Nazareth. And it was at that extraordinary “beginning” that they heard his words and touched him as well. Luke’s words are a perfect match for John’s in 1John 1:1:

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.”

The “beginning” described by Luke in Luke 1:1-3 and also by John in 1John 1:1-3 offer us pointers for understanding and explaining that “the Word” which was “in the beginning” (John 1:1) refers to Jesus Christ.

None of these “beginnings” have to do with the early part of Genesis, except in that Genesis was a pattern for this new “beginning” in Christ, to which all the New Testament passages allude. Instead, the Genesis references in the Gospels describe the “beginning” of the Father’s new spiritual “creation”, of which the cornerstone is His Son. In short, they are all about Jesus the man, and not Jesus the “pre-existent god”, or Jesus the “idea” or “purpose”!

2. “Creation” and the “New Creation” in the New Testament

Many times in the New Testament the Greek “ktisis” (creation) signifies, not the material, physical creation of Genesis, but the new spiritual creation in Christ. This is a creation — more specifically, a new creation — in and through Christ, by which men and women who bear his name are forgiven and regenerated.

In the New Testament, the “ktisis” family of words is found in nine passages where the literal “creation” of Genesis in plainly intended (Matt 19:4; Mark 10:6; 13:19; Rom 1:20,25; 1Cor 11:9; 1Tim 4:3,4; 2Pet 3:4; Rev 8:9; 10:6). While these passages may have far-reaching implications for other matters beyond Genesis, they are statements firmly grounded in the Lord God’s original creation. So we will set these passages to the side as not relevant to this discussion.

However, another fifteen passages in the New Testament just as plainly refer not to a literal creation but to a new or spiritual “creation” of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. This spiritual aspect is blurred by the KJV which sometimes renders the word as “creature”. This spiritual “creation” describes those who have believed and thus become part of God’s ongoing spiritual “creation”, as well as those who have the potential to do so (Mark 16:15; Rom 8:19-22; 2Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 2:10; 2:15; 3:9; 4:24; Col 1:15,16; 1:23; 3:10; James 1:18; Rev 3:14; 4:11; 5:13). We shall take a further look at several of these: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation [‘creature’: KJV]; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2Cor 5:17).

Paul speaks of God reconciling unto Himself those who had been separated, and thereby beginning to bring order back to a frail, futile world. God does this through Christ in a second “creation” which is patterned after the first. This is clearly shown by the wider context: “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of
darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2Cor 4:6).

Elsewhere, Paul again speaks of God as the Creator, but also points to Christ as Creator too, unique in his own work of creation:

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do... [Christ’s] purpose was to create in himself one new man” (Eph 2:10,15).

The phrase “to do good works” defines the purpose for which we are being created anew in Christ, through belief and baptism.

“[Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation ['every creature']. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him” (Col 1:15,16).

Christ is the “image” and the “firstborn” of all his creation, because all believers are created by him (v 16). This must be the “new creation”, since Christ is “before all” in point of time (Col 1:17), and all are made out of him (v 17). These figurative expressions are explained by the more literal ones of verse 18: “He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead” (cp also 1Cor 15:20,23). In these last passages particularly, Jesus himself is the One who “creates” — an act which is only possible in the sense of a new, spiritual “creation” of believers — created in him.

Another five passages might seem to fit in either list, since they refer to a literal creation, but with a strong spiritual element also (Rom 8:39; Heb 4:13; 9:11; 1Pet 2:13,14; 4:19). Referring to Heb 4:13: “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (KJV).

The NIV translates a key phrase as “God’s sight”, but that is plainly wrong. While it is true that God knows the thoughts and hearts of all people, it is hardly relevant to this passage, because the word theos does not occur here. The “his” and “him” refer to Jesus Christ as the antecedent, for he is “the Word of God” who “judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb 4:12), especially the hearts of believers.

These last five passages may reinforce the other fifteen listed earlier. This complete listing of “creation” passages gives us only nine passages which are primarily about the literal creation, but at least fifteen and possibly twenty passages which deal to some extent with the spiritual creation. Thus, more than two-thirds of all New Testament “creation” passages are seen to deal, not literally with Genesis, but with the “new creation” in Christ.

Bible “beginnings” are accompanied by “creations”. There could have been no “beginning” in Genesis 1 without the awesome creative activity of the LORD God in and through His angels. And there can be no “beginning” in the New
Testament, i.e., the Gospels, without the even greater and more far-reaching creative work of our heavenly Father in and through His Son.

An understanding of such a “new creation” helps to explain John 1:1-18, as well as a number of other supposed “problem passages” in the New Testament. These passages are alleged to teach that Christ had a literal existence with the Father before his conception and birth (i.e., that he had a “pre-existence”), and/or that Christ was personally responsible for the Genesis creation. But when read properly, such passages are set in the context of a spiritual “creation”, the beginning of which is chronicled in the Gospels.

The man Jesus, who is also “the Word of God”

In the context of such a “beginning” and such a “creation”, “the Word” of John 1:1-18 can scarcely be a vague, philosophical idea. In fact, there is much evidence that “the Word” and “the Word of God” refer to Jesus Christ and are especially appropriate titles for the man who embodied the will of his heavenly Father and communicated that will to the world.

Jesus was a man (Acts 2:22; 1Tim 2:5; Rom 8:3; Heb 2:14) who spoke God’s words (John 7:16; 8:28; 12:48,49). Thus, one of his names is “the Word of God”. In addition to John 1:1 (where it appears three times), the apostle John uses the phrase “the word of God” and “the word” 14 times in his New Testament writings. Of these uses, at least eight are significant for our discussion, since they appear to use the phrase as a title:

“[John] testifies to everything he saw, that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:2).

“I, John, your brother and companion in the sufferings and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 1:9).

“He called them ‘gods’, to whom the word of God came — and the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched” (1John 1:1). This we proclaim concerning the Word of life”. The “Word of Life” was, according to John, a visible, tangible, physical human being: the Lord Jesus Christ.

“I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you” (1John 2:14). Here “the Word of God” appears to be parallel to “him (who is) from the beginning”, i.e., Jesus Christ. To “know Christ” is equivalent to having “the Word of God” [i.e., Christ’s influence] living in yourself.

“[John] testifies to everything he saw, that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:2).

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“When [the Lamb] opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls [or ‘lives’] of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained” (Rev 6:9).
“I [John] saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God” (Rev 20:4).

Once again, “the Word of God” seems to refer to Christ himself. He was not only “the Word of God made flesh”, but “the flesh of Jesus Christ made God’s Word”. The two were one and the same!

These last four passages from Revelation use “the Word of God” as roughly equivalent either to Jesus Christ or to the saints’ testimony of Jesus Christ. To early believers, “the Word” and “the word of God” were not just literal words, written or spoken. They were a memory — a living, breathing testimony by men and women willing to die for the one great reality in their lives: a living, eternal Son of God who embodied in himself the fullness and perfection of Divine revelation.

“[Jesus Christ] is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God” (Rev 19:13). Here the verse is perfectly plain: Jesus Christ is “the Word of God”!

The use of the “word” (Greek “logos”) as a title for Jesus is not restricted to the writings of John. In the remainder of the New Testament, another half dozen passages, at least, may be interpreted in the same way (Luke 1:1,2; Acts 19:20; Rom 10:8; Heb 4:12,13; James 1:18; 1Pet 1:23). Try reading each one as though it refers to Jesus Christ personally by his title, “The Word of God”.

Luke 1:1,2 and Heb 4:12,13 have already been considered earlier, so we will look at each of the other four: “The Word of the Lord [‘kyrios’] spread widely and grew in power” (Acts 19:20).

When Luke describes this “Word”, he does not mean God’s Truth but especially “the name of the Lord [‘kyrios’] Jesus Christ”, which “was held in high honor” (v 17). “The Word is near you” (Rom 10:8).

The context here is clear, and distinctive: “The word” Paul describes is Christ, who is “the end, or fulfillment, of the Law” (Rom 10:4). And now, Paul says, this personal “Word” need not be sought by ascending into heaven (that is, to bring Christ down) (v 6), nor in “the deep” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead) (v 7), but rather “the Word” is near you, in your mouth and your heart — where the confession is framed that “Jesus is Lord” (vv 8,9).

“[The Father] chose to give us birth through the Word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created” (James 1:18).

“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God” (1Pet 1:23).

In the first of these two passages, God’s “new creation” is conceived through the implanted “Word of Truth”, and is born as “a kind of firstfruits”. And in the second, the same believers are “born again” by the imperishable seed of the “Word of God”. The “Seed” of God is Jesus Christ, and his titles include “the Word
of God”, “the Word of Truth”, and the “Word... made flesh” (John 1:14, KJV). His “precious blood” has been the means of redemption (1Pet 1:19) for those who in faith (v 7) understand his “sufferings” and “the glories that would follow” (v 11), and seek as “obedient children” (v 14) to follow in his footsteps.

Conclusion

All of John’s Prologue may be read as a statement about Christ — the Logos or “Word” of God in human form and expression — and the work of a new, spiritual Creation which God is carrying on through Christ. Indeed, this is a “Creation” which is far from finished — but one at which the Father and His Son continue to work to this very day. It will not be finished until every last redeemed one has been gathered into the great multitude standing before the throne of God. Indeed, so far as we know, it may not be finished even then.

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Notes:
1. Quotations from the NIV unless otherwise stated.

Jesus’ Meat and Drink

Disciples of Jesus put themselves in the position of a wilderness people on the sixth day of the week, preparing for the coming day of rest. This, of course, is exactly our position. We often describe our lives as a wilderness pilgrimage; we have not yet reached the promised land of the Kingdom age; and we yearn for the great Day of rest, release and jubilee.

So we pray to God, “Give us this day bread for the coming day”. Prepare us now for life in the Kingdom so that we can rest with the Lord when he returns. That preparation has to be undertaken daily. As our physical bodies crave and need daily sustenance, our spiritual lives also thrive on regular and constant refreshment from the food God provides. Jesus said that it was his meat and drink to do his Father’s will, and he learned what to do from the Word of God. If it was Jesus’ meat and drink, and we wish to be like him, it must be our food too. It will sustain us today, which is wonderful in itself. But more importantly, it is the only thing which will prepare us for the coming day.

This is why it was so important for a portion of manna to be laid up before the Lord: “Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt” (Exod 16:32). The golden pot of manna was an eloquent witness of incorruptibility. It was placed in the Ark of the Covenant, and nothing that is brought into God’s presence in that fashion can corrupt, for He is the fountain of life. The pot of manna was laid alongside Aaron’s rod that budded and the tables of the covenant (Heb 9:4), showing that the fulfilment of God’s covenant with His faithful people will involve resurrection and the gift of immortality.

The Proper Use of First Principles

Faith-Ful lives

“That you may become wise unto salvation.” This oft-used phrase is a serious misquote. The full passage (2Tim. 3:15) reads “…wise unto salvation through faith.” Salvation is through faith, not knowledge. “Becoming wise” means that we learn that salvation is through our faith in God’s grace; it is not through our knowledge of Scripture.

Bible study and knowledge have the goal of changing our character so that we can lead faithful lives. When we break down Bible knowledge into specific Bible doctrines, then we can connect each teaching into an aspect of faith. When we know something to be true about God’s plan and purpose, then that doctrine should directly affect our way of life.

Two methods of investigation will guide this pursuit: context (or intent), and implication. Context is familiar to us; when we read a passage in context we discern the writer’s intent. For example, no Bible passage can contextually argue against the orthodox triune God, because that would be anachronistic. Therefore, any passage used to argue against Trinitarian teaching, as applicable as it might be in theory, must have an immediate, contextual meaning. There must be something more than using a passage to disprove the erroneous teachings of orthodox Christianity. That “something more” should direct us to the moral intent of the writer.

The second tool for properly applying the teachings of Scripture to our lives is implication. Implication tells us what must follow given a certain state of affairs. For instance, if God resurrected Jesus from the dead, that implies that God is greater than Jesus. It would also imply that Jesus was not God, that Jesus was mortal, and that if Jesus is now immortal, that became the case only after God raised him. As for how this applies to our lives, Paul informs us that our belief in this fact leads us to acceptance of our faith, and hence a relationship with God that develops our characters through suffering (Rom 4:23-5:4).

First principles are not given as a set of Scripture; they are selected teachings that define our body. They are a way of saying what’s really important, so important that to not believe them would exclude one from the household of faith. However, does it take much faith to accept them as true? Is it very hard to believe in the unity of God? That seems to be a given of the universe. True, a dead person rising to immortality is totally contrary to our experience, but it is easy to believe given the existence of God, and the implausibility of alternate explanations to the accounts of Jesus’ resurrection. It is relatively easy to believe that God exists and that God raised Jesus from the dead; that takes little faith. It takes much faith to live according to that belief.

If the only function of fundamental teachings is to define who we are (or as it often unfolds, who we aren’t), then they are not functioning as principles, but merely truths to be received. A principle is not a principle unless it serves as
a principle, a guiding precept by which we live. Earth’s surface is about 70% ocean. That is a fact, but there is no special moral meaning or application in this fact. Likewise, the fact that God is one, or that God raised Jesus from the dead are just facts of the universe if all they are is something to be accepted as true. Bible truths, especially those we elevate to the status of “First Principles,” must do more than occupy the “T” column in our minds.

We will investigate three “First Principle” Bible teachings and look for the daily life applications that inhere in these teachings. The three I have chosen for this article are the unity of God, the sinfulness of all humans, and the promises to Abraham.

1. There is ONE God

God is one — not three. That is how this doctrine usually hits the road. We feel comfortable that we can refute the orthodox view on this issue because we have Scripture to back us, and because of the historical development of the doctrine after the New Testament era. However, two problems arise when handling the unity of God as primarily as a negation of Trinitarians. First, every orthodox Christian identifies as a monotheist. Of course they believe in one God, one eternal omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent deity. However, their God is somehow divided into three entities, all of whom comprise one God. If you have ever discussed monotheism with a conventional Christian, you know how futile these dialogues can get. There is no traction in taking a monotheistic stance, because your interlocutor will be right there with you.

The second problem, already noted above, is that no Bible passage can contextually argue against the Trinity because that doctrine considerably post-dates the writing of the New Testament. We can truthfully say that the Bible does not teach the trinity, but it would be anachronistic to say that the Bible argues against it. Anti-Trinitarian argumentation must use Scripture indirectly and build itself systematically from the foundation teachings about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

What then do we do with “there is only one God”? We follow the two leads posted at the beginning of the article: context and implication.

The context of monotheistic passages in Scripture is largely, if not invariably, warnings against idolatry and false gods, the gods that are inventions and projections of humans, gods of limited power. The pagan polytheistic cultures of ancient Near East featured many gods and idols of wood, stone, clay, and metal, idols who have mouths but speak not, who have ears but hear not, eyes but see not, hands but work not, wombs but bear not.

When we read the context of “proof texts,” such as Deut 6:4, Isa 44:6, and 1Cor 8:4-6, we get the flavor of monotheism: don’t worship made-up false gods, the work of craftsmen, because they are but the creations of humans, whereas yhwh, the true God of Israel, created the universe. To worship a false god is folly because it will get you nowhere; these gods are powerless. Worse, they manifest the projections of base human behavior, and thus often invoke human sacrifice,
ritual prostitution, sacrifices to gain favor, and orgies to insure procreative success and a good harvest.

In the New Testament Paul informs us that covetousness (greed, NIV) is idolatry (Col 3:5). This doesn’t need any explanation, but it might need some expansion. Any sort of greed, desire, “need,” “must have,” or whatever it is in this mortal, material realm that we strive for becomes a false god and we thus negate our monotheism. “You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt 6:24) is the clearest New Testament statement about monotheism. The NIV renders these opposing objects of devotion as “God and Money,” with a capital “M,” to identify the two as the possible masters of our lives, to whom only one we can give our devotion.

**Another implication**

There exists one obvious yet under-appreciated aspect of monotheism. It’s the ellipsis that follows “there is only one God.” Stated fully, the doctrine would read, *There is one God, and it’s not you.* We lack omniscience, so we will reserve to God alone when and how the kingdom will come about. We do not presume to know things only God, who is eternal, and therefore outside of history, can. Unfortunately, such seems to be the nature of much prophetical exposition.

Also, we do not know the motives of our fellow servants, thus we cannot know who is guilty and who is not, who is a believer and who is not. God looks on the heart; we cannot. This is the basis of “do not judge.” To judge is to say you know another’s motives. This execrates the doctrine of monotheism.

2. **Human Nature is Sinful**

This first principle is about us, so it should have an easy time moving into the moral teaching sector. Theologically and conceptually, it complements the doctrine of monotheism. If there is one God, then all other sentient beings are not God; the label for that group is “sinners.” This is not necessarily pejorative, rather it is a statement of relationship. There is one perfect, omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, omnibenevolent being, the God of the Bible, *y*hwh, and there is every other thinking being. These beings, collectively known as “humanity,” are the only other entities in the universe able to relate to God. Unlike God, they have finite time lines, minuscule knowledge and meagre power. Because of these limitations, they have a constricted perspective on their world; add in a few other factors inherent in their biological constitution, and you have a creature given to self-interests, hence, a sinner. We need not look far into human experience to validate the veracity of “all have sinned.”

The usual context of proof texts on humanity’s sinful nature is salvation by grace and faith, not by works (e.g., Rom 3:23-24, Gal 3:22). These texts place all of us entirely in God’s debt, not vice-versa because of our works. This reflects the theological basis of our nature, for if something within our power could effect salvation, then we must have some immanent “goodness.” Without going to Calvinistic excess on this matter, we affirm that we are entirely dependent on God’s grace for living both now and forever in our Lord’s kingdom.
We will look at three implications that follow from this teaching: (1) we’re no better or worse than anyone else, (2) we need forgiveness, and (3) we need to grow spiritually. Each of these has two areas of application: our own sinfulness and the sinfulness of others.

The first implication, about belonging to the common group of humanity, forms Bible’s teaching on humility. Indeed we do have individual strengths, spiritual capabilities, and virtues, but these attributes cannot remove us from the lot of humanity. We never attain “no further improvement needed” status. Our best virtue is awareness of where we lack virtue. Thus, we always belong in the common pool of “sinners.” In short, humility is the demonstration of our belief in this first principle.

How does it work with respect to others? We can humble ourselves by being aware of our limitations, but how do we apply humility to others? One way is to refrain from the adulation we often assign to the leaders of our community. We ought not celebrate, elevate, or idolize our leaders or any outwardly faithful and devoted brother or sister. We hope that inside they are the person they appear to be, but we don’t know that, and not being omniscient (see above on monotheism), we can’t know that. People can do helpful acts and useful service, and we properly thank them for that. However, no one, no matter how well-known they become in our community, is immune to the impulses and weaknesses of our nature. No one is excluded, so don’t be surprised when you hear about the lapses of even esteemed members of our community. The teaching “all are sinful” is not merely a theological truth. Sadly, there will be real instances in our midst.

Forgiveness, the second implication, is a major Bible topic. That we need to ask God for forgiveness is a foundation of our faith. Praying for forgiveness implies that we are aware of our sins, and that must mean something beyond the general “be merciful to me a sinner,” as true as that is. Praying for forgiveness of specific sins is the first step in overcoming them. The vital practice of forgiveness is a direct outgrowth of a theological first principle. God forgives us, as we forgive those who sin against us. If we are all sinners, we all need forgiveness. We practice the model God shows by forgiving others whose behaviors negatively affect our lives.

Overcoming sin is the third major implication of the doctrine “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Being in a sinful condition is not intractable, as in “I’m a sinner and there’s nothing I can do about it.” This first principle gives us the starting point from which we begin our spiritual journey. We may never escape our nature or our label, but we don’t have to act like sinners, either. This doctrine demands our fullest attention; it summons and challenges us to do better each day, to apply at a personal level what the Bible tells us at a theological level.

What does this imply for living in an ecclesial environment of like individuals? Two Biblical directives derive straight out of this doctrine. One, the admonition to practice patience, tolerance, forbearance, and long-suffering (e.g., Rom 15:1). Remember, we are all working on our individual growth, each with a different
background, capability, desire, intent, and other factors. We’re all at a different
place in our journey. Two, we have the admonition to help each other (Rom
15:2,14; Gal 6:2) by providing positive support and nurturing help to each of
our beloved, but sinful, brothers and sisters. Condemnation, gossip, criticism,
and judging do not strengthen a community of sinful people; they weaken and
fracture it.

If all humans are sinful, we need to do something about how we live. We practice
patience with others, we help them, we strive for ourselves to overcome our
specific deficiencies, we seek for forgiveness from God, and we offer forgiveness
to anyone who might have caused us harm or distress. So many virtues stem
from this fundamental truth.

3. The Promises to Abraham

God promised the patriarch Abraham an inheritance of land and a descendant
through whom he, and many others, would inherit that land eternally. These
promises are initially stated and developed in Genesis 12-22, and they find
further reinforcement frequently throughout the Bible. They are fundamental
to Christianity, but how do we derive specific moral teachings from the first
principle we call “the Promises to Abraham?”

I chose this doctrine as the third example for this article because it doesn’t seem
to lend itself to moral application. The Promises are historical, something to
be known and believed. How do God’s promises to Abraham, made some four
millennia ago, affect our lives today? How do we go beyond the practical use of
the Promises as an item of catechism, to be recited at a baptismal interview?

Paul nominates Abraham as the icon of faith, writing in Rom 4:9-12 that he
received the promise, which antedated his circumcision, because of his faith.
Therefore Abraham, the father of the Jewish people and the faithful nation of
Spiritual Israel, was an *uncircumcised Gentile* when God counted his faith as
righteousness! Just what did he believe? Abraham doubtless believed many
things about God, but Romans 4 emphasizes two: forgiveness of sins and life
from the dead. Life from the dead is prefigured twice: in Isaac’s conception and
birth (Rom 4:18-19) and in the figurative offering of Isaac (Gen 22:5, Heb 11:17-
19). The Hebrew verb translated “return” in Gen 22:5 is first person plural — we
will return, indicating Abraham’s faith that God would either resurrect Isaac or
provide a way out, which did happen with the entangled ram. These providential
acts in Abraham’s life proved *a fortiori* that God could solve any human problem.

Paul taught Abraham’s belief in forgiveness by inserting Psa 32:1-2, concerning
God forgiving and justifying the ungodly through faith, into the discussion of
Abraham’s trust in faith, not works (Rom 4:5-8). This quote implies Abraham
himself knew he was forgiven and counted righteous not by his own goodness
or deeds, but by his trust in God.

Abraham’s paradigmatic faith is representative and exemplary, to be emulated
by us (Rom 4:24). Our faith is not based on believing that God made promises
to Abraham, but on emulating the faith of Abraham, believing with him that
God forgives sin (the ultimate abstract blessing) and God raises the dead (the ultimate tangible blessing).

It is necessary to believe that God made promises to Abraham, and God reckoned Abraham’s belief in those promises as righteousness, because that is a true and fundamental fact. However, believing the fact is not faith. We become heirs of the promise not because we believe about Abraham, but because we believe like Abraham. Therefore, if our faith is like Abraham’s, we always believe that God can forgive us, no matter how badly we might stray, and we always have hope, no matter how dire our situation. That is the faith of Abraham.

Conclusion

The three doctrines treated above certainly have more to offer in this light, and there are many other fundamental doctrines. Think of what you could do with the doctrine of the devil, for instance. No outside tempter means we have no excuses for our behavior, period. We take full responsibility for our actions. What of baptism by immersion, or that the Holy Spirit is God’s power, or the Kingdom of God on Earth? What are the real-life implications of these fundamental teachings? If you have a first principles class in your ecclesia and fail to take these teachings to their moral extent, you are teaching facts, not principles.

Finally, please see the big picture here. Our morality is not an add-on to our first principles. We do not have truths to be believed, and then a separate set of virtues, values, and behaviors. We directly derive morals, values, and conduct from the facts that comprise the essentials of Christianity. If we have a document worth calling a Statement of Faith, it must comprise the principles through whose application we form our way of life. Effective Bible study always has as its final question, “Now that I have learned this, how do I then live?”

David P. Levin (Baltimore, MD)

When the apostle speaks of leaving first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and pushing on to perfection, he does not imply that when we have secured a mental grasp of these elements they require no further thought. His complaint was against those who were continually discussing, and questioning their foundations, and who, at a time when they ought to have been teachers, had need that one should teach them again the first principles of the Oracles of God.

He desired that they should be grounded and settled on such points, in order that they might gain a knowledge of the deeper and more subtle matters he was prepared to expound to them. Pushing on to perfection also implies a practical application of doctrine in the working out of character, and the ordering of our daily life. It is possible for a man to spend so much mental energy in discussing and re-discussing the simple elements of truth, that he never puts what he has learned into practical effect, and probably this is why some people have drawn a fictitious distinction between matters of morality and what have been called “mere questions of doctrine.” (Islip Collyer)
Live Like a King

Guidelines
How would you like to live like a King?

God was very clear about His guidelines for being a King in Israel. This was an important position, and you had to lead the people, present a good example for them to follow, and teach them the ways of the Lord.

“You are about to enter the land the Lord your God is giving you. When you take it over and settle there, you may think, ‘We should select a king to rule over us like the other nations around us.’ If this happens, be sure to select as king the man the Lord your God chooses. You must appoint a fellow Israelite; he may not be a foreigner.... When he sits on the throne as king, he must copy for himself this body of instruction on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. He must always keep that copy with him and read it daily as long as he lives. That way he will learn to fear the Lord his God by obeying all the terms of these instructions and decrees. This regular reading will prevent him from becoming proud and acting as if he is above his fellow citizens. It will also prevent him from turning away from these commands in the smallest way. And it will ensure that he and his descendants will reign for many generations in Israel” (Deut 17:14-15, 18-20 NLT).

What better advice for us today?

“Always keep a copy of the Bible with you and read it DAILY as long as you live.”

God has three main ways to develop our character in this present life: Prayer, Fellowship and contact with His Word. As we strive to become better servants, it is vital that we develop good habits to input as much of these three items into our daily lives.

Building a vital and healthy prayer life is an important part of any Believer’s life, and frequent Fellowship with like-minded Brethren who challenge, encourage and motivate us is also essential to healthy spiritual growth.

We’d like to talk now about the importance of regular, consistent time with God’s Word. There are not many other things that we can do with our time to help prepare us for a life in Christ more beneficial than systematic Daily Bible Reading. Bible Reading is not like other kinds of reading. It’s not like a self-help manual, or a motivational book.

The Word of God is living and active, and able to break down the calluses that life develops in your heart and pierce through to your true inner thoughts and intentions.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are
wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work (2 Tim 3:16-16 NLT).

Brother L.G. Sargent said, “There are almost as many ways of Bible Study as there are Bible students.” (Exploring the Bible, Page 5.) What worked for L.G. Sargent, doesn’t necessarily work for me, and what works for me may not be effective for you. The key is to diligently find some plan or procedure that fits in well with your personality, your daily schedule, and your ability.

The classic picture of the family sitting in the living room after dinner with Bibles open doing the Daily Readings is frequently not the case. Life is busy and active for many believers. Dad’s picking his daughter up at Karate and Mom is getting their son from Soccer and picking up take-out for Dinner. (It has to be take-out, because otherwise we won’t have time to eat and get to Bible Class by 7:30!) Realizing and accepting the fact that life is often busy and hectic is an important first step to taking control of it, and not letting it control you.

Don’t feel bad if your family doesn’t fit into the mold of being able to sit in the living room after dinner doing the Daily Readings. But, don’t let that be the end of it! You’re smart. You’re creative. You can find a way to work something out. God’s Word is powerful and impactful at any time of the day! Make time around the Word in the morning. Many women find it helpful to pass the time on the treadmill at the Gym by reading. What an ideal opportunity to get some helpful, Scriptural input! Replace the picture of the gentleman sitting at the breakfast table, drinking his coffee and reading the daily paper, with an opportunity to read something that is going to have much greater lasting value.

**Smartphones**

68% of Americans now carry a Smartphone, and 45% carry a Tablet. These incredibly helpful devices are great for helping you get the Biblical input that you desperately need in your daily life.

- Got 20 minutes to kill waiting in the Doctor’s Office Waiting Room? Don’t waste it playing Solitaire, fire up your Bible App and catch up on some daily Bible time.
- Sitting in the stands during a 90 minute long baseball practice? What a perfect opportunity to refresh yourself spiritually.
- Stuck in traffic jam? Listen to God’s Word with your MP3 Player or streaming live from the Internet.

Bible Apps are so incredibly helpful, easy to use, and convenient, that many believers are now transitioning so that the App is their main Bible.
Some of the more popular Apps are:

- **YouVersion** — Highest Rated and most popular — Completely free and as an added bonus it includes the Robert Roberts Daily Bible Planner built in!
- **Bible.is** — Hands down one of the best “speaking” apps out there — If you plan to listen to the Bible, this is a good option.
- **Glo Bible** — Great focus on videos, images, maps and study tools — Bro. Leen Ritmeyer’s work is featured well in this App.
- **Tecarta NIV Bible** — My personal favorite! Great user interface, lots of options for marking verses, highlighting words, adding notes, etc.
- **Logos Bible Apps** — Requires an internet connection, but it can sync with all of your Logos content that you currently use online and on your PC.
- **Blue Letter Bible** — Similar to Logos in that it requires an online connection and syncs with your Blue Letter content — Only available on Apple devices.
- **Bible Gateway & ESV Crossway** — Great options for Android users

Whatever App you choose will do just fine, but feel free to try out a few and see which one best fits your personality and reading habits. Many of them are free, and most cost less than a cup of coffee. One thing to look out for is apps that only work when you have Internet connectivity. If you travel a lot to places without good internet, or don’t want to use up your Data Plan, be sure that the App you choose allows you to download the content to your device, and doesn’t have to be continually connected.

**Bible companion**

Looking for a good reading plan to follow? You can’t go too far wrong with following the traditional Robert Roberts Bible Reading Companion. Wikipedia refers to the companion when it says, “Christadelphians believe that reading the Bible is very important: they believe that it is ‘essential if one is to discover—and remember—God’s revelation of Himself and His purpose’; citing Bible verses such as Psalm 119:105, they believe the Bible gives moral direction for the life of a Christian — thus the Bible Companion is designed to aid the Christian in their Bible reading to this end.”

- A pdf version of the Bible Companion is available at — www.christadelphia.org/chart.pdf
- If you want more help remembering, you can also get the Roberts plan emailed to you each morning, and it will show up in your Inbox to remind you. Sign up for this online at: www.read.thepostiveword.com/support/dremail.php
- Or, if you just would like the readings automatically added to your calendar you can do that as well at: www.read.thepostiveword.com/support/ical.php
• www.dailybiblereadings.org also lists the readings for the day, and provides some interesting and helpful commentary on them as well!

I enjoy mixing up the traditional plan a bit, and for the past few years have been following a modified plan. It uses the Roberts plan, but does all six days of the first reading on Monday and Tuesday, then all six days of the second reading on Wednesday and Thursday, and then all six days of the third reading on Friday and Saturday. On Sunday you are right back to the beginning, and read all three portions with everyone else at Memorial Service. You can find this planner online at: www.simihills.org/2016-Planner

If you want to stop by a Bible bookstore there are actually some Bibles specifically printed to help you with regular Daily Bible Reading. There is a 365 Bible that evenly breaks the Scriptures up into daily bits, and labels them all by the date. I enjoyed reading a 365 Day Chronological Bible for a few years. This version reworks the order of the Scripture so that everything appears in strict chronological order, and then divides that up into 365 even portions for daily reading.

However you choose to ingest the Word of God, make sure that you get some in! Don’t starve yourself from this valuable resource for your spiritual development. Make some time alone, with your spouse, or as a family to see the message that God has prepared for you.

**Now comes the hard part... Don’t just read it!**

The Bible isn’t some sort of magic talisman or mystical mantra that can have miraculous effects on you simply by squeezing 15 minutes of Bible reading into your day. You have to bring it into your HEART. You have to pray and ask God to allow His miraculous word to have its wonderful effect upon you. You have to think about how you will change your life because of what you read. You have to think about how you can come to better understand and know God and his son Jesus more fully.

There is a purpose and goal of systematic, regular, consistent Bible daily reading. It is not about checking something off a list and feeling better about yourself as a “Good Christadelphian”. It’s about opening yourself up to changing the kind of person that you are and becoming the kind of person that God wants you to be. The kind of person that you read about in the Bible.

*Jeff Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA)*
“Sola Fide”
Saved by Faith Alone…No Need for Baptism

An “elevator speech” in a stairwell

Many years ago I was walking up a stairwell in San Jose, Costa Rica with two of our missionaries when we met a young man coming down the stairs, who our mission brethren had met before. He was a missionary for a mainstream Protestant religion. When the brethren introduced me and told him I was from the Christadelphian Bible Mission committee it immediately became evident that our brethren had had some Biblical discussions with him in the recent past. After a brief hello he said: “Right...you believe you are saved by your works.” I told him: “No, I do not believe my works could save me, but I do believe a lack of works could condemn me.” He obviously believed in “Sola Fide”, salvation by faith alone. Taken to the extreme, and many who hold this doctrine do so, it even eliminates the need to submit to baptism because it is something one does, and is therefore a work.

The background for Sola Fide:

What was the impetus for the idea that we are saved by faith alone? Sola Fide, salvation by faith alone, was born in the Reformation. Martin Luther was the midwife. He was probably the single most important catalyst in the success of the Protestant reformation. Martin Luther was a Catholic priest who split with the Church. It was the Catholic Church’s extreme emphasis on salvation by works that was a prime factor in moving him to nail his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Cathedral in 1517. He rightly observed that we are not saved by any works that we can do when they are not motivated by our faith. However he, and his followers down through the ages, have taken this correct concept to a wrong and dangerous extreme.

Interestingly, Jesus had the same complaint about the Jewish establishment that Luther had in his day. The Pharisees had put so much emphasis on the works of the Law of Moses, and superimposed so many of their definitions, qualifications and additional requirements, that they had lost sight of the intent of the Law and were leading the people astray. It is Jesus’ teachings in the New Testament against that error, although taken out of context, which are used to support the idea of salvation by faith alone today.

Catholicism and indulgences

It was the extremes to which the practice of “indulgences” were being used as a fund raiser that became Luther’s main point of focus. Indulgences were written letters guaranteeing forgiveness of any penalty for sins. At one point it was possible to buy an indulgence for future sins not yet committed. Indulgences are still practiced by the Catholic Church today, but not to such extremes. The explanation of “indulgences” that follows is a quotation from “Catholicism”, edited by George Brantl. It has the imprimatur from Francis Cardinal Spellman so it can be relied upon as accurately stating the Catholic position. This excerpt
is taken from the section titled “Indulgences and Satisfaction”: by Jaques Benigne Bossuet:

“Now, when she (the Holy Roman Catholic church) imposes those penances on sinners, and when they humbly submit to them, that is what we call satisfaction. But when in the consideration of the fervor of penitents, or in consideration of other good works performed by them, she remits a part of that punishment to them, this is called indulgence.

“The Council of Trent proposes nothing more to our belief upon the subject of indulgences, than “that the power of granting them, hath been given by Jesus Christ to the church, and that the use of them is salutary”; adding “that it should be retained; with moderation however, lest ecclesiastical discipline come to be enervated by an excess of mildness,” which shows us that the manner of dispensing indulgences is an affair of mere discipline.” (Emphasis mine.)

It was the Catholic church’s belief that it had (and still has) the power to forgive sins that had degenerated into the practice of selling written letters of forgiveness (indulgences) that Martin Luther fought against. He rightly saw the practice as the defacto teaching that one could be saved by his “works”. In this case the work was the making of a donation to the church.

It was in this context of condemning the Catholic Church’s practice of selling forgiveness of sins (indulgences) that “salvation by faith alone” became a cornerstone in the reform movement. It is a commonly held doctrine in most of mainstream Protestant Christianity today. We will see how this plays out and how this idea works into the framework of Christian thinking today. It is even used as an argument against baptism. Because baptism is something one does, and is therefore a “work”: it is eschewed by some as a sign of slipping back into believing that one can be saved by one’s works.

**Martin Luther**

Luther was a prolific writer and much of his work is still available. The following is a brief excerpt from his writings on Sola Fide:

“...One thing and one thing alone, is necessary for life, justification, and Christian liberty: and that is the most holy word of God, the gospel of Christ, as he says: “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me shall not die eternally” (John 11:25): and also “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36); and “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4). Hence it is clear that, as the soul needs the word alone for life and justification, so it is justified by faith alone and not by any works. For if it could be justified by any other means, it would have no need of the word, nor consequently of faith.” (emphasis mine).

Salvation by faith alone taken to the extreme of virtually excluding any actions on the part of the recipient is worked into the Evangelical beliefs as follows. It
should be noted that there are minor variations on some specific points between different branches of the evangelical community.

**Sola Fide and the evangelical formula for salvation**

If the issue was simply “salvation by faith” alone the subject could be easily addressed. One would think that James 2:14-25 would provide all the Scripture needed to establish that faith and works are both required. In fact James states that faith without works does not really exist. It is dead! “What good is it my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?” He gives an illustration of someone failing to help someone in need and makes the point that: “So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” In verse 20 he continues “Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?” He concludes his argument in verse 26: “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.” One would think James’ writing on this matter would be sufficient to eliminate the idea of “salvation by faith alone” and set forth the need for our lives to be a balanced manifestation of faith and works.

However Sola Fide is not a stand-alone doctrine. It is combined with a number of other verses taken out of context that construct a formula for salvation:

- Faith is given to us by God by His Holy Spirit. “For by grace are ye saved, through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not by works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8-9). It tends towards predestination because if salvation is entirely a gift from God that requires no “work” response from the recipient, there is nothing anyone can do to put themselves in the way of salvation.

- When we accept Jesus we are saved at that moment. “And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1John 5:11-12). This and similar verses are taken out of the context of Scriptures that state that salvation is neither a present possession or guaranteed in the future. Paul did not feel he was already “saved”. Writing to the Philippians Paul says: “that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own” (Phil 3:11-12 ESV).

- Once saved we are always saved and we cannot lose our salvation. The judgment seat of Christ as it relates to “saved” Christians is relegated to milder forms of punishment and is not a the matter of life or death.

- If someone who claimed to have received Christ subsequently falls away it is believed he must never have truly accepted Jesus in the first case. I'm not aware of any Scripture to support this idea. In fact Hebrews 10 states the opposite.

The problem with the above construct is that it takes Scriptural verses out of context and draws conclusion that are inconsistent with other Scriptures. We recommend “Wrested Scriptures” by Bro. Ron Abel as an excellent source for an in depth look at the arguments and passages in question.
The Scriptures actually present a different picture that is consistent with the overall Biblical teachings.

**Faith and works in Scriptural context**

The Word of God states that faith must be accompanied by works or it does not exist. “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26). James is not contradicting Paul’s statement in Ephesians 2 where Paul says that salvation is the gift of God. There are no works per se which we can do that can earn our salvation. However that does not mean that God does not expect a change in our actions. We are expected to respond with deeds, the first of which is obedience to the command to be baptized. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). Even brethren in the first century who had already received the Spirit gifts submitted to baptism. “For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?” (Acts 10:46-47).

We are expected to employ our minds and reasoning in reading and understanding God’s word. Salvation is the gift of God, but “faith cometh by hearing” (Rom 10:17). Luke praises the brethren in Berea because: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts17:11).

There is a sense in which we are saved when we believe in Jesus and obey His command to be baptized, but we can change our minds. “For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment” (Heb 10:26-27).

Immortal life is not a present possession. It is the blessing we pray to receive when Christ returns. “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1Cor 15:52).

And we can lose our salvation. We are no better than Paul or the first century believers described in Hebrews 10: We can decide to reject the gospel at any point in our lives. And sadly some of us do.

**Sola Fide is a wrong doctrine**

“Once saved always saved” is wrong and human nature being what it is, it could result in a negation of the warnings in the New Testament about the dangers, and the consequences, of disobedience. In this day and age Bible talks emphasizing judgment are not politically acceptable...including in Christadelphia. But a balanced reading of the Scriptures does not support ignoring judgment and punishment. (Could it be that God knows a little more about how to reach us than we think?)
Conclusion

“Text out of context is pretext”. One can prove almost anything from the Bible by taking verses out of the context of the Bible as a whole. We are the readers. We are not the “editors in chief”. We cannot pick and choose. That is why we emphasize reading the whole Bible...not just the pleasant parts. A balanced reading of the Bible teaches that once we have faith, we must manifest our faith in our works. God does not do it all. He has provided us the way of salvation in His Son. That was entirely of His doing. But we must do our part in response. Faith without works is dead.

1) We use the word “faith” in two different ways. We might say that someone is “of the Catholic faith”. In that case we mean he subscribes to the Catholic system of beliefs. When we say a person “has faith” we mean he has firm beliefs and convictions that guide his thinking and his actions. (Or should). “Faith” in this sense does not exist in the absence of works. That is James point. “Faith without works is dead”. It does not exist. It would be clearer if we thought in terms of “belief without actions”.

2) I say “roughly” because I do not want to encourage the conclusion that this brief treatise on a complicated doctrinal thought process is an exhaustive treatment of Sola Fide and its related conclusions. It is also good to remember: “One has not really heard the other man's argument until you have heard him make it.”

3) When I emphasized the Scriptural verses on judgment to come in a discussion on this subject with a Christian friend of mine who believed in “once saved always saved” he said: “I may be smelling of the smoke but I’ll be there.” He was taking 1Cor. 3:15 out of the context of Hebrews 10.

Ken Somerville (Simi Hills, CA)

Works and Faith

Work ethic

The most compelling religions ever practised by man all had a great work ethic. The most notable of these would easily be the intricate web of involvement within the Catholic Church or within the simple Five Pillars of Islam. You do as you are told, keep the checklist up to date — and you are in....

These religions are especially compelling because they were written and contrived by man and imposed and judged by man. Idolatry, in one form or another, is perfectly imbedded within. Humans love to worship the stuff they make — or write. The better the stuff — the greater the adherence. You essentially talk yourself into redemption by doing and following your own work ethic — your own stuff.

There are many Biblical examples of this. The golden calf model provides one: “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt” (Exod 32:4). Following their recent, miraculous history of the Exodus, this inexplicable event should easily be seen as madness; however, it did happen.
In the time of Christ, there were two major systems with good work ethics: the Jerusalem temple worship regime of the Sadducees, and the Synagogue system of the Pharisees. In relation to how all this was to affect the spread of the Gospel to the Gentile world, the Synagogues would have the most profound effect. The Synagogues were a great asset in the beginning — but they quickly turned into the source of the most crucial opposition to the grace of our Lord.

**Peter and Paul**

Synagogues were well entrenched by the arrival of Jesus in the first century. Dating back to the Maccabean period, they had become established in most Greek and Roman cities by 30 AD. Later, as Paul and his team moved north and west from Jerusalem, the Synagogue was often the first stop on their journey. Paul had easy access as he was a full card-carrying member. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He knew most everything there was to know about the process and the “Works of the Law.” He had done it all — but had given it all up for Jesus. Now he was nothing but a sinner saved by grace. When the Synagogue folks figured this out, they hated him. But Paul had even bigger trouble than that. He was the Apostle to the Gentiles. However, in Jerusalem there were thousands of Jews who had converted to Christ from Judaism. "Works" and "Law" were part of their DNA.

And then there was Peter — the Apostle to the Jews. He was one of them. But he had spent time with the Lord — and angels. While being commissioned by Jesus to be the apostle to the Jews, his first, official mission was to convert and baptize a Gentile household — that of Roman Centurion, Cornelius. Along the way he was introduced to the new, but old, concept of what God calls clean and unclean. So, things were different now. The Jews had to open their collective minds to the new reality of God’s grace.

This reality finally came to a head in the Roman Province of Galatia among the Galatian Ecclesias. As the Gospel pushed north and west from Damascus and Antioch in Syria (which had a substantial Jewish presence), the mission of Paul and Barnabas took a side trip through Cyprus and ended up lingering among small towns in the region of Galatia: Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. They were received enthusiastically for the most part — until the local Jews realized what was happening. Consequently, they quickly stirred up the townsfolk, resulting in Paul and Barnabas being thrown out of the city of Lystra — but not before stoning Paul and leaving him for dead.

**Troubles in Galatia**

Happily, in a somewhat lower key, Paul and Barnabas returned to the towns and ministered to the locals which resulted in the formation of ecclesias — the first network of Gentile Ecclesias — the Galatians. With great joy the apostles returned to Antioch sharing the response to the Gospel they had witnessed. Furthermore, the Ecclesias were growing in grace and in the Spirit.

This is when things changed. Delegations of Jewish brethren came down from Jerusalem to provide further instruction for the new converts in the necessities of
the works of Judaism. For starters, circumcision. But, it wasn’t just circumcision, it was also “the works of the law” and “observing days and months and years!” A whole checklist of things. What is amazing is that these delegations evidently were sent under the authority of James, the Lord’s brother.

Earlier, Paul had gone to great lengths to establish his position in the church and his independence of the Jerusalem “super” apostles. When God was pleased to reveal His Son to Paul, he didn’t go up to Jerusalem, but went into Arabia for introspection and returned to the community by way of Damascus. Three years later he went up to Jerusalem to meet with Peter, seeing none of the other apostles with the exception of James, the Lord’s brother. Paul was personally unknown to the Churches, which were now praising God because of him (except for his former record of destruction). Undoubtedly they had to have a chat about their various commissions: Peter’s to the Jews and Paul’s to the Gentiles.

Later, Peter, Paul and James attended the Jerusalem Conference, which was convened because of the dispute over the notion that works (especially circumcision) were necessary for salvation. Paul had to remind the Galatians that these super apostles in Jerusalem had extended the right hand of fellowship to himself and Barnabas, thus supporting their commission to preach to the Gentiles. There was no mention of any specific, essential, righteous works or circumcision in the spiritual contract — but only to abstain from food polluted by idols, sexual immorality, from meat of strangled animals and from blood. Just some common sense stuff, some of which only had relevance to the early Church.

Unfortunately, the interference of Jewish Christians in Galatia was so strong that even Peter buckled to their bullying. Paul had to withstand him face to face. Peter was not acting in line with the truth of the Gospel.

“We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ know that a man is not justified by observing works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified” (Gal 2:15).

Paul rejoiced that, while he and Peter were brothers in the work of the Gospel, he had died to any legal requirements for redemption. He had been crucified with Christ, so he no longer lived, but Christ lived in him. The life he was now living in the body he lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved him and gave himself for him. Paul was not going to set aside this grace of God, because if righteousness could be gained in any way through the works of the Law, or any other works, then Christ died for nothing.

Paul then reminded the Galatians of how foolish it was to have accepted Christ, who through the Spirit was clearly portrayed as crucified, and then be sidetracked by another gospel (which was no gospel at all) where salvation could be attained by human effort. Had God given them of His Spirit and worked miracles among them because they began with a regime of observing Jewish laws — or because they believed what they had heard?
Let’s not forget, righteousness was achieved by Abraham by believing God. The Gospel — that the Gentiles would be justified by faith — had been announced long before Abraham was circumcised: “all nations will be blessed through you”. And, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:8). Faith was the basis of salvation — pure and simple. What a blessing! How impossible it is to consider salvation being effected by works — especially the shadows of the past. Imagine trying to take Judaism to the Gentiles. No! Now everyone could be “Sons of God.” Everyone could receive full rights through the Father...no longer slaves to the checklists of salvation by works. What a personal pain this was to Paul — that his saints would want to abandon salvation by faith in Christ for a mixed religion of works and faith. Sadder still that the works regime was clearly backed up by politics and personal power. Paul continues, “They want to alienate you from us, so that you may be zealous for them” (Gal 4:17 NIV) This had little to do with truth and much to do with human engineering.

Paul’s anguish in knowing their current position was equal to his pain in the beginning, “for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is finally formed in you” (Gal 4:19).

**Hagar or Sarah**

However, although the saints now knew that sonship was attainable through the Father, by receiving the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, they needed to decide who their mother was. There was a choice. Hagar or Sarah? Hagar stood for the legal slavery of Mount Sinai and the Judaizing city of Jerusalem, that was quickly passing away. Sarah stood for promise and the New Jerusalem — which is from above. They needed to remember that the child born in “the ordinary way” persecuted the Son of Promise. And, that conflict continues to plague the world today. Natural descendants of Ishmael are causing havoc in our world, including continuing to harass the son of the free woman. The children of Hagar, the legal thinkers within the community of Christ, continue to insist on adherence to human rules and regulations — a sort of half and half religion. It doesn’t, of course, have any power to save. Salvation by human action has been and ever will be with us — in constant conflict with truth and salvation by faith.

Consequently, slavery is an ever present, human fall-back position. It is for freedom that Christ sets mankind free — not slavery. And, Paul reminded them in no uncertain terms that if they let themselves be talked into circumcision then the sacrifice of Christ would be of no value at all. If you want to be justified by law (and works), you will be alienated from Christ and will fall away from grace. In Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself in love.

Paul was indignant. The Galatians were running such a good race. Who cut them off? The Judaizer’s doctrine of works was like a corrupting yeast that defiles the whole lump. Salvation by faith and the grace of the Son of God was counter-
culture. It always has been and it always would be. Paul constantly suffered for it. If circumcision was necessary, the offence of the cross would be abolished. Paul would have it easy. But, Paul was suffering for the cross — and the false brethren's pernicious teachings. If these agitators were so possessed with their false doctrine, why didn’t they just go all the way and be castrated? This is one of the great lines of sarcasm in Scripture. If they were so marred, they would, of course, be cut off from the temple worship. And, why not? If they continued to preach circumcision, they would be cut off from Christ.

There is always the argument that if we don’t have the burden of the checklist of works to keep us on the straight and narrow — we will claim the freedom to indulge. We could continue in sin and let grace abound. The antidote here is to continue to serve one another in love. When we have the works checklist, we readily use it to judge and compare one with another — because it is our list. This type of thinking and activity causes most of the strife in our Ecclesias. We bite and devour one another and in so doing, we destroy the community of our Lord — instead of building it up in faith and within His saving grace. Flesh and Spirit are diametrically opposed to one another — and therefore, in eternal conflict. It is hard at times to know what we should be doing. But, we must never forget that we need to be led by the Spirit. Praise the Lord, we are not under the works of the law.

There are “works” of course. Works of the flesh. And works (fruits) of the Spirit. Those who belong to Christ have crucified the first and live by the second. We reap what we sow. If we sow to the flesh we will reap destruction. If we sow to please the Spirit, from the Spirit, we will reap eternal life. It is our choice. It is all or nothing. We can’t have a bit of both.

We sow to the flesh because we naturally want to make a good impression to the world — and to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. Circumcision was the natural identification with Jewry. And, sadly, the works-righteous Judaizers wanted to “boast” about “your” flesh. There is at least a hint of irony here as they were reminded of the women of Israel singing about how many Philistines David had been able to kill or the number of foreskins he was able to bring home to King Saul. Salvation by works is generally a foreskin count in one form or other.

What Paul wanted to boast about was the cross of Christ — through which the world had been crucified to him and he to the world. Works counted for nothing. The only thing that counted for something was a new creation. And, if anyone wanted to “mark” the body, then it should not be circumcision — but the marks of Jesus.

_Clyde Snobelen (Victoria, BC)_
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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, Fraternals, 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.
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.

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”.

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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.’

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:
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 1868. 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 paens 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
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.

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 …!**

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.

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

**Notes:**

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.

“For 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 to 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._
History

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.”

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:

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.

Fasting

What about fasting? We do not fast today, do we? 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. 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!

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.

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.
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.

Written by David Lloyd Co-linkman to Mexico
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

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

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 whiteboard 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
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?)

Bible Class at La Paz Ecclesial hall, Tues, May 31st
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/CBMI Publicity
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)

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

Insights, reflections, practical issues, difficult passages, personal observations and more to uplift and encourage all those “on the Way”. $9.00 US (309 pages).

Observations along the Way, A Bible Journal,
by George Booker

A sequel to “on the Way”. An album of a spiritual journey, offering encouragement and food for thought to fellow travelers along the Way to the Kingdom. $9.00 US (305 pages).

The Ecclesia at Ephesus, by Ryan Mutter

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

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

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

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

Pictures of Redemption, by George Booker

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

The Whole Armor of God, by Ryan Mutter

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

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Shipping and handling extra. Make checks payable to The Christadelphian Tidings.
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

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

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 SNOBELEN 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.


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 was 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


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, 1S438 Highland, Lombard, IL. Topic “Faith in Action”. Speaking will be Bro. Tano Teka (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.


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

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 Sisters 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@cssl.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@cssl.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.
Our Relation to the State

Walking in the Way of Jeroboam

First Principles: The Devil, Baptism, and Infallibility

Isn’t It Time to Discuss Revelation?

Don’t Worry (For the Right Reason)

The New Testament Church: Schisms and Heresies

Reflections: ‘In’ or ‘Of’? Plenty of Nothing

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Our Relation to the State

No, it is not all about military service

With the demise of compulsory military service in most areas of Christadelphians, many of our young people have grown up in a society where their interactions with the government have been largely benign. Long-gone are the times when mock-tribunals were held, in which young Christadelphians had to defend their objection to military service before a panel of (usually) experienced brethren.

Not only that, if you read and listen to talks on the subject, our attitude to military service has warped, in many cases, into a strictly pacifist argument: “Thou shalt not kill” (Matt 5:21), as reflected in many of the Bible Study courses put out by our community. When we make this our position, of course, we then have to explain the facts:

- Almost all modern translations, in common with the Old Testament passages Jesus cited, of Exodus 20:13, Deuteronomy 5:17, have, “you shall not murder,” and the Greek behind murder means, “to deprive a person of life by illegal, intentional killing — ‘to murder, to commit murder.’”¹ So acts of war are, in almost all cases, not covered by this prohibition.
- In the course of the history of the children of Israel, they were many times commanded to go to war with the nations around them. And were praised by God for succeeding.

I do not mean to say the pacifist argument does not have strength: but it is not the only basis of our attitude to military service. In fact, the primary argument has historically been that we are fundamentally alien to the society in which we live. It is of more than passing interest that the very name of our community was chosen by Bro. Thomas during the American Civil War in opposition to its members being forced to serve in the Union army:

“This is also to certify, that the Denomination constituted of the associations or ecclesias of this Name, conscientiously opposes, and earnestly protests against ‘Brethren in Christ’ having anything to do with politics in wordy strife, or arms-bearing in the service of the Sin-powers of the world under any conceivable circumstances or conditions whatever; regarding it as a course of conduct disloyal to the Deity in Christ, their Lord and King, and perilous to their eternal welfare.”²

Well before this familiar statement, Bro. Thomas had been even more explicit in his rejection of pacifism, for he declared at a Peace Society Meeting in 1848:

“That national wars to avenge the injured, and defend liberty, are neither impious nor impolitic; — that while a Bible Christian must not fight in the absence of the captain of his salvation, the Scriptures leave the nations to do as they please.”³


Aliens

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household” (Eph 2:19).

“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20).

“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36).

The question is, are we really from above? Most of us are the citizens of the country in which we reside by nature of our birth, but do we, ought we, act as though we are not? In the US, as I write this, most “citizens” (or at least the media) are consumed with the upcoming elections, but “aliens” are not even allowed to vote. The dictionary definition of alien is, “a foreigner, especially one who is not a naturalized citizen of the country where they are living.”

In North America, as largely countries of immigrants, are our attitudes and values distinctive?

“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory... Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all” (Col 3:2-4, 11).

While we do not (or should not) vote, do we allow ourselves the indulgence of political views? Complacency to insist that it is “natural” to have political opinions is as illogical as insisting that “lusting after a woman” is acceptable because it is “natural”! Yet we would recognize, even if unable fully to meet the Lord’s challenge, that to lust is to commit adultery in the heart. Likewise if we accept the principle that it is wrong to vote, then shouldn’t we also accept that it is untenable to harbor political opinions? Are we “of the Truth” in the sense that Jesus uses it, or does our thinking owe more to the newspapers we might read, or more likely the broadcast and social media we see, rather than to our appreciation of Christ and his message?

So who (or what) is our leader? In these days, we might not all respect our elected leaders, and we might even question the institutions that set our laws, but most acknowledge some form of allegiance to their country. While we are told to “honor the king” and to offer up “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks... for kings and all who are in authority” (1Tim 2:1-2), do we recognize that our primary, indeed our only loyalty is to Christ? Anything less than this is a very serious betrayal of the Lord.

Consequences

The situation in most of the world is that, as Christadelphians, we are almost indistinguishable from the non-believers around us. Except for a few hours each week, when we attend our ecclesias, our apparent lives tend to conform to the society in which we find ourselves. Unlike the Amish and Mennonites you see in
the rural areas of the Mid-West, neither by our dress or mode of life do we stand out. And perhaps we should not: after all, I am sure Paul and the other disciples were indistinguishable from their fellow Jews — until they opened their mouths and proclaimed the gospel:

“And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1Cor 9:20-22).

Paul advises us not to dissociate from the world and from those we might regard as sinners: “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world” (1Cor 5:9-10). As Jesus said: “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32).

This is a difficult balance, to be part of the world and subservient to the state, but rendering all allegiance to our heavenly Master. But we need to be aware at all times of both aspects: and try our utmost to obey both sets of precepts. Indeed, there are perhaps times when we use the principle of submitting to the ordinances of men as an excuse not to do as we should. How often is it said that, “There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets” (Prov 26:13), as excuses are made not to preach the gospel? Peter and John refused to give up in the face of real threats (Acts 4:19; 5:29) from the Sanhedrin and the chief priests.

And lest we believe we have no conflicts in this duality, I would point out:

1) An individual who becomes a naturalized citizen of the United Sates has to declare, in part: “I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same... and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.”

2) A person becoming a civil servant in Canada has to say: "I, [name], do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors. So help me God.”

Both of these declarations give me pause.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:
2. The Christadelphian, 1865, p. 105.
3. Herald of the Kingdom, 1852, p. 231.

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Exhortation

Walking in the Way of Jeroboam

Judah and Israel

In the record of Chronicles, particularly 2 Chronicles 11, we have the separation of Judah and Israel. With the introduction of a new form of religion, Jeroboam sets a disastrous direction before the children of Israel. And immediately, we see the devastating effects on the ecclesia for the faithful who were in the land. Jeroboam did the following:

- Set up his calves of worship;
- Changed the feast days;
- Changed the qualifications of who could be a spiritual leader in Israel;
- Made priests of the lowest of the land.

As a result, the priests, the Levites, and all who were faithful throughout the land, left Israel and fled to the south. Many years later we come to the end of the northern ten tribes of history in the land which demonstrates to us the powerful impact that this new religion, this tweaking of the truth that Jeroboam introduced, had on the nation. It was mainly as a result of this apostasy that Israel is carried away in captivity by the Assyrians.

“Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes... And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only” (2Kgs 17:5-6, 16-18).

The new form of the “truth” that Jeroboam had introduced in the north had this devastating effect, and in fact we see it in all the kings of Israel, that they followed in the ways that Jeroboam had set up. “And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight” (2Kgs 17:20). The word “rejected” there has a meaning of He “despised them.” God cast them off, but of course we know it was just for a time, which we see later with the prophet Ezekiel.

When it comes to the end of Judah’s history, we see that there was no remedy for the children of Israel in the two southern tribes. And now Hosea, who comes 150 years after the period in 2 Chronicles 11, would stand up in the north. Just before they would be carried away captive, and say: “Hear the word of the LORD,
ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land” (Hos 4:1). In the grand scheme of things, 150 years is not a long time. The truth being re-founded and recorded again by John Thomas was just over 150 years ago. In a very short period of time there can be a blossoming of faith and truth, but also it can be completely lost. It is a blessing that we are still able to hold on to that truth.

God pleaded with the children of Israel through all the prophets, as we see in Ezekiel again, but they would not return to Him. We know that there is a clear warning in all these things. Paul told us, “Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come” (1Cor 10:11). These things were written for our learning, and we see how they ended — in a state where God despises the ecclesia and there is no knowledge of Him anymore. We realize the warning for us, that we can easily be deceived by changes to the truth. We can lose our love for the truth, and in the end lose the truth all together, as it was the case in the north, and eventually in the south as well. There was no way that God could bring salvation to the children of Israel. He tried and exhausted every means. The offer was there, the means by which they could have been saved was presented many times, but they continually rejected it. So there is a very clear warning and when we come to the prophet Ezekiel, his words to the people were: “And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not” (Ezek 33:32). We will take a look at that aspect of Ezekiel as we move forward.

The message for us

So we want to consider how we prevent ourselves from falling into the same condemnation. How do we keep ourselves from making those same mistakes? If these things are recorded for our learning, then what have we learned, and what can we apply? Well the first thing we saw, when Jeroboam introduced his new form of worship, is that clearly they did not have a relationship with their Father. They worshiped the golden calves, they worshipped the host of heaven, they worshipped Baal — they worshipped everything else but God. They lost their love for their heavenly Father. They hadn’t worked on building a personal relationship with their God. That would be the first thing we learn as we look at Israel’s history and from our account here with the ecclesia of old. We need to work diligently on our relationship with our heavenly Father.

Any relationship we want to be successful requires work. We have to nurture that relationship, we have to build it up. And a key aspect in having a successful relationship is communication, good and open communication. Our communication with our heavenly Father has two fundamental aspects of living in the truth. These two forms of communication really are the two most basic elements of our life in the truth. If we hold onto nothing else but these two elements, we would still be doing very well in our walk, and form a stronger relationship with our heavenly Father. They seem like obvious statements but are extremely important ones.
The two ways of communication

The first form of communication is listening. Listen to our heavenly Father by reading His word. God says that He has shown us what is good, and what He requires of us, “…what does the LORD require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul” (Deut 10:12). Our relationship with our heavenly Father starts with that fundamental part of communication — listening to God’s words. If not, like with relationships we have now, it will negatively impact how we see and interact with God. And as we go to the New Testament, if we don’t listen to the words of His son through the Gospels, our relationship with our God will start to diminish. We come together each Sunday, to listen to His word being read, to hear the words of exhortation, and to examine ourselves. Not only should we do these things on a Sunday morning, but continually, taking care to examine ourselves every night as the day ends.

Prayer is the other basic part of our relationship with God and our communication with our heavenly Father. We need to listen to Him by reading His word on a daily basis, and then He listens to us as we approach Him in prayer. The more in tune we are with God’s word the easier it is for us to pray. Praying to God, speaking to our heavenly Father through His son, can nurture that relationship. So at the end of every day, as we contemplate the things of the day, we contemplate how we have performed mentally and physically. We approach our heavenly Father in prayer, asking for forgiveness and asking for help as we start a new day the next morning. We gather on Sunday morning, we listen to the word being read, and the exhortation from it, and we are exhorted to look inwardly at ourselves. And the word of God needs to be used as a tool in our lives for self-examination.

The Pharisees who were masters of the Law, read the law daily. They had that communication, yet had strayed so far away. So it isn’t just reading and praying, there was an essential element that was missing in the lives of the masters of the Law in Christ’s day. They looked outward in everything that they did. So all of the reading they did, they applied to outward things. Things that they would demonstrate proudly in their lives, and things that they saw in other people’s lives. The key here, is to have successful communication with our heavenly Father, and a successful relationship with Him. We need to look inwardly when we read His word. When we come here on a Sunday morning and consider what our Lord Jesus Christ did for us, it causes us to contemplate our lives, not to think about other people’s lives, not how this person could benefit from reading of the word or from an exhortation, but to look inwardly. In fact the Pharisees, despite the appearance of being important, were spiritually small and were by no means great men, as they never grew spiritually. So we can be so-called masters of biblical things, we can be the prestigious travelling speaker, mastering all kinds of knowledge, yet we can totally miss the lesson because we never looked inwardly to apply it to ourselves. We have an opportunity to look into our own lives and see what we need to do to build and nurture our relationship with our heavenly Father.
The second element of our walk

The other element that will help us from falling into the same mistakes as the children of Israel are the relationships that we have with each other. We just considered our relationship with our heavenly Father, built up with reading, prayer, and looking inwardly. That is important, but it is equally as important as our relationships with each other:

> “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb 10:23-25).

The word “consider” there means to fix our minds upon. There is the commandment of the apostle Paul by divine inspiration, that we meet together on a regular basis, that we don’t forsake coming together around the table of our Lord, and that we fix our minds upon... one another. So that we might love, and do good works. It’s not just when we come together on a Sunday morning. There needs to be a relationship so that our minds are fixed one upon another. Not just in our family or house, but for all of our brothers and sisters in the ecclesia. Now how do we help each other? We help each other by virtue of coming here every week. Coming together at any opportunity we have to work on those relationships with each other.

> He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends” (Prov 17:9). That doesn’t mean we ignore a transgression, but we go speak to one another in private. An aspect of confidentiality. We don’t take that conversation we had with that brother or sister and expose it to others in the ecclesia. We work with them, and if more help is needed then ask for permission first so that love and good works can continue. In fact the proverbs teach us that hatred is the motivation behind seeing a problem in another person’s life and not approaching them about that problem:

> “When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people;” (Ezek 33:1-2).

So when we love each other, when our love is fixed upon one another, we will be watchmen for each other. It applies to every single one of us... Can you imagine if the watchmen here hadn’t been told what to watch for? Armies would come in with ease. There needs to be some instruction first. You can’t be unsure of what is right and wrong. You see, to be watchmen, we first have to work on the relationship we first talked about — the one with our heavenly Father. We are people of the Book, because if we are not people of the Book, then we don’t know what to watch for in our own lives and in the lives of one another. And this is not the outward looking that the Pharisees had, because they looked outwardly in judgment upon their brothers and sisters and upon others in the ecclesia. No, our looking out for one another comes in response
to looking at ourselves first. It comes from recognizing who we are as we come together on a Sunday morning and come before our Lord Jesus Christ to contemplate his perfect life and recognize how far we have fallen short. From all this we gain a love and a desire to help those in the ecclesia who are struggling, and possibly struggling with the same thing we are struggling with. That’s the type of outward looking that came from a watchman, but we can’t effectively do that role if we don’t know what we are watching for. So with daily reading, meditation, and time spent around God’s word, we come to know the principles that should direct our lives, and the lives of those who we fix our minds upon — for love of one another. So as we see that day of the Lord coming, our minds being fixed on one another, and our desire to come together should grow immensely. We know that by the grace of our Lord, there are signs everywhere. They seem to come more often and more intense as the days go by. There is worry and stress everywhere. We know that the day of the Lord is almost here.

**Our dangers are subtle**

Our day is not full of Assyrians or Babylonians surrounding our city wall, our day is very subtle. Christ describes it in Luke that our day would be like Noah’s and Lot’s day — the earth filled with violence and filled with immoral things. Christ says it will be a great affliction to us. Because the motivation behind the violence and immorality we see everywhere all comes from focusing on self rather than focusing on God. It’s a pattern — we stop reading the word; we stop communicating with our heavenly Father; we stop being reminded of the wonderful love that has been shown to us, especially seen in these emblems, and we forget and no longer have any knowledge of the Lord. Now our priorities in life change. No longer is the truth, our spiritual family, or our relationship with God the priority, but our priorities in life become ourselves. Life all of a sudden becomes about daily living and self-serving, and when that happens the violence and immorality comes with it.

> “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev 16:15).

We have been given a garment, a covering, with the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through this we are able to have a covenant relationship with our heavenly Father, and can have our sins forgiven. How great is our God, how great is His mercy, grace, and longsuffering nature. We examine ourselves, we exhort one another with the wonderful hope that we have, not having lack of clarity from the platforms but speaking the Truth, and we renew our faith in the hope of things that will shortly come to pass. Also we help each other... our minds fixed on each other, reminding each other to watch, rejoicing together in the innumerable signs, and rejoicing in the victory that our Lord Jesus Christ will give us at his return.

*James Comito (Detroit Royal Oak, MI)*
First Principles

Doctrines to Be Rejected — (15) Devil

Doctrine to Be Rejected #11: That the Devil is a supernatural personal being.

The Devil or Satan

The doctrine can be re-stated in a positive way: The Devil is variously manifested as that which falsely “accuses.” It is the manifestation of the ungodly characteristics of sin’s flesh, and will cease to exist when sin is ultimately destroyed:

“All sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1Pet 5:8).

“And the Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev 20:10).

The Christadelphian “Statement of Faith” fully describes God, but does leave the possibility open of another type of evil “supreme being.” Many of the denominations around us have some such belief, although this is often not emphasized these days. This false belief is based upon a very selective treatment of some passages in both the Old and New Testaments, and its rejection was made clear by John Thomas in his Elpis Israel. However, for completeness we include a brief analysis of this topic.

Introduction

Sometimes the original words of the Bible text are left untranslated (“mammon,” in Matthew 6:24, is an Aramaic example of this). As a word, ‘Satan’ is an untranslated Hebrew word that means ‘adversary,’ while ‘Devil’ is a translation of the Greek word ‘diabolos,’ meaning a liar, an enemy, or false accuser. If we are to believe that Satan and the Devil are some being outside of us, which is responsible for sin, then whenever we come across these words in the Bible, we have to make them refer to this evil person. The biblical usage of these words shows that they can be used as ordinary adjectives, describing ordinary people. This fact makes it impossible to reason that the words Devil and Satan, as used in the Bible, do in themselves refer to a great wicked person or being outside of us.

The word ‘Satan’ in the Bible

The Bible records:

“The Lord stirred up an adversary [same Hebrew word elsewhere translated “Satan”] unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite” (1Kgs 11:14).

“And God stirred up another adversary [another Satan]... Rezon... he was an adversary [a Satan] to Israel” (1Kgs 11:23, 25).

This does not mean that God stirred up a supernatural person or an angel to be
a Satan/adversary to Solomon; He stirred up ordinary men. Matthew 16:22-23 provides another example. Peter had been trying to dissuade Jesus from going up to Jerusalem to die on the cross. Jesus turned and said unto Peter: "Get thee behind me, Satan... for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Thus Peter was called a Satan. The record is crystal clear that Christ was not talking to an angel or a monster when he spoke those words; he was talking to Peter.

The books of Samuel and Chronicles are parallel accounts of the same incidents, similar to the way the four Gospels are records of the same events but use different language. 2 Samuel 24:1 records: "The Lord... moved David against Israel" to make him take a census of Israel. The parallel account in 1 Chronicles 21:1 says that, "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David" to take the census. In one passage God does the provoking, in the other Satan does it. The only conclusion is that God acted as a 'Satan' or adversary to David. He did the same to Job by bringing trials into his life, so that Job said about God: "With thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me" (Job 30:21); 'You are acting as a Satan against me,' was what Job was basically saying.

The word 'Devil' in the Bible

And so it is with the word 'Devil.' Jesus said, "Have not I chosen you twelve [disciples], and one of you is a Devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot" (John 6:70-71). Judas was an ordinary, mortal man. He was not speaking of a personal being with horns, or a so-called 'spirit being.' The word 'Devil' here simply refers to a wicked man. Another example. "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things" (1Tim 3:11). The wives of church elders were not to be "slanderers"; the original Greek word here is 'diabolos,' which is the same word translated 'Devil' elsewhere. Similarly, Paul warns Titus that the aged women in the ecclesia should not be "false accusers" or 'Devils' (Titus 2:3). And likewise he told Timothy (2Tim 3:1, 3) that "In the last days...men shall be...false accusers [Devils]." This does not mean that human beings will turn into superhuman beings, but that they will be increasingly wicked. It ought to be quite clear from all this that the words 'Devil' and 'Satan' do not refer to a fallen angel or a sinful being outside of us.

Sin, Satan, and the Devil

The words 'Satan' and 'Devil' are used figuratively to describe the natural sinful tendencies within us. These are our main 'Satans' or adversaries. They are also personified, and as such they can be spoken of as 'the Devil'— our enemy, a slanderer of the truth. This is what our natural 'man' is like — the very Devil. The connection between the Devil and our evil desires, sin within us, is made explicit in several passages: "As the children (ourselves) are partakers of flesh and blood, he (Jesus) also himself likewise took part of the same; that through (his) death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil" (Heb.2:14). The Devil is here described as being responsible for death. But "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). Therefore, sin and the Devil must be parallel. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own
lust, and enticed” (James 1:14). It is our evil desires that tempt us, leading us to sin and therefore to death. But “him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;” (Heb 2:14): this says that it is the Devil who brings death. Contrast this with Romans 8:3: “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (that is, in our human nature) condemned sin in the flesh.” This shows that the Devil and the sinful tendencies that are naturally within human nature are effectively the same. It is vitally important to understand that Jesus was tempted just like us. Misunderstanding the doctrine of the Devil means that we cannot correctly appreciate the nature and work of Jesus. It was only because Jesus had our human nature — the ‘Devil’ within him — that we can have the hope of salvation.

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).

By overcoming the desires of his own nature, the Biblical Devil, Jesus was able to destroy the Devil on the cross. “He that committeth sin is of the Devil” (1John 3:8), because sin is the result of giving way to our own natural, evil desires, which the Bible calls ‘the Devil.’ “For this purpose the son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil” (1John 3:8). If we are correct in saying that the Devil is our evil desires, then the works of our evil desires, i.e., what they result in, are our sins.

“He (Jesus) was manifested to take away our sins” (1John 3:5). This confirms that “our sins” and “the works of the Devil” are the same. Acts 5:3 provides another example of this connection between the Devil and our sins. Peter says to Ananias: “Why hath Satan filled thine heart?” Then in verse four Peter says, “Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?” Conceiving something bad within our heart is the same as Satan filling our heart. If we ourselves conceive something, e.g., a sinful plan, then it begins inside us. If a woman conceives a child, it doesn’t exist outside of her; it begins inside her. Psalm 109:6 parallels a sinful person with a ‘Satan’: “Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand,” i.e., in power over him.

**Personification**

However, you may reasonably reply: ‘But it does talk as if the Devil is a person!’ That is quite correct; Hebrews 2:14 speaks of “him that hath the power of death, that is, the Devil.” But even a small amount of Bible reading shows that it often uses personification — speaking of an abstract idea as if it is a person.

“Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table” (Prov 9:1-2).

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord: (Rom 6:23).

Here we have of a woman called ‘Wisdom’ building a house, and sin is a paymaster giving wages of death. Our Devil, the ‘diabolos,’ often represents
our evil desires. Yet you cannot have abstract diabolism; the evil desires that are in a man’s heart cannot exist separately from a man; therefore ‘the Devil’ is personified. Sin is often personified as a master: it is understandable, therefore, that the ‘Devil’ is also personified, seeing that ‘the Devil’ also refers to sin.

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matt 6:13 NET). This sinful part of our nature is personified as “the evil one” — the Biblical Devil. The same Greek phrase translated “evil one” here is translated as “wicked person” in 1 Corinthians 5:13, showing that when a person gives way to sin, his “evil one” — he himself — becomes an “evil one,” or a ‘Devil.’

‘Devil’ and ‘Satan’ and the world order
These words, ‘Devil’ and ‘Satan,’ are also used to describe the wicked, sinful world order in which we live. The social, political and religious hierarchies of mankind can be spoken of in terms of ‘the Devil.’ The Devil and Satan in the New Testament often refer to the political and social power of the Jewish or Roman systems.

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried” (Rev 2:10).

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is” (Rev 2:12-13).

The first refers to the Roman authorities imprisoning believers. In the second we read of the church in Pergamos being situated where Satan’s seat, or throne, was — i.e., the place of governorship for a Roman colony in Pergamos, where there was also a group of believers. We cannot say that Satan himself, if he exists, personally had a throne in Pergamos.

Individual sin is defined as a transgression against God’s law. But sin, when expressed collectively as a political and social force opposed to God, is a force more powerful than individuals. It is this collective power that is sometimes personified as a powerful being called ‘the Devil.’ In this sense Iran and other Islamic powers have called the United States, “the great Satan” — i.e., the great adversary to their cause, in political and religious terms. This is how the words ‘Devil’ and ‘Satan’ are often used in the Bible.

It is probably true to say that in this subject more than any other, it is vital to base our understanding upon a balanced view of the whole Bible, rather than building massive doctrines on a few verses containing catch-phrases that appear to refer to the common beliefs concerning the Devil. The words Devil and Satan can be used as ordinary adjectives, or in some places they refer to the sin that is found within our own human nature.

Conclusion
One of the foundations of Scriptures is that we have a choice to do good, or not to, of our own volition. We can choose to do God’s will or we can choose not to do it,
“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

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Notes:
1. Note the subject of “demons” is quite different, but is not covered in the Statement of Faith.
2. “This enemy within the human nature is the mind of the flesh, which is enmity against God; it is not subject to His law, neither indeed can be... This is the accuser, adversary, and calumniator of God, whose stronghold is the flesh. It is the Devil and Satan within the human nature; so that ‘when a man is tempted, he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.’ If a man examine himself, he will perceive within him something at work, craving after things which the law of God forbids. The best of men are conscious of this enemy within them. It troubled the apostle so much, that he exclaimed, ‘O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death,’ or, this mortal body? He thanked God that the Lord Jesus Christ would do it; that is, as he had himself been delivered from it, by God raising him from the dead by His Spirit.” (Elpis Israel, written in 1849).
3. This whole topic is of course the subject of a large number of pamphlets, books, etc. The treatment we are using is largely based on the section in Bible Basics, although similar works can be found: for example, The Devil, the Great Deceiver by Peter Watkins (The Christadelphian Office).

Why I Left the Roman Catholic Church,
(5) Baptism, Infallibility

Baptism

The Catholic Church baptizes infants by sprinkling them with water, or pouring water over their heads. However, this practice is not in keeping with what the Bible dictates. Baptism, in Greek, means to make fully wet, or to cover wholly with a fluid, or to dip.

Whenever a baptism occurs in the Bible, it is preceded by belief in the gospel message, and it is done to adults, and these adults are made fully wet: “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that does not believe, shall be damned,” (Mark 16:15-16). An Ethiopian eunuch was taught the gospel by Philip, and “as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’ Then Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ After this baptism, they came up out of the water” (Acts 8:37). It was also the first act that the newest converts to the nascent ecclesia underwent: “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:42). As Paul says:

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:3-4).
How can a baby understand, accept and believe the gospel before being baptized, and decide to be “buried with him through baptism into death,” and then put off his/her “old self” and walk according to Christ? Obviously he or she cannot. Because of this mistake, or falling away from true doctrine of the Scriptures, Catholics have instituted “Confirmation” for older children to “renew” their baptismal vows. However, this is a doctrine of men, and not of Christ; for there is but one baptism: “One Lord, one faith, one baptism,” (Eph 4:5).

The pope's infallibility

Catholics believe that the Pope is a descendent of the Apostle Peter, upon whom Jesus built his church. When Peter first confessed Jesus as the Christ, Jesus answered; “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church” (Matt 16: 17-18).

Catholicism teaches that the Pope is infallible, that he is God’s chosen spokesperson. However, Scripture reveals that although Peter was zealous for Jesus, he was certainly not infallible.

Peter had faith in Jesus, yet he doubted the power of Jesus to keep him upon the water, and Jesus said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Matt 14:31). Peter was an adversary of Jesus when Peter told Jesus that he was wrong, and that he would not be killed: “Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘Far be it from you, Lord: this shall not happen to you!’ But he turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me Satan! You are an offense to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men’ ” (Matt 16:22-23). Again, Peter was zealous for the Lord, even cutting off the high priest’s servant’s ear when this servant came to arrest Jesus. However, it is shown that Peter did not comprehend/believe Jesus when he said that he must die to be glorified. Jesus rebuked him, saying: “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?” (Matt 26: 51-54).

Peter was fearful of the Jewish authorities and so denied knowing Jesus three times: “Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly” (Matt 26:74-75).

Although Peter’s faith was strengthened by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, he was still not infallible, and in fact, misunderstood or misrepresented some of the gospel message. Paul described how Peter was being a hypocrite because of fear of the Jews: “Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was to be blamed... I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, ‘If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?’ ” (Gal 2:11-15). And then Paul went on to explain Peter’s error.
Peter later acknowledged the wisdom given to Paul from God: “As also in all his [Paul’s] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2Pet 3:16). Is the Pope more faithful and more knowledgeable about the gospel than Peter, who was Jesus’ own Apostle?

**The Pope accepts homage being paid to him** (e.g. bowing before him, kissing his ring, etc.), while Peter did not. “As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, ‘Stand up; I myself am also a man’ ” (Acts 10:25-26). Is the Pope more worthy than Peter?

The Pope accepts the following titles:

- His Holiness
- the Holy Father
- the Prince of the Apostles
- Sovereign of the temporal dominions of the Holy Roman Church
- Sovereign of Vatican City
- the Holy See

Peter would never accept any of these titles. He called himself only a fellow “elder”: “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed” (1Pet 5:1). When a dispute occurred over which of Jesus’ Apostles should be considered the greatest, Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves... I am among you as the one who serves,” (Luke 22:24-27).

**The Pope has not accomplished signs, wonders nor mighty deeds**, although Paul tells us what the signs of an apostle are: “Truly the signs of an Apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds,” (2Cor 12:12). The true apostles did so: resisting vipers, and raising the dead:

“And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm” (Acts 28:3-5).

“And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him... And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted” (Acts 20:9-12).
The Pope lives in a luxurious, palace-like building in Rome (the Vatican). But Peter tells elders to "shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock," (1Pet 5:1-3). While the Pope lives in isolation from us in his luxurious accommodation, the early apostles (as well as the Lord Jesus) lived and worked among the early church. I myself was very excited about seeing the Pope at a huge rally in Montreal in the early 1980’s, where he held a Mass — however it was very difficult to get a glance at him as he drove by the throngs in his bullet-proof “Pope Mobile.”

The Pope can afford to live in the Vatican only because a portion of the money collected from every Roman Catholic Church is sent to Rome. The “Peter’s Pence” is “a collection made each year among Catholics for the maintenance of the Pope and his works of charity. It was originally a tax of a penny on each house, and was collected on St. Peter’s day”1. Also, millions of dollars in revenue are collected from people who make a pilgrimage to the sanctuary at Lourdes and the thousands of other similar sanctuaries. Revenue is also earned by selling rosaries, images of Mary and saints, and other articles used in prayer and worship. This is similar to the silversmiths at Ephesus who caused a great commotion about the Way, because they prospered by the selling of idols and did not want the Truth to be spread because they would lose their profit — see Acts 19:21-41. Revenue is also made by selling “indulgences,” which are “the remission before God of the temporal punishment due for sins already forgiven as far as guilt is concerned, which a follower of Christ [supposedly] acquires through the intervention of the Church”2.

The apostle Paul writes to Timothy that he must be careful to avoid false teachers and greedy motives. He says:

“If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself,” (1Tim 6: 3-5).

The Pope claims the right to canonize saints. This is supposed to be “an infallible declaration by the Pope that a person, who died as a martyr and/or practiced Christian virtue to a heroic degree, is now in heaven and is worthy of honor and imitation by all the faithful... From its earliest years the Church has venerated saints... ‘We decree... that he/she shall be venerated in the universal Church with pious devotion’.”3 There are several things I have found to be incorrect/sinful in this because they oppose Scripture:

• Who but God alone can search a person’s heart and mind and judge her or him to be worthy? Jesus clearly warns us not to judge others: “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt 7:1).
• God clearly gave the right to judge to His son: “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom” (2Tim 4:1).

• To canonize a saint is to judge that person; God said that only He or His son has the right to judge people; therefore, to claim the right to judge people is to call God a liar — and this is a sin.

As I have learned, venerating anything or anyone other than God and the Lord Jesus is a sin, yet the Catholic Church celebrates feasts to honor its saints.

Ruth Anne Chisholm-Davin (Shelburne, ON)

Notes:

Peter’s Non-infallibility

Peter himself knew nothing of such infallibility. The Lord, even in the very context of his statement about the founding of his church, had to rebuke Peter, the very disciple to whom the Father Himself had revealed a truth about the Son of God, when he later spoke of himself “not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (Matt 16:16–23).

No wonder that later Peter, when writing from the apocalyptic “Babylon,” or Rome, to “the strangers scattered abroad,” was careful to make his exhortation very plain: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1Pet 4:11).

We set out below, in contrast to such clear words of Scripture, the Papal Bull on Infallibility, a decree of Pius IX set forth at the First Vatican Council, 1869–70, as a dogma to be received by all the faithful:

The Doctrine Of Papal Infallibility: Vatican Council, Session Iv. Cap. 4… We (i.e. Pope Pius IX), agreeing faithfully to the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith — with a view to the glory of our Divine Saviour, the exaltation of the Catholic religion, and the safety of Christian peoples (the Sacred Council approving), teach and define as a dogma divinely revealed: That the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks ex cathedra (that is, when — fulfilling the office of Pastor and Teacher of all Christians — on his supreme Apostolical authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the Universal Church), through the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, is endowed with that infallibility, with which the Divine Redeemer has willed that His Church — in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals — should be equipped: And therefore, that such definitions of the Roman Pontiff of these not by virtue of the consent of the Church — are irreformable. If anyone shall presume (which God forbid!) to contradict this our definition: let him be anathema. (The Christadelphian, 1992, P. 290)
Isn’t It Time to Discuss Revelation? (3)

A disturbing aspect

There was another disturbing aspect of the disagreement. Many of those who did not accept the *Eureka* exposition appeared to have little first-hand experience of the book itself. References to it often reflected a lack of understanding of what had been written so long ago. One of the dismissive comments made by an English brother, Chris Brown (*When These Things Begin to Come to Pass*) implies intellectual dishonesty on the part of John Thomas. “I discovered that the information I was reading [on the continuous historical explanation] was largely copied from other sources, mainly Joseph Mede and Edward Elliot (sic).” Bro. Brown did not appear to be aware that there are acknowledgements in the text of *Elpis Israel* and that the preface to Vol. 3 of *Eureka* is devoted to a review, largely critical, of the sources its writer had studied. It is also true, however, that in 1924, C.C. Walker, then editor of *The Christadelphian*, accepted that Thomas did not always admit his indebtedness to other writers1.

What was impossible to deny was that an increasing number of brethren and sisters across the world were finding more answers to their questions about Revelation in a futurist understanding. One of the undoubted reasons for this was the insistence of many adherents of *Eureka*, in spite of a changing world, on retaining the 19th century model constructed by Bro. Thomas. Yet many of the principles of interpretation presented in that early exposition are undoubtedly capable of useful extrapolation into the present time. The reluctance of many readers to make this mental shift has had the effect of depressing the status of the Revelation, not of elevating it as they would wish.

A root cause of the ongoing disagreement, I sincerely believe, lies in insisting that the book of Revelation should fit into a box of our own construction. We try to force the book to conform to a set of criteria that we ourselves have constructed and then become angered when it clearly does not do this. The God we worship is far above anything we can fully comprehend. His thoughts and His ways are not by any means ours: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa 55:8-9). Does this not suggest that we should recognize that Revelation is far greater and more comprehensive than we can ever imagine? In my experience, this is the first step towards a resolution of an otherwise intractable problem.

Further exploration

One of the undoubted obstacles to seeking an understanding of Revelation is the inflexibility of our own finite minds. It leads us to reject things we cannot immediately comprehend and cling desperately to those we think we know.

A clear illustration of this inability to see the bigger picture is provided in two
examples from the continuous historical understanding as frequently taught in our community. The first relates to the decline of the Catholic Church, attributed to the effects of the French Revolution and the career of Napoleon and understood to be the meaning of Revelation 16. That the political and social upheaval in France weakened the power of the Pope goes without question, and so does the way in which these ideas spread through Western Europe under Bonaparte. But this is by no means the full story.

What has generally been left out of our thinking entirely is the other half of the original Catholic Church, known today as the Eastern (or Greek) Orthodox church, which separated from Rome only in 1054, although the quarrel went back to the Council of Constantinople in 869. *Eureka* correctly notes that, with the fall of Constantinople, the Patriarch fled to Moscow. But an important point appears to have been entirely missed: the power of this Eastern Pope was not at all affected by his translocation to Russia, or by the later French Revolution. His loss of authority came with the Russian Revolution of 1917. The conclusion is plain. A satisfactory understanding of the continuous historical interpretation demands that events of the 20th century be taken into account. Revelation is shown to be bigger than we have in the past allowed.

**Great earthquake**

The same tendency to limit the reach of the prophecy is seen in another related topic, the spread of popular democracy. Our traditional explanation limits this largely to the French Revolutions, of which there were three between 1789 and 1848. It completely ignores the English (1688) and the American (1775) precursors to the French upheaval, both of which were products of similar thinking and ambitions. And John Thomas could not be expected to foresee events in Russia after 1917, when the power of the Tsar was destroyed, nor the influence of nationalism and liberalism in Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa in the 20th century. Rightly understood, I am convinced, the great earthquake of Revelation 11 cannot be limited to events in France over a mere sixty years. The process started in Switzerland and Holland in 1648 and reached the country in which I sojourn, South Africa, only in 1994. And it has not yet arrived for our neighbours in Swaziland, which remains close to an absolute monarchy! There have been 350 years of rumbling, upheaval and aftershocks.

Another related narrowing of the view refers to the three spirits like frogs of Revelation 16. These are often identified with the French revolutionary slogan “Liberty! Equality! Fraternity!” 2 Although some later writers, like Michael Ashton, 3 have noted that the only other Bible reference to frogs is in relation to the third Egyptian plague (Exod 8:2) nobody has, to my knowledge, explored the significance of two other Old Testament observations. To understand something of this we must go to the inspired commentary in the Psalms. These make it clear that the frogs (small and defenceless though they undoubtedly were) penetrated the most carefully guarded places in the land: “Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings” (Psa 105:30), and potentially destroyed Egypt’s unquestioned power: “He sent divers sorts of flies
among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them” (Psa 78:45).
The brief description of the event given in Exodus masks a reality we sometimes miss: ordinary life and business in Egypt were completely paralyzed, not by the croaking (on which Scripture is silent but which has needlessly distracted so many of our commentators!) but by the sheer weight of froggy numbers.

What better image could there be than this, of the effects of ‘people power’ on formerly autocratic governments? And Revelation tells us that the role of the three spirits is to bring the kings of the earth to battle on the great day of Almighty God: “For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Rev 16:14). After the recent Arab Spring doesn’t that make good 21st century sense? It is, I hope, becoming clear that the scope and depth of the book of Revelation are significantly beyond our present comprehension. The corollary is that we should pause before we too quickly abandon one way of understanding it in favor of another.

The emergence of different ways of understanding the Apocalypse has created problems for many Christadelphians. It has led to a major cleavage between “conservative” and “progressive” thinkers as well as to an intensified antagonism between them. It may be helpful to try to understand how this came about.

The principal objection of those who favour the traditional view is that there is, among futurists, a lack of clarity about future events. The program presented in Eureka enables individuals, it is claimed, to place themselves accurately in time, to find a precise location in the unfolding drama and to have the security that comes from that precision. Futurist views, of which there are several, do not offer a similar security. They have replaced certitude about future events with bewildering uncertainty.

Those who espouse this opinion do not readily accept the argument that much uncertainty stems from the fact that in the past century and a half the world has changed out of all recognition. They are reluctant to accept that the rise of nationalism which has led to the redrawing of many maps, especially in the Middle East, has also profoundly affected political realities. They find it hard to accept that Western Europe (and Britain in particular) is no longer able to determine the destinies of other peoples as it did in the 19th century. And the rise of Islam, in spite of the global impact of the events of 9/11, is still regarded as essentially irrelevant. What tends to be entirely overlooked also is that uncertainty is an undeniable and unavoidable part of discovery and learning, as is well illustrated by the experiences of Bro. Thomas in his first encounter with Restorationism in the 1830’s and 1840’s. This was, after all the man who wrote:

“Must a man never progress? If he discover an error in his premises, must he forever hold to it for the sake of consistency? May such a calamity never befall me! Rather let me change every day, till I get it right at last.”

(From a letter written by John Thomas in 1848.)

Personal experience is supported by professional studies which show that we
learn by discovering little pieces of useful information, which may take a long

time to put together in coherent form.

[To be concluded]

Robin Lamplough (Pinetown, South Africa)

Notes:

1. Some brethren are shocked that we should even mention the Bishop and his book. They

   need not be. We do it upon the principle of Paul’s quoting “your own poets” (Acts 17:28). Or

   upon the principle of Dr. Thomas’ fine and generous acknowledgments to Pearson’s suc-

   cessors, Peter Jurieu and Bicheno, see Eureka, vol. 2, pp. 657, 660. “Dr. Thomas was more

   indebted to bishops than appears on the surface” (The Christadelphian, 1924, p 26).

2. The three voices have one origin — the Frog power which completely transforms the

   influences of the French Revolution — liberty, equality, fraternity — a false promise of


Youth Speaks

Don’t Worry (for the Right Reason)

Should we worry?

I worry about a lot of things, ranging from my health, my job, financial

responsibilities, ecclesial responsibilities, spiritual life, family life, the list

goes on. It is stressful to say the least, so stressful that I inevitably reach out to

someone and tell about all the stressors in my life and how I feel.

Usually in these cases, we are offered some sentiment of “well, things could

be worse,” or “at least you have blankity-blank unlike John Doe over there.” Or

perhaps we receive some encouragement and sympathy from a listening brother

or sister, some advice on how to better handle the situation. Eventually, after

all of that, it is either suggested to me or I am reminded in all my worry to look

to Scripture:

“And he said to his disciples, Therefore I say to you, Be not anxious as to

your life, what you shall eat; nor for the body, what you shall put on. Life is

more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens:

for they neither sow nor reap, having neither storehouse nor barn, and God

feeds them. How much more are you better than the birds? And which of

you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature? If then you are not

able to do even the least, why are you anxious about the rest? Consider

the lilies, how they grow; they do not toil, they do not spin. And yet I say to

you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then

God so clothes the grass (which today is in the field, and tomorrow is cast

into the oven) how much more will He clothe you, O little-faiths? And do

not seek what you shall eat, nor what you shall drink, and stop being in

We have read these words many times before, but to be honest, I sometimes feel that when people use this as their advice, it feels like fluff. Don’t worry, about the petty things in life, God will provide. Don’t worry about food, clothing or your job or money, God will take care of you. That’s all fine and dandy, but sometimes it’s harder to not worry than at other times. I need to understand why God said not to worry, why God says He will take care of me. Why would God provide for a sinner?

The obvious answer of course, is love. For God so loved the world, He gave His only son. He loves us so much that He is more than happy to provide for His children. Again, this doesn’t feel complete. This unconditional love and provision of God feels... the idea feels one sided. And on one hand it certainly is. We can never deserve the love that He is giving to us. But the idea that He would say, “Don’t worry,” I want to understand. Why?

Medically speaking, worrying is a state of fear. It is the body reacting to outside stimuli and can often trigger a fight or flight response. The body senses some form of danger and prepares itself for the act of attacking it (fight) or running away (flight). This releases chemicals throughout the body that allow it to react by moving faster or hitting harder.

This release of chemicals is not necessarily catastrophic and many scientists believe this response is meant for extreme circumstances (a child trapped under a car, a wild animal, a dangerous person etc.). It is the body going into survival mode.

When we are stressed or worry frequently, we are prepping ourselves to go into this response more readily, which can have long term effects on our bodies such as immune system deficiencies and other major health problems. This, I should mention, is not from little worries that happen naturally, but dwelling on worries for long periods of time.

So back to Christ’s words, maybe God doesn’t want us to worry because He knows the problems that can be caused from it, health-wise. Similar to God giving instructions on health and safety in the law, these instructions may also be a guide to healthy living. God may choose to take care of the little things because He knows we would make ourselves sick if we were to dwell on them.

And I certainly believe that is part of it. But there is one thing about that fight or flight response that caught my attention: it doesn’t make you think clearer. Just react. If you think about it, thinking in a crisis, taking time to consider options, plan out an attack or flight pattern could slow us down. The body wants to react. And that can lead to some very dangerous choices.

Scriptural examples

Let’s look at some examples in Scripture:

“Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, did not bear. And she had a female slave, an Egyptian, and her name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, Behold now, Jehovah has kept me from bearing. I pray you, go in to my slave woman. It
may be that I may be built by her. And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar her slave woman, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife (after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan)” (Gen 16:1-3).

Abram and Sarai had already been promised that they would have a son. This was flat out promised by God and fairly explicitly too. But Abram was old, as was Sarai, so perhaps some worry was understandable. This was a bigger deal than simply food or clothing. But in their worry, Abram and Sarai made a decision not fueled by faith, but by fear. They rigged the game to play in their favor.

And even though the real promise did come to fruition, this shenanigan would later bite them and their descendants — for centuries. And it seems the worry was hereditary:

“And he said to him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I do not know the day of my death. And now please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me. And make tasty meat for me, such as I love, and bring to me so that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die. And Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt game in order to bring it. And Rebekah spoke to her son Jacob, saying, Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying, Bring me game, and make me delicious things so that I may eat and bless you before Jehovah before my death. And now, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you. Go now to the flock, and bring me from there two good kids of the goats. And I will make them delicious things for your father, such as he loves. And you shall bring it to your father so that he may eat, and that he may bless you before his death” (Gen 27:2-10).

Here we see all sorts of worries taking hold: Isaac worries for his death so he seeks to bless the son that God already had stated He didn’t like. Jacob too had been worried prior so he forced his brother to give up his birthright (which God had already given him). And his own mother was so worried that Esau would get the blessing that she put together this elaborate scheme to make God’s plan happen.

Again, God’s plan happened regardless, but needless pain and suffering occurred due to this lack of trust and excess of worry. And I believe it is important to note that this is consistent in both cases, and in every case in Scripture. Whenever someone intervened and attempted to move God’s hand because they were worried that it would not happen on its own, the plan STILL went through. Just with added consequences.

And this is not only a family issue, but a human condition. Look at Judas Iscariot, the man who betrayed Christ:

“Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests. And he said to them, What will you give me, and I will betray him to you? And they appointed to him thirty pieces of silver” (Matt 26:14-15).
Now we know Judas was a not a great guy, but 30 silver pieces to betray a man whom the priests wanted dead seems like a small amount of payment. If it were solely about the money, Judas would have perhaps asked for more.

There have been some though that speculate that Judas’ motivation was never about the money, but to bring the kingdom of God into place, to take down the Roman oppressors — to force God’s hand. And we know it did not end well with him. Yet God’s plan still succeeded, with or without him.

On the flipside, when individuals allowed God’s plan to come to fruition, we see great things happen. Staying within the immediate family, look at Joseph. He, of all of Jacob’s family had every human right to worry about his lot. First he was sold into slavery by his own brothers. At any point during his trip, he could have worried, or feared to the point of reacting badly.

But upon entering Egypt:

“And Joseph was brought down to Egypt. And Potiphar, a eunuch of Pharaoh, the chief of the executioners, an Egyptian man, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. And Jehovah was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man. And he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that Jehovah was with him, and that Jehovah made all he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him. And he made him overseer over his house, and he put into his hand all he had. And it happened from the time he had made him overseer in his house, and over all he had, that Jehovah blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake. And the blessing of Jehovah was upon all that he had, in the house and in the field” (Gen 39:1-5).

It is not stated that Joseph was not worried, but I feel that Potiphar would not have promoted a young man who was constantly worried about what would happen next. God took care of him as he knew He would. His trust that God’s will would be done allowed him to make rational decisions, without resorting to instinct. It allowed him to remove himself from temptation because he could think clearly at all times, rather than resort to worry. And even though he was thrown in prison (another worrisome situation):

“But Jehovah was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison gave all the prisoners in the prison into Joseph’s hand. And whatever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison did not look to anything under his hand, because Jehovah was with him; and whatever he did, Jehovah made it to prosper” (Gen 39:21-23).

Again, why put a prisoner in charge if they are filled with fear and loathing? A clear thinker is what was needed, and it worked. And Joseph would have plenty of reasons to worry in a prison, especially after the butler failed to tell of the unjustness of his sentence for two years. But this worry is unrecorded. We simply know that upon release, Joseph’s character was shown again and he was promoted to second in the kingdom.
And again, imagine the stress this would cause: you tell the most powerful man in the kingdom, a man who holds your life in his hands and you tell him that in seven years, the worst famine the world had seen would be upon you and immediately you are told: you are in charge of this situation. Make it better and save us all. One might worry. And perhaps there was a twinge of worry in Joseph, a bit of natural anticipation. But his reactions were not of someone who dwelled on such fears. Perhaps Joseph already knew what Jesus said in Luke,

“And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you of whom you shall fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you, fear Him” (Luke 12:4-5).

Joseph knew that the only one who had power true power over his life was God and in Him he put his trust. And here is the real reason why I feel Christ said not to worry. Why God has said He will provide. It is to give us time and energy to focus on what He wants us to.

“Yet you say, The way of Jehovah is not fair. Hear now, O house of Israel: Is not My way fair? Are your ways not unfair? When a righteous one turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and dies in them; for his iniquity that he has done, he shall die. Again, when the wicked turns away from his wickedness that he has committed and does that which is lawful and righteous, he shall save his soul alive. Because he looks carefully, and turns away from all his sins that he has committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die” (Ezek 18:25-28).

God makes special mention of “thinking carefully” and not worrying about petty things. We are to think carefully about our actions. Worrying about things that God has said He will provide takes time and effort that should be used in serving Him.

**Ask for God’s guidance**

And if there are things that worry us, that we cannot let go we are to bring them to God, to ask for His guidance, knowing that He will lead us and provide for us. We can see a clear example of what happens when we do not:

“And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on Jehovah your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped out of your hand. Were not the Cushites and the Libyans a huge army with many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on Jehovah, he delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of Jehovah run to and fro in all the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him. You have done foolishly in this; therefore from now on you shall have wars. And Asa was angry with the seer and put him in a prison-house. For he was in a rage with him because of this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at that time. And behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.
And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa was diseased in his feet, until his disease was very grievous. Yet in his disease he did not seek to Jehovah, but to the physicians” (2Chron 16:7-12).

Asa worried about many things, as would be expected of a ruler. But he never turned to God. He never consulted with the Lord and let the worry consume him, putting more faith in his own hand than in the Lord’s. We must not do this. Worry comes to us naturally, yet we have a way to deal with and alleviate it by turning to our Lord and seeking His comfort and support.

Joseph knew this, just as Abraham, Jacob, David, Ruth, Moses and so many more would learn this faith and strive to continue it. Just as Christ would do in his life. Because if anyone had reason to feel worried, it was Christ. Christ had no occupation during the three years we read about him. Would it not be possible for him to worry about food and drink or lodging? We know he did worry about it, at least once in the wilderness, but he did not dwell on the issue.

We know he worried about his safety and showing the people God’s power, but again, he chose not to dwell on such matters of fear but rather focused on his faith in his Father.

We know he worried that God’s plan would not succeed, and perhaps that he would not be able to bear such pain. We know this fear was probably his greatest, the one that lingered in his mind at the very end in the garden. But he would not dwell on that worry. Because that worry would not be his legacy, nor would it assist in God’s plan and purpose.

**God is with us**

Christ did not allow his worries to rule his life just as we cannot either. Though the world is constantly changing and shifting in sometimes chaotic ways, we must remain firm in our conviction that God is with us. That He wants nothing more than our faithful preparation for that coming day. That instead of fear or worry, we should cling to faith and hope. We have a task to do, to be manifestations of God’s will and purpose on this earth, to lead those who are lost and worried out of the darkness and into the hope of something better.

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Be thou faithful when most tried:  
Leave not then the Master’s side;  
In temptations fiercest hour  
Thou shalt prove his saving power.  
When in sorrow’s darkest hour  
Trust in God’s Almighty power:  
Christian brother, faithful be;  
Thou shalt gain the victory. (Hymn 342)
The New Testament Church,
(14) Schisms and Heresies

How they arose, and how they were dealt with

It will be necessary for us in looking at this subject (without descending into any kind of pedantry or a profession of knowledge which I do not possess) to first of all think of the two key words, and the Greek words from which they are taken, because there is a good deal of misunderstanding as to what we mean when we talk about “heresy,” and what a heretic is.

The word that is translated heresy means “a choice, opinion, or sentiment,” according to Young’s Concordance. It is taken from the verb “to choose.” The Greek word is, in the English form, “hairesis.” It is the same word, if you look it up in Young’s Concordance, as the word “sect.” So a heretic, basically, is not somebody who has misunderstood a point of dogma. A heretic is a sectarian, somebody who has chosen to separate himself from the mainstream of opinion.

The word schism comes from the Greek word “schisma,” being spelt in almost exactly the same way, and this word means “a rent or a division.” It is the word Jesus used in the parable of the piece of new cloth in an old garment, when he said it would make a “rent” and the garment would be useless. “The rent is made worse” — this is the word schism. Perhaps this will help us get the two words in focus. A heretic is a sectarian, and schism means a rent, a tearing apart.

Moral judgment

It seems to me, having looked carefully at the New Testament uses of the word heresy, that it always carries the idea of deliberately leading away a party, forming another group. Titus 3:10 is a very well-known verse in this connection: “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.” “A man that is factious,” the RSV, says. You notice here a moral judgment. This is not a man who has just misunderstood, who genuinely has been trying to understand and has come to a wrong conclusion; he is a man who is “factious,” and there is a moral judgment, because it says, “he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself.” What Paul has in mind here is not just a question of a genuine misunderstanding, but a desire to disrupt the body.

Similarly heresy is linked up with other sins of the flesh. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness” (Gal 5:19-20). I think it is clear that the word heresy in this context is being thought of as a moral thing. Here is a man who is guilty of a moral offence. It is as bad in the sight of God as these other “works of the flesh” and it links up closely in the context here with wrath, strife, seditions, and heresies.
It is interesting to notice that the Jews accused the Christians of being sectarians. It is not surprising that they should think of this new body, the Christian community, who grew out of Judaism in the beginning, as being heretics, or those who led away a party, who separated themselves from the mainstream. So Paul defends himself against this charge: “But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:14-15).

Notice how Paul says that while they call it heresy, in fact what he stands for are the very things that the Law and the Prophets foretold should come. He is really standing on the same platform that they ought to be standing on. This is not heresy, or a breakaway party: this is a fulfilment of the religion which they have professed. And again “For we have found this man,” that is Paul, “a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5). And that is the same word as heresy. To the Jews, this was heresy — the heresy of the Nazarenes.

Again, after Paul has got to Rome and they sent a deputation to talk to him about his views: “We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against” (Acts 28:22). And that is again our word heresy. They looked on these men, Paul and the other preachers of Christianity, as being men who were leading away a faction. The Jewish religion was the true religion and Christianity, was an offshoot of it, in their eyes. It was a sect, or a heresy.

A division of opinion

Now the word schism, as I have said, means a division or a rent. I suppose that it comes from the same root word as scissors. Cutting up: that is just what schisms are, cutting up the body. Jesus caused a division: “So there was a division among the people because of him” (John 7:43; see also John 9:16; 10:19); in each case we read there was a “division” among the Jews, i.e. a schism. They fell out with one another over the claims of Jesus. Some said he is a good man, and others said that he is deceiving the people, and they were at one another’s throats, they were falling out with one another. This was a “schism” among them, a division of opinion.

Schisms or divisions, as we well know, were the bane of the Corinthian church. “For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ” (1Cor 1:11). And so they were cut up, divided up into parties. It does not appear that they had stopped meeting with one another. They had not broken off and formed another “fellowship,” as we should say, but they were divided in their midst and there were those among them who said I am Paul’s man; I am Apollos; or I am Cephas; and inevitably if you start getting parties like this you get somebody who says “a plague on all your houses! I am for Christ.”
It comes out again: “For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions (schisms) among you” (1Cor 11:18). And again we notice that they “come together” in the church: they had not broken off into little fellowships, having nothing to do with each other. They came together but they were divided off, into parties or factions.

**How did divisions arise?**

Now the question we are trying to answer is, how did these divisions arise? How were these sects formed in the early church? It is a very difficult question. Divisions at Corinth, which we may take as a pattern because the divisive spirit seems to have been more at work there than anywhere else, clearly arose from the contentious spirit of men and was always rooted in human pride. “You are puffed up,” Paul says, “for one against another.”

Notice that human pride does not always mean being puffed up for yourself. You can glory in someone else. They were glorying in men. They were puffed up for one against another, but they got some kind of reflected glory out of it themselves. Some were declaring: “Apollos is our man, he is a fine speaker, he has got a better presence than Paul, such an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures.” No doubt he appealed to many of the Greeks in the Corinthian church. They admired Apollos, so they got some kind of reflected glory for being one of his followers. The personality cult, we call it, is often responsible for these kind of schisms or divisions that arise in ecclesial life.

“I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another. For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?” (1Cor 4:6-7 ESV).

I want now to look at this passage, because Paul says something there that I think is very important for us to get into our minds and our hearts today. What he is saying is this. I have chosen Apollos and myself particularly to show you that you ought not to range yourselves behind human leaders.

If there was one man above all that the Corinthians could have ranged themselves behind, it was Paul himself, because he had founded the Corinthian church and he was their father in the Truth. “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me” (1Cor 4:15-16). They were his children, and he looked on the Corinthians with a particular kind of affection. This is clear from his writings. And yet he says, “Who is Paul? Who is Apollos? Was Paul crucified for you? And were you baptized in the name of Paul? How absurd it is for you to be ranging yourselves as Paul’s men or Apollos’ men or Cephas’ men or anybody else’s men. You are Christ’s. It was Christ who died for you and nobody else.” “Now,” he says, “I want you to learn by the example of Apollos and myself, not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.”
We know, and they knew, what was written of men in the Scriptures, that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9). "Men of low degree are vanity and men of high degree are a lie" (Psa 62:9), the Psalmist says. And we could go on making similar quotations which they ought to have known, and indeed would have known. This is what was written of human nature. This is what the Scriptures taught about the nature of human life. It counts for nothing in God’s sight. It is Jesus who is everything, and men are nothing. This is what Paul was saying. And if they would only get that into their thick heads, he says, then they would not start having these divisions, this cutting up of themselves into little parcels, and labelling themselves Paul, Apollos, Cephas or somebody else.

In almost all cases in the New Testament when we read the word heresy it seems to be allied to evil practices, and often to exploitation to selfish ends. We will look at one or two examples of it.

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (2Pet 2:1-3).

Note the type of people Peter is talking about here. These were not inoffensive men who had misunderstood some abstruse doctrine of Scripture, or some passage of Scripture had eluded their comprehension. These were evil men, that is what Peter is saying. Theirs was not just a misunderstanding, or a genuine endeavor, even if unorthodox, to understand truth, but a denial of the Lord that bought them. “And many shall follow their pernicious ways,” (their licentiousness RSV; their debauched lifestyles NET), and because of them the way of truth will be reviled and they will exploit you.

Now, in my experience in the Brotherhood, I have not met any brethren who have been really of this type. Although we may throw at them a passage that says they shall bring in “damnable heresies,” the fact is that I can honestly say that I have not met any people who were inciting me to licentiousness, or who were guilty of denying the Lord, and causing the Truth to be reviled by people outside, and exploiting us for their own ends. However, that these things were taking place in New Testament times is very clear, and I do not think we ought to be too naive and think that they never happen to us and never could. Clearly they could happen, but we should not manufacture them, and pretend that they are happening simply because we have fallen out with somebody else about the meaning of a passage of Scripture, and so start using verses that describe him as an evil man, who is defiling the truth, and guilty of pernicious practices, licentiousness and dissolution. This is the kind of man a heretic was in New Testament parlance.
Jude’s condemnation

In the Epistle of Jude there is a very famous verse that we know well. Jude is saying that he set out to write them a nice cozy little letter “about our common salvation,” but it became necessary to write unto them and exhort them “that they should earnestly contend for the faith, which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Something has come to his knowledge that has made him change his plan. He intended to write to them about their common salvation, perhaps a general hortatory epistle, but he said, “it became needful for me to write unto you that you defend the faith,” because “there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 4).

Here is the same charge against heretics in New Testament times. They were evil men who had “crept in unawares,” and now were turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. I personally would identify them, although I cannot prove it, as the people who built upon Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith and said, “all things are lawful unto me,” and they actually went about teaching that it did not matter how you behaved. The more you sinned, the more scope you gave for the grace of God to operate, to which Paul indignantly replied: “What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid” (Rom 6:15). But clearly there were those who were teaching this, otherwise he would not need to expostulate against it! There were those who were saying behavior did not matter, all things were lawful, anything goes, because Christ will wipe the slate clean. It is his righteousness, not ours, and therefore it does not matter any longer how you behave. You can do what you like. And this probably led to the introduction of these evil, corrupt practices, so that a party began to grow up who really were indulging in the sins of the flesh. “Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities... These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts” (Jude 8, 16).

From this it would appear that the “heretics” of New Testament times were vicious men who introduced corrupt practices into the church. Men were led to follow their own passions, thinking that it did not matter any longer. “These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit” (Jude 19) (“It is these who cause divisions” (ESV)). These people were schismatics, sectarians, dividing up the body, cutting it into pieces, and saying in effect, “Those who follow us do not have to bother any more, but can do what they like, and anything goes.” And in this way they were exploiting the believers and introducing corruption into the church. Essentially, then, heresy is the act of forming a breakaway party and schism is the result, of which, unfortunately, we have more than our share of experience in our Brotherhood.

Len Richardson
Reflection

‘In’ or ‘Of’?

Daniel’s childhood

He had heard the voice of Jeremiah ring out in the courts of the Lord’s house warning the people that if they would not hear their God, God would make the Temple “like Shiloh,” and make Jerusalem “a curse to all the nations of the earth” (Jer 26:6).

But it was a confusing time. The extravagance of King Jehoiakim was unprecedented: while the people languished due to heavy taxation and extortion to pay off Egypt for protection, the king and his officials were enlarging and adorning their houses. Where Josiah, Jehoiakim’s father, covered himself in sackcloth before the word of the Lord, Jehoiakim clothed himself in pride, arrogantly consigning God’s word to the flames of a winter fire. “And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth” (Jer 36:23).

Daniel was born during the middle of the 31 ‘golden years’ of King Josiah, and would seemed to have been nurtured by godly parents. His parents, who would have endured the rampant idolatry and godlessness of Manasseh’s reign, must have rejoiced in Josiah’s godliness and devotion to Yahweh. His cleansing of the disgusting idolatry and reformation of the nation must have given them great relief, and, a wonderful environment in which to raise their son.

It is evident that Daniel did not forget his parents’ instruction and godly ways. When Nebuchadnezzar sent the Egyptians back home through a humiliating defeat at Carchemish, he then proceeded south towards Jerusalem to humble Judah and bring them under his yoke. During Jehoiakim’s fourth year, Nebuchadnezzar finally entered Jerusalem, made Jehoiakim his vassal, and took some of the vessels of Yahweh’s Temple captive, along with some of the youths from prominent families, from the king, and from his nobles. Like the Greeks of a later period, Nebuchadnezzar intended to ‘Babylonialize’ these Jewish youths so they would learn and appreciate the ways of Great Babylon.

So these were the experiences and this was the new world that confronted Daniel and his three friends as the first group of Jewish captives to be taken to Babylon (607-606 BC).

The test of Daniel

To instill in all these young Jewish men the ways and thinking of Babylon required three years of education and training. Accordingly, they were enrolled in the ‘college of Babylon’ where they received comfortable housing, daily food, from the king’s table no less (!), and daily instruction at the hands of the Babylonian priests and wise men.
Wow. What an opportunity! And then to serve in the courts of the king’s palace with all the privileges and status that would give? What’s not worth liking about this? Were there only 20 Jewish youths involved? 50? 100? We aren’t told and can’t really say, but we can be absolutely certain of one thing: Daniel and his three companions were not the only ones enrolled in this training.

The training did have a downside though: it involved some compromises for these Jewish youths. The food would have included the flesh of unclean animals, perhaps even prepared with the blood in them, or perhaps the blood was used in the sauces that accompanied the meat. Babylonians also regularly used both beer and wine as offerings to their gods. As this was from the king’s table, the wine would have been first offered to these Babylonian gods.

This was a compromise Daniel was not willing to accept:

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself” (Dan 1:8).

Instead of the king’s food, Daniel and his three companions asked to be fed grain and vegetables, with water to drink. Had it not been that “God had brought Daniel into the favor and good will of the chief of the eunuchs” (v. 9), this might have provoked some severe consequences for resisting the king’s order! But through the benevolence of this chief servant of Nebuchadnezzar, a ten-day test was arranged to see if this proposed alternative food would show the same results as the required food.

The faith of Daniel

Wow…again. Daniel had no way of knowing whether God would bless his desire to be faithful and true to Him. Which means, that if the alternative food did not nourish them successfully, Daniel and his companions probably faced harsh servitude in the Babylonian prison...or worse! This truly is a young, vibrant faith to be admired!

There is one vital principle displayed in this young man’s courageous determination to be faithful to the Living God of Israel; a principal we do well to learn — and emulate, because we may well face the very same challenge in our world today.

The Principle?

“No I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to you... While I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name. But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world... They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (John 17:11-16).
There it is, in verse 16: the disciples of Jesus must be in the world, but they are not to be of the world. Daniel’s behavior illustrates powerfully what this means in tangible, human terms. Loyalty to God — to the One to whom we belong and to His ways — must take precedence over the commands of the world in which we find ourselves.

Compromise is so easy, so seductive. Nobody will know really. And does it really matter if I eat unclean food? After all, I am in a foreign land and I can’t expect them to respect my Jewish upbringing. Daniel could so easily have compromised his loyalty and devotion to God. But if he started here, with this compromise, what would be next? Maybe how he worshipped God, praying to Him three times a day? Perhaps he could drop this for a month so as not to antagonize the other administrators? Where do compromises stop? I suggest they stop when at last we have made a shipwreck of our faith and we have imperceptibly become part of the world we once turned away from.

In Abraham’s day this principle went by another name:

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ... These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb 11:8-10,13).

That’s it: “strangers and pilgrims” or sojourners. Living in the world, but claiming no part of it as their own. Rather, they earnestly and faithfully looked forward to the place, to the city, to the country, to the world God would establish — to the Kingdom of God on this earth!

Compromise would have been so easy for Abraham too. He could so easily have settled into this new country, found a nice home and raised his family. He didn’t need to wander around, living in a tent all his life. But Abraham didn’t see it that way. His decision to live the way he did was the Statement of his Faith.

The Statement of our Faith

It is on this principle that we do not participate in politics or voting, in serving on juries or in the military. It is not a Christadelphian rule; it is the Statement of our Faith! As Hebrews 13:14 says: “For here we have (like Abraham) no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.”

When we get caught up in the spirit of our age, proclaiming that we support a particular presidential contender or their party’s platform, what statement are we making about our faith? Have we not at our baptism already declared our support and allegiance to the only one who can truly rule this world in righteousness? Is it not to his ‘platform’ we ought to be declaring publically our
allegiance? What an opportunity to witness has been afforded to us this year when asked who we will be voting for! To declare boldly that we have already cast our vote for the only candidate that can provide the kind of leadership and guidance this world needs will make a clear statement... and may just open the door to a receptive heart.

A note to young people
Where were the rest of the young Jewish men? Why were there no others that joined Daniel and his three friends in this? Here is one more lesson, a hard lesson, we must learn: exercising faith is often a lonely undertaking. Don't expect even your Christadelphian friends to stand with you. They may not because compromise is so much easier, so much less painful, and you don't have to give up anything. But who knows, maybe your courageous act of faith in not compromising will be the very thing that gives others the courage to follow the same path! Don't be afraid to stand alone, because, as we see with Daniel, God will stand with you.

A final lesson
There exists today a counterpart to ancient Babylon that seeks just as diligently and fervently to dominate and ‘Babylonialize’ the Western world of which we are a part. The face of this system can be found in the humanistic organization we call the United Nations. Here is a body that seeks to impose on all the world, the thoughts and ideas and principals of man. Our views of the rights and obligations of men, of women, of children, of nations and races, of what is moral and immoral, are being defined by this body. And its laws are being slowly imposed on our Western World.

Like the young Jewish men brought to Babylon of old, we too are faced with a very real choice: Will we choose to belong to this system? Or will we heed God's warning and “come out of her”?

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities” (Rev 18:1-5).

It is a question we each must answer, and in a real way, we are actually answering now in the things we say and do publicly and in our hearts.

Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)
Plenty of Nothing

“He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty” (Prov 28:19).

There is a meaningful repetition here, not captured in all translations: the diligent person will have “plenty [Hebrew yisba] of bread,” but the lazy person will have “plenty [yisba again] of poverty” (RSV). What an irony — more than enough poverty to be satisfied with!

“Fantasies” is the Hebrew word reyq, derived from a word meaning “empty.” This may refer to empty or worthless things, “daydreams” (NET) or “worthless pursuits” (see Gen 41:27), including idle or empty words (Deut 32:47). Sometimes, more specifically, it refers to empty people, or in the words of the KJV, “vain persons” (as in: Jdgs 9:4; 11:3; 2 Chron 13:7).

Islip Collyer writes that Proverbs 28:19...

“applies not only to the tilling of the land but to all humble callings which will give bread. From such humble security men are lured in every year that passes, and many of them follow vain persons to poverty and sorrow. Closely following this passage — in the next verse [Prov 28:20] — we have the warning against making haste to be rich.

“The exhortation is needed now as much as ever. Often those who are most bitter in their criticisms of the rich are those who have tried hastily and unsuccessfully to follow in their wake. The Government has had to warn people against ’share pushers.’ All such swindlers use a golden bait, and it is surprising how many people who ought to know better have succumbed to their blandishments. There are still plenty of fraudulent enterprises even on the right side of the law, and men ready to take the money of those who ’make haste to be rich’ ” (Principles and Proverbs, p. 244).

George Gershwin, in an old Broadway song entitled “Plenty of Nothing,” puts a positive spin on the phrase. Porgy, a crippled black man living in the slums of Charleston, South Carolina, sings the song. Even though Porgy is poor in material things, he is rich in more meaningful things:

Oh, I got plenty of nuthin’,
And nuthin’s plenty for me.
I got no car — got no mule,
I got no misery.
The folks with plenty of plenty
Got a lock on the door,
’Fraid somebody’s a-goin’ to rob ’em
While they’s out a-makin’ more —
What for?
I got no lock on the door
(That’s no way to be).
They can steal the rug from the floor.
That’s okay with me.
’Cause the things that I prize,
Like the stars in the skies,
Are all free.
Oh, I got plenty o’ nuthin,’
And nuthin’s plenty for me.

If we understand poverty as a relative thing, and appreciate the simple blessings of life, this viewpoint of “plenty of nothing” well reflects Jesus’ words, in the Sermon on the Mount:

“So do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:19-21). To this he adds:

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt 6:25-33).

Poverty often does not arise from laziness and indifference to work. Its cause may be circumstances without easy remedy, where idleness has played no part. Or, it can be a deliberate choice of those who labor for their daily bread and could easily afford more than they consume — more of this, that, and the other luxury items — but instead they choose less. This latter kind of poverty recognizes that human life does not consist in the abundance of possessions (Luke 12:15), but in character, and in the thoughts of the heart.

Although this proverb — and others in the book of Proverbs — may appear to focus exclusively on practical wisdom, it is very much about the spiritual life. The reality is that a wise man will labor for his daily bread, while never losing sight of his foremost object: “Seek first the kingdom of God” (Matt 6:33). Money and material things with which he has been blessed will be put to good use, not to hinder but to help his walk toward God’s Kingdom.

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)
On April 30, 2016, about 35 sisters from various ecclesias from all over the Island of Jamaica, gathered together to have fellowship with each other. This event took place at Hope Gardens in Kingston, the capital of Jamaica. It is an established recreational, educational and sight-seeing place, thus providing attractions for local and foreign persons alike. Most of the trees are extremely tall and huge with wide branches and roots stretching far and wide in all directions. This provides lovely shade and seats for the visitors. There is always a feeling of welcome as you enter the gates.

This seminar gave the sisters an opportunity to discuss and to learn more about the compassionate and forgiving God we serve. It also helped to uplift and encourage sisters from small ecclesias. The theme for the day was “God uses Ordinary People in Extraordinary Ways” — examples: Esther, Tamar, and Rahab the harlot.

Sis. Lorraine Johnson happily welcomed every one and wished for an informative and inspiring study of God’s precious word. Sis. Merle Henry was indeed sure of the lesson she wanted us to take home as she presented her study on the book of Esther. Although God’s name was not mentioned in the Book of Esther, His providential care for His people is evident everywhere. Esther was crowned queen instead of Vashti — Esther 2:17.

The Port Maria group.

The Round Hill group.
Esther’s character was more noticeable than her beauty. She showed love, obedience, tact, loyalty and great courage. In time of dire peril, Esther refused to put herself first, thus, saving a nation from extinction. We remember Esther as a woman who remained faithful in spite of her exalted position and the challenges she faced.

Our second speaker was Sis. Lasmine Elliott and her presentation was given by her daughter due to a personal challenge she encountered at the time. The talk was given on Tamar who was one of the woman who was included in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 1:3). Sis. Lasmine reinforced the fact that all stories in the Bible have their purpose in fulfilling God’s words. She mentioned that it is a great joy in having children today but it was essential for Tamar to have a child to secure an inheritance in Judah’s family. Tamar was very discrete in handling the pregnancy for Judah. God may not approve the means used in conceiving this child but it was blessed in having, Zerah, another vital link in the royal seed, and for all of this she risked her life. Tamar and his son went with Jacob’s family into Egypt — Geneses 43:12. Do not despair over the sorrows of this world. Our merciful father will remember us as He remembered Tamar. Treasure in the loving hope God has given us deliverance through the royal seed — the Lord Jesus Christ.

With pleasant smiling countenance, Sis. Beverly Barnes made her presentation on Rahab the harlot. This woman truly showed faith by works when she hid the spies under the stalks and let them over the wall. Her basic life style was transformed to dedicated resolution even to telling a lie to aid in the escape of the men. After the conquering of Jericho, Rahab and her family made their home with the Israelites. She married Salmon and their son Boaz continued the line of David and Jesus. Rahab the harlot is included in the blessed list of the faithful in Hebrews. It is not ours to decide who is condemned and who is saved. The choice is God’s the scarlet cord tied to her window was her identity. Sisters were encouraged to let us keep our scarlet cord of hope shining and never fading.

Sis. Lorraine stressed the importance of sisters discussing their challenges with one another and explained the possible solutions according to the principles of God.
In closing, Sis. Gerzel thanked everyone who attended the seminar. She emphasized the lessons learned from the study. God’s hands were seen at work in the lives of these women. She reminded us to take heed, encourage one another, to uplift one another in the way of Lord. She asked God’s blessings on all attendees. The closing prayer was given by Sis. Gerzel, and Sis. Kay Brown from Broughton was remembered in our prayers as she was not able to attend the seminar due to illness, may God see her through.

Thanks to the one true God who made this day to be a success, special thanks to our Brothers Marlon, Adrian and Christopher who were with us throughout the entire seminar, to the arranging brothers, the CBMJ and CBMC, and to all those persons who have contributed to make this day a success, to God Be The Glory great things He has done.

Written by Gerzel Gordon, May Pen Ecclesia
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

**Jamaican Youth**

Once again the CBMJ sponsored a Mutual Improvement Day — this year it was at the Round Hill Ecclesial Hall on Saturday, June 11th. About 85 brothers and sisters, plus children and teens were present from a number of Jamaican ecclesias. Four young men presented devotional talks on various topics, such as: ‘Ye are the light of the world’ (Matt 5:14) and ‘Thy word have I hid in my heart’ (Psa 119:9-11). Several of the presenters showed noticeable improvement from last year, in content and delivery — and this was evident by the applause of appreciation for their worthy effort.

During the June 11th event, a workshop was led by Bro. Don Luff on the topic of the ‘Dress,’ especially at ecclesial activities — as well as reviewing our general deportment and the importance of the sisters’ head-covering. Many Biblical principles were reviewed, starting in Genesis. Following this introductory study, Bro. Keith Kinlocke chaired the whole group discussion on these matters, during which some very helpful comments were made by those in attendance. One clear observation was made, in light of what we see in society — as followers of Christ, our outerwear should cover our underwear — for males and females.

This year the CBMJ is hosting two Sisters’ Study Days (April and July) instead of the usual one, when sisters from different ecclesias prepare study papers
to present for instruction and encouragement. These events are also a form of mutual improvement for sisters in their service in the Truth.

The important aspect that is ever-present at these activities is the youth element. The March Easter Youth Camp was well-attended, and there was also a large youth segment in the audience at the June 11th Mutual Improvement Day, as apparent in the accompanying photo.

The rest of our time of study and fellowship was spent at the Round Hill Ecclesia Hall, and with members of the Mt. Pleasant, Port Maria, May Pen, White Horses and Spanish Town Ecclesias. Regular overseas support of the CBMJ Annual Calendar of Events and ecclesial activities is much appreciated by the Jamaican brotherhood. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the CBMJ chairman, Bro. Keith Kinlocke at kkinlocke@yahoo.com or Bro. Don Luff at luffs@sympatico.ca.

Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

Trip to South America, May, 2016

About the middle of May, we flew down to Lima to begin a two-week trip to visit the members, young people and friends in Peru, Chile and Argentina. This is a good time to travel to South America, since the heat of summer is abating but winter hasn’t hit yet.

During the week in Lima there were four public lectures, well attended by 13 interested friends, several young people and all seven brethren and sisters. The young people had classes with Sis. Jean on Daniel. As usual we broke bread at the home of Bro. Flavio and Sis. Gloria, with all the members and a few friends and kids in attendance. Afterwards we enjoyed a fraternal lunch of traditional Peruvian pollo a la brasa — chicken roasted over a wood fire. It was lovely to feel the warm fellowship and friendship.
On Monday we headed still further south to Santiago, Chile, for a mid-week visit; only three days, but each filled with classes and visits with the members and friends. A couple of ladies are showing serious interest; we pray they continue to mature to baptism. God willing, in July Bro. Andrew and Sis. Shaye Yearsley of New Zealand will be returning as resident missionaries, which will be a great boost for everyone here.

Last October our planned visit to Cordoba, Argentina, had to be suspended after our documents were stolen in Santiago, so on this occasion it had been a year since we had seen the brethren there — a rather long time when Bro. Pancho Gilardoni is close to 100 years old! We were thankful to find him still very much with us, though a tad frailer, recounting as usual different events of his long and active life. Sis. Julia Reynoso, 88, was well, preaching to everyone she meets. We broke bread at Pancho’s house on Saturday evening, then on Sunday we went with Julia out to Bro. Ruben and his wife Roxana’s house in the country for an Argentine barbecue — Ruben’s specialty — and an afternoon of Bible discussions. On Monday Jean gave a three-hour Bible class to Julia and a number of her friends, with plenty of animated discussion!

It was a shorter trip than we usually make, but filled with the love and fellowship of our brethren and sisters in these isolated little meetings, as well as good talks with the friends who are showing interest in the Truth. Please keep them all in your prayers.

Written by Jim and Jean Hunter, Link Couple
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC
Publicity
Berbice, Guyana Baptisms, 2016

With the coming of spring new life explodes everywhere. In the tropics there is no spring, but new life has blossomed in the New Amsterdam and Kilcoy Ecclesias. In New Amsterdam, on April 3rd, Devin Budhan (oldest son of Bro. Deo and Sis. Jemmie Budhan) was baptized along with his fiancé Sasha Rajkumar. Both of these young people live in Georgetown for work and university but Devon’s parents are in New Amsterdam. It is likely that work will keep them in Georgetown. On the same Sunday Devin’s cousin Susan Arjune was baptized; her parents are Bro. Rayman and Sis. Kamla Arjune. She is completing her studies in accounting at a small private school across the Berbice River. Her sister, Sharon, was baptized almost a year ago but left Guyana immediately after her baptism to study medicine in China.

The following Sunday, April 10th, Devon Simon was baptized in Kilcoy which is the home ecclesia of his fiancé, Sis. Atiya N’djelekulu. Fyrish (where Kilcoy Ecclesia is located) is the village where he grew up, raised by his grandmother who belongs to an unnamed, Christian house church. She and a few of his family members were able to attend the baptism. This couple will be married in Kilcoy July 23rd, but they will continue to live in Georgetown where Devon works and where Atiya is finishing up her training as a medical doctor.

On May 15th, Sonia Rupenarine, the youngest child of Bro. Sankar and Sis. Bibi Rupenarine was baptized in New Amsterdam. Bro. Sankar died of malaria almost 15 years ago and Sis. Bibi raised the four children on her own while at the same time devoting herself to keeping the light stand shining in New Amsterdam through some very rough and tumultuous years.

Then on June 5th, Bro. Abedi and Sis. Bawili N’djelekulu rejoiced in the baptism of their fourth daughter, Ariette. Her three older sisters, Rose Porte, Atiya N’djelekulu and Faida N’djelekulu are all baptized. The whole family came as refugees from Congo to help the struggling Kilcoy Ecclesia. Kilcoy is now the strongest ecclesia in Berbice. The family has had many struggles in Guyana but thanks be to God they are settled now. All the children have excelled in school. Bro. Abedi has added new stability to the ecclesia and has been a source of encouragement to all the brethren. When they arrived almost 10 years ago, they spoke Swahili and French except for Bro. Abedi who knew English. The progress they have made is truly remarkable. God’s hand has been seen in their lives since their arrival in Guyana. Sis. Bawili works long, arduous hours in the market and in her garden growing food to use and to sell. She has earned the respect and admiration of many who know her.

We hope to hear of a few more baptisms before the year is out as there are a few who have finished instruction classes both in Berbice and Demerara. It is so exciting and inspiring to have this growing group of young adults willing to dedicate themselves to the life of service in Christ.

Ted and Dolores Sleeper, retiring Guyana links
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**CBMA Overseas Book Service** welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110. Phone: 818-842-2868 jberman@earthlink.net

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**Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation** provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Jonathan Farrar, 140 Whitwell Way, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0

**Joy Fund, Inc.** provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

**Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF)** provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

**Alcohol Help Line** provides fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. Phone: 866-823-1039

**Christadelphian Care Line** provides fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems, as well as family issues. Phone: 866-823-1039
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.

HONESDALE, PA
We held our annual weekend picnic and memorial service the weekend of August 7th at Friendship Lake, PA. Trap shooting, fishing, swimming, and boating were enjoyed by many. These were followed by our Memorial Service with Bro. David Cheetham from the Moorestown, NJ, Ecclesia exhorting us. Numerous visitors from the Moorestown Ecclesia attended the weekend along with Bro. Austin Kohler from the Telford Ecclesia in Pennsylvania.

Stephen J. DeMarco

MISSISSAUGA WEST, ON
In December 2015, we joined Sis. Viola (Vi) Fisher in the celebration of her 100th birthday. Although her health prevents her from attending our weekly services in person, Sis. Vi is able to regularly connect via telephone and serves as a wonderful example to our ecclesia of patient service in our Lord.

We commend Bro. Rob Grey, by way of transfer, to the love and care of the Toronto Church Street Ecclesia. We warmly welcome Bro. John Williams, Bro. Mark and Sis. Terry Williams as new members of our ecclesia (formerly of Hamilton MacNab).

In August 2016, we rejoiced with the angels in heaven to witness the baptism of REBECCA JACKSON, daughter of Bro. Doug and Sis. Carolyn Jackson. We pray for our Heavenly Father’s blessing on our new sister as we journey together to the kingdom and age to come.

The undersigned has assumed the duties of recording brother for our ecclesia. All future correspondence to the Mississauga West Christadelphian Ecclesia should be addressed to Bro. Joel Thorp, email: misswestchristadelphians@gmail.com; mail: 1304 Saginaw Cres., Mississauga, ON L5H 1X5, Canada; and telephone: 416-721-4677.

Joel Thorp

ST. LUCIA
The ecclesia in St. Lucia is small by most standards but works hard to maintain the faith of the gospel and to preach to all who will hear. Since our last report much support has been received from visiting brothers and sisters, both personal and under the auspices of CBMC.

We are very pleased to report the baptism of JESSICA ORTEGA. Sis. Jessica is the sister of Bro. Edward Anthony and has been in discussions with him and others during the past eighteen months. Jessica’s baptism coincided with the visit of the Truth Corps and took place before the memorial service on Sunday July 24th.
We look forward to continuing the work of following up with the contacts and resuming preaching the gospel in the forum of our Bible Enrichment classes.

*Martin Webster*

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**Work Commences in St. Lucia**

God willing, the 1994 preaching activities will be undertaken in St. Lucia from November 5 to 12. St. Lucia (*The Tidings*, March 1994, p 120)

Four of us left Antigua on Friday, November 4 for St. Lucia for our first preaching effort in that island. On Sunday, November 6, we held our first breaking of bread on the island in a spacious room of the guest house. Bro. Jay gave an appropriately encouraging exhortation, preparing us for the task ahead. He reminded us that God’s ways are not ours, and that we should not despise the day of small things.

Bro. Joe Badlu had contacted someone in the village of Anse-La-Rayé in connection with arrangements for our activity weeks before our visit to St. Lucia. The contact proved to be very reliable and efficient. He had a comfortable and well-equipped hall already booked and had made arrangements with the village town crier to announce our meetings. Evening meetings were held in Anse-La-Rayé from the Sunday through the Wednesday with Bible prophecy as the main theme. On the first night, there were about 12 visitors in the hall along with a number of people who listened from outside the door. Afterward, they came in to choose from the literature we had put out on a table by the door.

The visitors were not shy in asking questions, many of which were challenging. On some of the evenings, we had to close the formal question session in order for the hall to be re-arranged for daily use. We then continued conversing on an informal basis. We found that most of those who remained back to ask searching questions and have discussions were young men. Many requests were received for Bible correspondence courses and the *Glad Tidings* magazine.

We thank our Heavenly Father for granting us the privilege of contributing to His preparatory work in the establishment of His glorious kingdom. I consider this a great blessing which should not be taken lightly. As we continue our preparation off-site, let us do it with all our heart, in the right spirit, asking for His on-going help and support. Esther Worrell. (*The Tidings*, Jan 1995, p 34)
Thoughts on the Way

Overflowing Abundantly

“Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith” (1Thess 3:10).

“Earnestly” (“exceedingly”: KJV) is “hyper-ekperissou,” a quite unusual word that means to overflow abundantly: in this case, “to overflow super-abundantly!”

Thessalonica was famous for its hot springs which continually overflowed abundantly. At an earlier time, Thessalonica had been named “Therma,” because of its bountiful hot springs. Paul was fond of using this figure of speech in varying degrees. When he prayed or preached, he was like a hot spring, bubbling over with warmth and love — and so he wanted his converts to be. Likewise, Paul preached of God Himself overflowing with love and mercy, just as the springs overflowed with warm, healing waters.

Paul uses the same or similar words several times in his letters. As Paul explains it, a number of things overflow or overflow abundantly and even super-abundantly, exceeding all bounds:

a) We have seen how, in 1 Thessalonians 3:10, Paul’s prayers overflowed, “night and day,” that he would see the Thessalonian brethren soon and again, for he yearned so very much to help them further in advancing their faith and mending their deficiencies. How wonderful is this picture: his love overflowed in wishes to encourage them, to help them reconcile with one another, and to restore the wanderers.

b) Then, just two verses further on, in 1 Thessalonians 3:12, Paul prayed that the Lord would make the love of the Thessalonians increase and overflow for each other and everyone else, just as Paul’s love overflowed for them. Paul hints at love’s great reciprocity. As the apostle John said, “We love [God] because [God] first loved us” (1John 4:19; cp. John 3:16). God had shown great love to the sinner who was Saul of Tarsus, and that repentant sinner — now Paul the apostle — reciprocated that love by overflowing super-abundantly in love by words and deeds to others, teaching them about all the glory and beauty to be found in God’s love.

c) Next, in 1 Thessalonians 4:1, Paul “urges” (“parakaleo”: exhorts, encourages) the Thessalonians to live worthy lives, so as to please God — or as he put it more specifically, that their lives of service to God and others would overflow more and more. What an extraordinary chain reaction: God first loved Saul; then Paul loved all men and women; and the converted believers whom he loved continued forward to love others yet, overflowing superabundantly in their imitation of the man who led them to Christ, and showed them how to live.

d) Paul repeats the same idea in verse 10: “Yet we urge you, brothers... to love all the brothers throughout Macedonia, more and more (the same words once again).” Surely he echoes the words of his Savior, who exhorted his
followers to love their enemies, do good to them, and expect nothing in return; to “be merciful, just as your Father is merciful,” and finally to give in good measure words of love and kindness to others — and then “a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:35-38). If we are generous and let our love overflow toward others, then our heavenly Father will smile in benevolence upon us, and His love will know no bounds in turn — like the overflowing hot springs of Thessalonica bringing warmth, healing and refreshing:

“Thy goodness, Lord, our souls confess,
Thy mercy we adore,
A spring whose blessings never fail,
A sea without a shore” (Hymn 131).

e) Paul uses the same Greek word “hyper-ekperissou” in Ephesians 3:20, where he refers to God as “him who is able to do immeasurably more than (KJV: ‘exceedingly abundantly above’) all we ask or imagine.” This verse in its context expresses much of what we have been considering: In verses 18, 19 Paul urges the Ephesians to grasp “how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,” and to know this “love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” Then he summarizes (in vv. 20, 21): May all the church in Christ Jesus give glory to God, who can do so much more than we could ever imagine, according to His great power.

f) Finally, there comes the great assurance more or less hidden in Romans 5:20: Here the negative side of things is stated first, but then it is paired with, and offset by, the positive: Among men, “sin” has increased, but with God — who can bless more abundantly than “sin” can condemn! — “grace” (mercy and forgiveness of sins) has increased all the more (KJV: “grace did much more abound”!).

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift (2Cor 9:15).

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)
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

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, please contact: norfolkchristadelphians.com/norfolk-cyc-study-weekend, or Sis. Amy Lagasse at 757-222-6726, or amyandniq@hotmail.com.

8-9 Calgary, AB Fraternal hosted in Rolling Hills, AB 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 information by e-mailing 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 Sussex ecclesial hall. Our speaker will be Bro. Ben Link on the topic “God’s Creation in Isaiah.” All ages are welcome.

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

8-10 Atlanta, GA Fraternal Gathering. The speaker is Bro. Nigel Small (Echo Lake, NJ), and his theme will be “Faith, Hope, and Love.” The registration deadline is September 1, 2016. Contact Sis. Carolyn Carter at 770-833-8915.

NOVEMBER, 2016

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

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

11-13 New Hamburg, ON Ontario Brothers’ Weekend at Hidden Acres Camp. The speaker and topic are to be announced soon! Please contact Bro. Nathan Badger for further details at natejbadger@gmail.com, or visit our website: http://christadelphianbroswknd.org.

18-20 Victoria, BC Fall Study Weekend. Bro. Mark Carr will be our speaker. His topic will be “Samson: Strength Made Perfect in Weakness.” Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen at victoria@cssl.ca for further information.

continued on back cover...
18-20 Washington, DC 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 Bro. Ken Green at 443-497-3497, or e-mail Ken at hashawha@gmail.com for additional information. Forms are available at www.hopeofthekingdom.com. (Please note that this is a week earlier than in previous years when it was held on the Thanksgiving weekend.)

DECEMBER, 2016


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@csll.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.
Editorial: Empty Words

The Family that God Created

First Principles: Is the Kingdom the Church?

Praying to Saints

Isn’t It Time to Discuss Revelation? (Concluded)

Sunday School: Ready-to-Use Character Plays (2)

Be Ye Reconciled

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Empty Words

“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient” (Eph 5:6 NIV).

“He [Moses] said to them, ‘Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess’” (Deut 32:46-47 ESV).

Signal-to-noise ratio

Apart from a technical meaning (familiar perhaps only to those with an engineering background), this term has come to have a more common meaning: “The ratio of useful information to useless information in any given statement.”

It is becoming an enormously difficult problem in our modern society to distinguish empty words from words which may form our very life, words that can help us achieve eternal life. In fact, there are two problems:

1) There is a tendency to rely on the internet as the source of all human knowledge, even those items related to our eternal salvation.

2) The Internet is so vast, at around 1 billion (US) sites, and an amount of data that has to be written in scientific nomenclature: $10^{24}$ bytes, or more usefully, $10^{24}$ individual alphanumeric characters.

There are of course several consequences:

1) We expect to find any information we want on the internet.

2) There is an incredible amount of information on the internet, both true or false, both valuable and worthless or worse. This makes it very difficult to find reliable information, even if the information is actually there.

3) The sheer amount of information, in the form of Web pages, Facebook groups, private forums, creates so much noise that useful information is difficult to obtain: there is too much noise.

To take the first consequence: Anyone who has studied any subject in depth recognizes how much knowledge is either unpublished, considered proprietary, or in the heads of experts in the field. To take a trivial example, to build a modern reliable automobile in high volume requires the combined skills of a large number of experts and hard won knowledge, almost none of which is readily available. And perhaps more relevantly, of the information I possess either in hard copy (books, etc.) or electronically about the Christadelphian community, less than 1% can be found on the internet.

The second consequence: There are around 400,000 sites with the term “Christadelphian” in them: many are just mentions, and quite a number are from those opposed to us, but that still leaves an overwhelming number of sites...
to look at. And this excludes the areas of the internet many rely on for their information — sites like Facebook and all the other social media sites.

**Noise:** Information flies at lightning speed from person to person, often spreading rumors, half-truths, false accusations, etc. They sometimes excuse the basest of sins, by words such as: “If it feels good, do it,” “If it hurts no one else there’s nothing wrong with it.” These are the empty words Paul is talking about: “Let no one deceive you with empty arguments [that encourage you to sin], for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon those who habitually sin” (Eph 5:6, AMP). Among all the words, we have the tendency to choose the ones that best fit what we want, not what is the best for us or the ones that reflect the will of God.

**Empty words**

In the context of Ephesians, the “empty words” refer particularly to those on whom God’s judgement will fall, who will be subject to the wrath of God. Because those guilty of the empty words are those who are immoral, impure, or greedy, as the NET puts v. 5. They want to persuade true believers that a little indulgence in the normal customs of the time are harmless. And this is one of the great problems of the “noise” on the internet: the sheer volume of “vulgar speech, foolish talk, or coarse jesting” to be found there almost desensitizes those who browse it to what are actually highly immoral activities. The three Greek words translated by the NET in verse 4 as “vulgar speech, foolish talk, and coarse jesting” are all only used once in the New Testament, and are difficult to translate, but are clearly terms for language unsuitable for believers to utter, and ones they should be avoiding. Good wholesome humor is sometimes what we need to brighten our spirits, but the apostle stresses thankfulness over wittiness. As he says: “always giving thanks to God the Father for each other in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 5:20).

Many are the words, empty of spiritual meaning, that we hear or read, and especially in the anonymity of the internet, with its chat rooms and anonymous browsing. How often when looking at harmless news sites do pop-ups or images tempt you to look at other sites, often not so harmless? How often does the language in exchanges, even between Christadelphians, reflect sentiments that ought not to be uttered? How many times do you read opinions that are based on ignorance rather than any appreciation of the truths so clear in the Bible?

How many times do we think:

- “If it feels good, you can do it”?
- “If it hurts no one else there’s nothing wrong with it”?
- “It’s not the destination, it’s the journey that counts”?
- “What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas”
- “No-one will know if I just...”?
- “There is no harm in a little...”?

**Is there a solution?**

“For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long.” As there are empty words, unsuitable words, there are instead words full
of life. Words we can hear at our ecclesias, when we converse with our friends. Words we can read from the Bible, words we can read from the books of our community, and if we are careful many other books that can help us in our life of what we hope is full of thanks to God and our Lord Jesus. And perhaps most important of these, words we hear from our fellow members, whether be it inside the ecclesiastical building or outside it. But we must stress these ought not to be “empty words” of idle gossip, trivial chit-chat, repeats of scandal, but conversations about those things that matter: the upbringing of children, affairs of our community, Bible-based discussions, and enjoying “speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your hearts to the Lord” (Eph 5:19).

And we can also enjoy the internet, and take advantage of what it has to offer, which is a great deal. If you have a talk to deliver or are studying a particular subject, there are many resources on almost any topic and any passage in the Bible. There are many of the classic books of our community available online. Many audio classes, especially from Bible Schools, are available at sites like the Christadelphian Vault and the Livonia Tape Library. Christadelphian videos are also available on YouTube, although care has to be exercised in general on this site. These tools can allow you to listen to excellent talks on your computer or while driving.

We have to work at it

It is so easy to sit back in front of your computer and let your mind wander along the pathways of all the distractions it presents. It is like the empty words of Paul’s day, full of enticements to indulge in the seemingly harmless ways of the world. All things change and advance, but human nature has changed little over the millennia. As the Phillips translation puts it: “The key-note of your conversation should not be nastiness or silliness or flippancy, but a sense of all that we owe to God” (Eph 5:4). For “conversation” we could insert “internet surfing” or “social media use.”

So how do we make it easy to turn our conversation to paths more suitable for believers? How do we walk in the light of the truth? How do we make our mind turn away from the idle temptations of our society? I do not mean we are to isolate ourselves in our little cocoons of ecclesia and family, for how are we to let our light shine forth if we hide ourselves. And I do not mean we have to turn every conversation with our work colleagues into an overt preaching effort, or refuse to discuss anything but Bible topics — but it should be clear where our interests lie, which does not include off-color jokes or rants about our politicians. For our days are just as evil as those of the Ephesians.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. From “The Urban Dictionary”, on the internet.

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

The Family God Created

Families, natural and spiritual

Let us consider the reasons that God ordered human families the way that he did:

• Why join a husband and a wife together until old age and death?
• Why have children that require 20 years of parental support?
• Why link us together with brothers and sisters for so many years inside a family?

Throughout the course of our physical lives we play many roles: dependent child, brother or sister, husband or wife, parent, grandparent, and often are once again so old that we become dependent on our children. Is it just coincidence that many of our roles in the church or ecclesia are modelled in the same way? Consider the roles that God asks us to play in our spiritual lives:

• Child of God
• Brother and sister in Christ
• Bride of Christ
• Elder or Spiritual parent

Family and ecclesial life are part of a preparation; family and ecclesial life are like a training ground preparing us for something bigger, something even more important — something to do with the very purpose of life itself.

Consider why God chose to create our planet with its seas, lands, rivers, and skies and to fill them with fish, birds, animals, and finally people. What was the purpose in all of that? It’s a purpose reflected in our family and ecclesial lives. It is God’s purpose:

• To have children that form a family.
• To have each love his fellow man as brother and sister.
• To join Christ and His other children in unity like the unity of a bridegroom and bride.
• To be a Father supporting His children.

The whole purpose can be boiled down into one statement: That God may be all in all. One family unified in God. All of our roles in our family and in our ecclesia: child, sibling, spouse, parent, grandparent, and elder — they are all roles which God is using to prepare us for His ultimate purpose: One family unified in Him.

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1John 3:1-2 NIV).
“In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvations perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers” (Heb 2:10-11 NIV).

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God” (Rom 7:4).

“Then one said unto him [Jesus], Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Matt 12: 47-50).

When a new sister gets baptized into the family of God, all of those roles can ultimately be spiritually fulfilled by our new sister: daughter, sister, bride, and mother. The same goes for every sister and brother here, we have been called to fill spiritual roles as children, siblings, spouses, and parents. God’s purpose is for people, through joy and hardship, to learn and to grow and so form one family in Him. God in all, and all in God.

And now, at this memorial service, we are before the cross of Jesus. Before the bread and wine — representing the body and blood of our elder brother. Of that cross we read of the following account:

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home” (John 19:25-27).

And so, when we sit before the body and blood of our elder brother and partake of these emblems, we should look around at those partaking with us. Look in front, behind, and to our sides, for behold, these are our brothers and sisters, our mothers and fathers, our sons and daughters. God intends this to be a family. Why else do we share together partaking of the same body and the same blood?

Only we must be careful to make this a family. God may intend it, but we are the ones who must want it, choose it and work for it.

**Every day is a choice**

It only takes a moment to form a family relationship.

- How long does it take to be born and become a son or a daughter? (A relatively short time, the span of a birth.)
- How long does it take to become a brother or sister? (Likewise, in the span of a birth.)
• How long does it take to get married and become a spouse? (The time it takes to say “I do”.)
• How long does it take to become a parent? (Whether though a birth or through adoption: in the span of a birth, or the signing of the papers.)
• All of these family relationships are formed and begin in a short moment of time: child, sibling, spouse, and parent.
• And how long does it take to get baptized?

As we have often witnessed, it takes only a short moment of time for a new brother or sister to begin a new spiritual relationship, being placed under the water, and a couple seconds later out of the water: child of God, sister of Jesus, bride of Christ, and spiritual mother for the young. And similarly for a new brother: child of God, brother of Jesus, bride of Christ, and spiritual father for the young.

Quick to form, quick to destroy, but LONG to build

However, like any family relationship, while it begins in a moment, it takes years to form a deep and strong relationship. And just as abruptly as a brother-sister, husband-wife, or parent-child relationship begins, it can be quickly damaged or even destroyed. Careless or hurtful words or actions can undo a relationship in moments. James wrote: “Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark” (James 3:5 NIV).

It takes but moments for a small spark to set a forest on fire. On the other hand, to build up love, trust, and companionship takes months and years and decades. Is a good marriage built in a day? Do we become good children over night? How about good parents? The answer is NO.

A successful family relationship, whether parent-child, husband-wife, or brother-sister takes time and effort. It is not a one-time decision, taken one day and forgotten. Being a good child, sibling, spouse, or parent takes daily work, year after year. And so it is with all who are baptized and have put on Christ: We have all heard these words: “Baptism is only the beginning of our walk in Christ”. And so it is.

You become a child of God, a sister or brother of Christ, a member of the ecclesia which is the bride of Christ, in one moment of time. We are buried in baptism and within seconds, in the eyes of God, we are raised in newness of life, out of the watery grave and into God’s family, having been joined to the body of Christ. However, to be a good child, sibling, and spouse is a daily battle that lasts a lifetime. It is a journey that is filled with many ups and downs, joys and sorrows, and it is one that requires much endurance.

No guarantees in our natural families

With our natural families there is never any guarantee that our family relationships will work out well. Consider parent-child relationships in this world. How many children run away from their parents? In Canada about 30,000 every year (according to Missingkids Canada). And aside from the runaways,
how many more parent-child relationships are poor or even just “lukewarm”? Certainly many, many more. Some of the reasons parent-children relationships break down:

- Parents hurting or neglecting children;
- Parents not accepting children’s decisions or lifestyle;
- Children disagreeing with parents’ rules or decisions and as a consequence seeking more independence;
- Children being ashamed of some aspect of their lives;
- And perhaps even more commonly:
  - Parents not spending enough time with children;
  - Parents not giving enough love to their children;
  - Children not respecting or being willing to forgive parents;
  - Children growing up and not giving enough of their time to their parents, due to being busy, or moving away, or just not caring.

We could list similar reasons for husband and wife relationships. Approximately four in ten Canadian marriages end not by the death of one of the partners, but by divorce. Many more live in cold or even “lukewarm” marriages. Some of the top reasons marriages do not work out:

- Lack of communication;
- Not being considerate of spouse’s needs;
- Infidelity;
- Not pulling one’s weight or being irresponsible;
- Neglect, not spending enough time together.

The basis of breakdown between sibling, parent-child, and husband-wife relationships is similar. It generally boils down to lack of time, consideration, self-sacrifice, and love.

And so there is certainly no guarantee that our natural family relationships will work out. As already mentioned, they begin in a moment and can be damaged just as quickly, but they require months, years, and decades of time, consideration, self-sacrifice, and love in order to build.

**No guarantees in our spiritual family**

All that has been said with regard to natural families applies to our spiritual family. As we all know, there is never any guarantee of salvation even though we have been baptized. None of us can sit here and say for sure we will be judged worthy to be part of Christ’s bride, his ecclesia, or worthy of being a son or daughter of God. There are certainly ups and downs and there will be times when it appears we are failing in our spiritual family. And so, in our roles as God’s children, consider for a moment that our spiritual relationships fail and succeed for the same reasons that our natural relationships do.

If we are too busy to care about our heavenly Father, to speak to Him, to read His word, and appreciate His hand in our lives, then we will drift away from Him, just as we would if we treated our own natural fathers like that.
In our roles as spiritual parents to the young (e.g., elders, leaders, role models, teachers), remember that our spiritual relationships fail and succeed for the same reasons that our natural relationships do.

- Parents must spend time to get to know their children.
- Parents must be patient and loving towards their young to build their trust.
- Parents must make the effort to teach and to guide the spiritually young if the young are to grow and to reach their potential.
- Every member has a part to play in guiding the youth of the ecclesia, even if it’s as simple as listening and providing a helping hand.

Regarding our roles as brothers and sisters: again, our spiritual relationships fail and succeed for the same reasons that our natural relationships do. If we do not treat our brothers and sisters with kindness and consideration, we will drive walls between us. If we let ourselves get too busy and fail to spend time together we will drift apart.

> “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another — and all the more as you see the day approaching” (Heb 10:24-25 NIV).

It’s important for us to take the time and effort to get to know one another. We cannot spur one another to love and good deeds if we don’t meet together and act with goodness toward one another: at the memorial, at Bible class, in our homes, and whenever or wherever our brothers and sisters have need.

**Our role as the bride of Christ**

Once more, remember that our spiritual relationships fail and succeed for the same reasons that our natural relationships do. What does a bride vow when she is married?

We are all familiar with the following vow: *I take thee to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish, and to obey, till death us do part, according to God’s holy ordinance; and thereto I give thee my troth.*

That wedding vow, which goes all the way back to at least 1549, forms the basis for most of the English speaking world’s wedding vows, and was based on the Biblical ideal of a husband-wife relationship. Similar to the groom’s, the bride’s marriage oath is a solemn promise to love, cherish, and obey the husband from that day onwards. Like any literal man-woman marriage in the world today, our spiritual marriage to Christ will fail if we neglect it, do not put in the effort, or are unfaithful to Christ.

**What is unfaithfulness to Christ?**

The figure of marriage is the figure of oneness and unity. The bride of Christ forms one body with him: *“for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Gal 3:27-28).
We are unfaithful to Christ when we fail to act as part of Christ’s body: not obeying Jesus, our head, and not serving and caring for the other members of the body. Infidelity happens when we serve the old man or woman, whom we were supposed to have put off at baptism, instead of Christ, whom we have put on. And so, when we serve ourselves instead of obeying Christ, we are jeopardizing our union or marriage with him.

Conversely, when we follow Christ’s teachings and example and serve his body as if it were our very own, we fulfill our role as Christ’s bride, destined to become one with him and with the Father, and to fulfill Christ’s prayer for us. Christ prayed “…that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me” (John 17:22,23).

**Joy in God’s family**

The whole purpose can be boiled down into one statement: that God may be all in all. One family unified in God. All of our roles in our family and in our ecclesia: children, sibling, spouse, parent, they are all roles which God is using to prepare us for His ultimate purpose: one family unified in Him. Eternal joy as part of one family unified in God is a prospect beyond compare. All of the effort and sacrifice required to be part of God’s family is worthwhile. I leave you with Paul’s words of exhortation to the Colossians:

“…you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievance you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col 3:9-17 NIV).

*Dan Archibald (Toronto East, ON)*

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him” (Psa 103:13).

“And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him” (Mal 3:17).
First Principles

Doctrines to Be Rejected — (16) Church

Doctrine to Be Rejected # 12: That the Kingdom of God is “the church.”

This can be stated in a positive way: the Kingdom of God is a divine political empire to be established on earth at the return of Jesus Christ.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD” (Isa. 2:2-5).

This can be compared with the BASF clause 19:

That God will set up a Kingdom in the earth, which will overthrow all others, and change them into “the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ.”


We note that this belief has been part of our Statement of Faith from its earliest times: John Thomas included it in 1867 as part of his synopsis among the doctrines as Perverted by the Apostacy: “The Kingdom of God, the ‘Church.’ ”

The belief of most of Christendom

The belief that the term “The Kingdom of God” does refer primarily to the present Church goes back around 1600 years. To quote a summary:¹

Early church writings talk about the Kingdom of God, yet its meaning wasn’t articulated fully until St. Augustine. Augustine (AD 354-430) was the first Catholic theologian to thoroughly define the Kingdom of God. In his book “City of God,” Augustine describes two kingdoms: The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man. For Augustine, the Kingdom of God on earth was the Catholic Church. Augustine also described the Kingdom of God as encompassing a heavenly element: those believers who had already passed away. The Kingdom of Man consisted of everyone outside the Church.

This has been echoes in many more recent creeds:

1) The Heidelberg Catechism identifies the keys of the kingdom of heaven as the preaching of the gospel and Christian discipline by which believers are accepted of God in the fellowship of the congregation and by which
unbelievers are excluded from the fellowship of God and excommunicated from the church. Thus this creed identifies the church as the kingdom. Thus also, the Catechism teaches that the kingdom is spiritual. The same Reformed Confession explains the second petition of the model prayer, about the coming of the kingdom, this way: “preserve and increase Thy church.”

2) The Belgic Confession establishes the identification of the church as the kingdom as Reformed orthodoxy when it declares Christ to be the king of the church: “This church hath been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end thereof; which is evident from this, that Christ is an eternal King, which, without subjects, cannot be” (Art. 32).

3) The Westminster Confession of Faith is explicit: “The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel ... is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ”. Significantly, the Confession immediately adds, “the house and family of God.” The phrase that is added is significant because it shows that the Confession has its eye on 1 Timothy 3, where the phrase is found.

The threefold meaning

It is perhaps unfortunate that our Christadelphian statements, such as the BASF, lack the acknowledgement that the term “Kingdom of God” (or “Heaven”) is used in several senses in the Bible, which sometimes force us on the defensive when discussing this. It has, unfortunately, also sometimes caused internal controversy, as some have pointed this out and have been assailed for so doing. This was particularly so in the 1970’s, a time of some turmoil in our community in the UK. This caused Bro. Fred Pearce to contribute a valuable article on the subject, in which he commented:

“It is evident from our correspondence that there is some discussion at present about the meaning of ‘the kingdom of God (of heaven)’ in the Scriptures. Some would maintain that the expression refers only to the future Kingdom to be set up by Christ at his return to the earth; others would add to this an occasional reference to the person of Jesus Christ as the embodiment of divine, kingly power; and still others would say that, in addition to these senses, ‘the kingdom of God’ in the New Testament sometimes refers to the sovereignty of God and of Christ over the saints during their probation.”

There had been wise words written by Bro. LG Sargent many years before when discussing the Sermon of the Mount:

“'The Kingdom', then, has a threefold meaning. First and last it is the future reign into which men may enter through judgment, and this must govern all secondary meanings. But it is also the power, authority, sovereignty, vested in the King; and in this sense the Kingdom was in their midst when he was among them, searching and testing them by their response to him. Further, the Kingdom is the message through which men become related to the future order. The use of 'Kingdom' in this sense is something more than a metonymy, because the message is an operative power working among men to prepare the materials
out of which the future Kingdom is to be formed; and the relation to
the Kingdom of those who accept the message is more than a hope: it
is a covenant. Because covenant and kingdom are inseparable for the
people of God, the present possessive can be used even of the time of
their probation: theirs’ is the Kingdom. The ground of their blessedness
is their relation to God and His King.”

**Past Kingdom**

There is, of course, a further aspect to this topic, that of the Kingdom of Israel:

“And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are
the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exod 19:6).

“And the LORD said unto Samuel, hearken unto the voice of the people in
all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have
rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1Sam 8:7).

“And of all my sons (for the LORD hath given me many sons) he hath chosen
Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over
Israel” (1Chron 28:5).

Of course, this Kingdom was taken away from the inhabitants because of their
wickedness, and the prophets described the future glorious kingdom.

**Present possession**

To further quote from the article by Bro. Pearce concerning the third aspect:

“In Romans 14 the Apostle Paul is insisting that the right way to ‘live
unto the Lord’ is not to demand that certain days must be observed, nor
that certain foods or drink must be banned; for ‘the kingdom of God is
not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy
Spirit’ (v. 17, RV). Here ‘The kingdom of God’ is directly identified with
qualities of the mind, as in the Apostle’s description of ‘the fruit of the
Spirit’, which begins: ‘love, joy, peace …’, and of course righteousness is
implied anyway. To come under the influence then, of the Spirit of God
and the spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9), in place of ‘the spirit of the world’ and
‘the natural man’ (1Cor 2:12, 14), is to come under ‘the kingdom of God’.
That this is the right understanding is shown by the way Paul goes on:
‘For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God’ (v. 18). To
be ‘in the kingdom of God’ in this sense is a matter of serving him in the
right way, in the spirit and not in the flesh.

“Even more striking is Paul’s description in his Letter to the Colossians
of the change of status which had been granted to the believers. God has
‘made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: (he)
hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into
the kingdom of his dear Son’ (Col 1:12-13). Both the verbs are in the past
tense, implying that their actions have already been accomplished. ‘To
translate’ here means to remove from one place to another, and what
this involves for the saints is ‘redemption ... even the forgiveness of sins’
and being ‘reconciled’ to God (v. 14, 21). Abundant confirmation that this is what Paul means by the transferring of the saints ‘into the kingdom’ of Christ is found in parallel passages like these:

“Paul describes his commission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles as ‘to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God’ (Acts 26:18).

‘Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light ...’ (Eph 5:8).

‘Ye are ... a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that ye should shew forth the excellencies of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light’ (1Pet 2:9 RV).

‘Ye turned from idols to serve the living and true God ...’ (1Thess 1:19).

“To be ‘translated into the kingdom’ of God’s Son then is to serve God, to be ‘in the light’ (as John puts it, 1John 2:10) and so to walk as ‘children of light’, or, being ‘good seed’, as ‘children of the kingdom’ (Matt 13:38).”

The future Kingdom in the BASF

Of course, we must emphasize the primacy of the future Kingdom in this discussion. It is clear that this aspect dominates most the Old and New Testaments, and it is rightly the focus of our preaching and is the larger part of our Statement of Faith: “The Things of the Kingdom”. As such, it compromises just about 25% of the statement.

As it says (clause XVII): That the things of the Kingdom of God are the facts testified concerning the Kingdom of God in the writings of the prophets and apostles, and definable as in the next twelve paragraphs:

XIX. — That God will set up a kingdom in the earth, which will overthrow all others, and change them into “the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ.”

XX. — That for this purpose God will send Jesus Christ personally to the earth at the close of the times of the Gentiles.

XXI. — That the kingdom which he will establish will be the kingdom of Israel restored, in the territory it formerly occupied, viz., the land bequeathed for an everlasting possession to Abraham and his seed (the Christ) by covenant.

XXII. — That this restoration of the kingdom again to Israel will involve the ingathering of God’s chosen but scattered nation, the Jews; their reinstatement in the land of their fathers, when it shall have been reclaimed from “the desolation of many generations”; the building again of Jerusalem to become “the throne of the Lord” and the metropolis of the whole earth.

XXIII. — That the governing body of the kingdom so established will be the brethren of Christ, of all generations, developed by resurrection and change, and constituting, with Christ as their head, the collective “seed of Abraham”, in whom all nations will be blessed, and comprising “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets”, and all in their age of like faithfulness.
XXIV. — That at the appearing of Christ prior to the establishment of the Kingdom, the responsible (namely, those who know the revealed will of God, and have been called upon to submit to it), dead and living — obedient and disobedient — will be summoned before his judgement seat “to be judged according to their works”; and “receive in body according to what they have done, whether it be good or bad.”

XXV. — That the unfaithful will be consigned to shame and “the second death”, and the faithful, invested with immortality, and exalted to reign with Jesus as joint heirs of the kingdom, co-possessors of the earth, and joint administrators of God’s authority among men in everything.

XXVI. — That the Kingdom of God, thus constituted, will continue a thousand years, during which sin and death will continue among the earth’s subject inhabitants, though in a much milder degree than now.

XXVII. — That a law will be established which shall go forth to the nations for their “instruction in righteousness”, resulting in the abolition of war to the ends of the earth; and the “filling of the earth with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.”

XXVIII. — That the mission of the Kingdom will be to subdue all enemies, and finally death itself, by opening up the way of life to the nations, which they will enter by faith, during the thousand years, and (in reality) at their close.

XXIX. — That at the close of the thousand years, there will be a general resurrection and judgement, resulting in the final extinction of the wicked, and the immortalization of those who shall have established their title (under the grace of God) to eternal life during the thousand years.

XXX. — That the government will then be delivered up by Jesus to the Father, who will manifest Himself as the “all-in-all”; sin and death having been taken out of the way, and the race completely restored to the friendship of the Deity.

**General summary:**

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14).

“The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Dan 2:44).

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**Notes:**
Why I Left the Roman Catholic Church
(6) Praying to Saints and Conclusion

Praying to “saints”
As I explained, we are told that the dead in Christ are “asleep” in the earth, waiting for his second coming — they are not alive in heaven. But Catholics pray to the dead saints and to Mary, as if they had already been raised, as if they did not have to wait until the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, like all those who sleep in Christ: “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40). Therefore, when we make our confession at Mass and say, “...and I ask the Blessed Virgin, and all the angels and saints, and you my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God,” we are asking the impossible. In the Eucharistic Prayer No. 1, we say, “...In union with the whole Church we honor Mary, the ever-virgin mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God. We honor Joseph, her husband, the apostles and martyrs Peter and Paul, Andrew, etc. and all the saints. May their merits and prayers gain us your constant help and protection.” However, Scripture shows us that these dead people can in no way “gain us your constant help and protection.” Believing and professing that they can is tantamount to disbelief in God’s word.

Paul writes,

“Beware lest anyone cheat you [plunder/take you captive] through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in him, who is the head of all rule and authority and power... Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God,” (Col 2:8-10, 18-19).

According to Scripture, elevation of the Pope is blasphemy
Despite the above admonition, the Pope claims to have all power on earth. At the Council of Trent, it was stated: “He hath all power on earth... All temporal power is his; the dominion, jurisdiction and government of the whole earth is his by divine right. All rulers of the earth are his subjects and must submit to him”. However, Jesus made the SAME CLAIM: After Jesus had been risen from the dead, he “came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’” (Matt 28:19-20). Who, then, has this divine power? Who is telling the truth? The Pope, or Jesus Christ?
Final thoughts

Paul warned us that before the second coming of our Lord Jesus, there would be someone who “opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2Thess 2: 4). This “mystery of lawlessness” was already at work in the infant church, altering the true traditions and gospel message as preached by Jesus and his Apostles:

“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan [meaning adversary; one in opposition to God], with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2Thess 2: 9-11).

Who is this lawless one, who “will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming”? (2Thess 2: 8). We are warned in Revelation to “come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues,” and “in the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow” (Rev 18: 4).

Likewise, John warns us about deceivers who were among the early Christians:

“As you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come... They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.... Therefore let that abide in you which you heard FROM THE BEGINNING. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us — eternal life” (1John 2: 18-25).

The Apostle Peter warns us about false teachers (men), and tells us to heed the Scriptures, because “prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit,” (2Pet 1: 21). So, in the book of God’s Word, we are taught that we must rely solely on Scripture for spiritual guidance, and not on the traditions of men.

In Revelation, Jesus warns us:

“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Rev 22: 18).
A personal appeal

Finding and obeying God’s Truth is a matter of eternal life and death. It is the most important thing that one can do in his or her entire earthly life. Jesus said “This is life eternal, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). If the above is the Truth and I ignore it or reject it because of the assurance of false teachers, will the teachers be willing or able to plead to the Lord for me at the “great and terrible day of the Lord”? “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him” (Psa 49:7). I alone am responsible for my behavior; I will stand alone before the Judgment seat of Christ.

In light of the above, I cannot remain in the Roman Catholic Church. Some of her practices and doctrines are clearly from men and oppose Scripture. As Peter said, “we ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5: 29). I have thus decided to “come out of her.”

If anyone would like to talk to me about the above, please do not hesitate to contact me. I earnestly wish you well on your own journey of faith and search for Truth. I pray that both you and I may be found pleasing in God’s sight, and that we might attain that glorious hope of eternal life with Jesus Christ, our King, where “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

[Concluded]

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Notes:
2. 1996 Catholic Sunday Missal, p. 27.

The Bible contains very blunt descriptions of the foolishness of attributing miracles to the souls of the dead. The apostle Paul foretold the rise of Romanism “with all power and signs and lying wonders” (2Thess 2:9) and the prophecy of “Babylon’s” overthrow says that “by thy sorceries were all nations deceived” (Rev 18: 23).

One of the articles adopted at the Council of Trent reads; “Likewise the saints reigning together with Christ are to be honoured and invoked; that they offer prayers to God for us; and that their relics are to be venerated”.

To a saint prayers will thus be offered, and the “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” will be practically set aside for the nonexistent services of imaginary souls of dead men and women. So men have turned from truth to fables, as the apostle Paul said they would.

Isn’t It Time to Discuss Revelation? (4)

Events and processes

One of the difficulties encountered by many of us has been the common failure to distinguish between events and processes. An event is a single happening. A process involves a series of related happenings. Change seldom comes overnight, although it often seems as if it does. Before 1948, for example, which saw the independence of India and Israel, it was hard to imagine (in spite of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) that the world had greatly changed. It took the Suez Crisis of 1956 to expose the weakness of Britain and France in the face of the new dominance of two powers from outside Europe, the USA and the USSR. And it was only in 1973, after the fourth Middle East war, that the world’s dependence upon oil was fully demonstrated. When in the next year the Shah of Iran was deposed, no-one could foresee that this was a foreshadowing of the revival of a militant Islam with world-wide implications.

Among the casualties of this process of change has been our own community, divided by the way its members interpreted world events in the light of their understanding of Bible prophecy. In the ensuing acrimony, several fundamentals came to be overlooked as common ground often is in time of conflict. On neither side of the great divide did anyone ever question the central lesson of Daniel the prophet: that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men. Nobody suggested that Israel, after it had been invaded by a hostile force, would be the epicenter of a world upheaval. No-one ever denied that Jesus Christ would then return to save his people, or that the resurrected saints would be able to rejoice at his victory. So the basic expectations of all Christadelphians remained the same as they had always been since the rediscovery of the gospel truth in the 19th century.

What was not clear was why such widely separated views had developed, which was perhaps because we were looking in the wrong direction for an answer.

As one reflects on the complexity of issues that our consideration of Revelation has uncovered, perhaps it is helpful to take a step back. When we endeavor to come to grips with the Apocalypse (or ‘uncovering’) of Jesus Christ, what is it precisely that we are trying to do? A little thought reveals that the central objective must be to seek to better understand the way Bible prophecy is fulfilled, and in particular, to understand the prophecies delivered by the Lord Jesus.

The first point to be noted is that prophecies are often fulfilled more than once. A simple illustration of this comes from the double warning of Moses to the children of Israel that, if they turned away from their God, some of them would be reduced by enemy action to eating their own offspring: “And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat” (Lev 26:29: see also Deut 28:53). Scripture reveals that this happened in Samaria when the Assyrian army laid siege to the city: ‘And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she
answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son” (2Kgs 6:28-29). We can further infer from Jeremiah’s Lamentations that it happened again at Jerusalem during the Babylonian assault: “Behold, O Lord, and consider to whom thou hast done this. Shall the women eat their fruit, and children of a span long? shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?” (Lam 2:20 see also 4:10). And the Jewish historian Josephus reports that it happened yet again in AD 70 when the Roman legions surrounded the city: “As soon as she had said this, she slew her son; and then roasted him; and eat the one half of him; and kept the other half by her concealed” (Josephus, Wars 6.3.208).

An example of a similar prophecy from Jesus himself is found in his predictions to the disciples on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24). Although some have argued that the Olivet prophecy refers only to the events of AD 70, there seems to be general consensus in the brotherhood that the prediction refers to both the Roman invasion and to the time of the Second Coming. Some commentators are able to distinguish between those details which refer to the first of these events and those which tell of the second but again most agree that the words can often be applied to either. This is a valuable clue in our search for clarity about Revelation.

The work Of Elijah

Even more to the point are the comments of the Master on Malachi’s prophecy about Elijah: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Mal 4:5). Jesus was descending the Mount of Transfiguration with his closest disciples when these men, who had just seen Moses and Elijah speaking with Jesus, asked “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” (Matt 17:10). The response they received was puzzling. First Jesus told them: “Elijah will come.” In other words, he confirmed that the interpretation of the doctors of the law was correct. But then he went on, “But I tell you, Elijah has already come and they did to him what they willed” (v. 12). Then they understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

If, as the Master appears to be showing, the prophecy of Malachi had two applications, widely separated in time and in circumstances that were not on each occasion identical, then is this not a valuable pointer to the way we can view the Apocalypse? If this is at least possible, then we do not need to keep asking: “Which interpretation of Revelation is the correct one?” The questions we should be putting instead are: “Who decided that there is only one correct way of understanding the Apocalypse?” and “On what authority was that decision made?” To state the matter even more plainly, should we not ask: “Why is Revelation not capable of more than one valid interpretation?”

I readily confess that this is at first a disturbing thought. It seems to shake the foundations of everything we have been taught since we first began to learn of these things. But I find it impossible to escape the logic of the argument that
has emerged from the passages referred to in this article. Most heartening of all, however, is that it points to a way forward towards a positive resolution of what has proved thus far to be an intractable problem for our community.

That alone makes it worth giving our serious consideration.

In the previous article it was suggested that there is a way through the minefield of interpreting the Apocalypse. This proposition needs now to be developed and expanded.

**Multiple interpretations equally valid**

The book was given to the apostle John for transmission to the disciples of Jesus: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John” (Rev 1:1). Those servants contemporary with John, and immediately after his era, lived in a world dominated by pagan Rome. Rome’s leaders refused to tolerate a small community whose members would not worship the emperor, who had been officially proclaimed divine. However, these servants of Christ were later followed by others who lived under the heel of ecclesiastical Rome, which would not countenance any religious teaching other than its own.

These medieval disciples were followed in turn by believers who saw the universal church threatened, first by the intellectual challenges of the Renaissance, and then seriously weakened by the Protestant Reformation. Their children and grandchildren saw the emergence of nation states, leading to colonization, militarism and industrialization, with its shift of population from the farm to the city. Later generations experienced two world wars, the Holocaust and the atomic bomb, as well as witnessing the creation of the United Nations and the European Union. Peoples outside Europe, previously seen as primitive and servile, themselves emerged as modern nations, some enriched by the discovery of oil, and others resentful of the wealth of their northern neighbors.

All through these momentous changes, the servants of God faced the same spiritual challenges in widely differing circumstances. And, as a light in a dark place, God had provided the sure word of prophecy, as testimony to His promise: “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). We have seen that prophecies may be fulfilled more than once, sometimes (as Jesus showed the disciples) in very different circumstances and eras. If we accept these principles, then we should have little difficulty in accepting that our 1st century brethren and sisters may well have understood the book of Revelation as reassuring them in the face of the threat of pagan Rome and reminding them that God was in control of events. This is the understanding of the Apocalypse that later came to be labelled the ‘preterist’ view.

But believers living in the centuries of Papal dominance needed a different picture to uphold their faith. It was not a correction of the earlier explanation. It was a wondrous provision by an all-knowing and all-powerful Father, who inspired the construction and writing of the book in a series of layers, each
valuable and instructive to all believers, but particularly according to the age in which they would live. Believers in the middle period therefore received what we call the 'continuous historical' understanding. This helped them to understand the world in which they were required to remain faithful.

Disciples living in the world to which the Lord Jesus would return, however, require yet a further level of understanding to prepare them for what lies before them. This is because their world has gone through another series of bewildering changes. So the wonderful book of Revelation was designed with yet a third layer, which has particular relevance to the time of the end. We call this the ‘futurist’ view and it is clear that we do not yet understand it in all its complexity. But the real point to be made here is that Revelation is far vaster in scope and depth than anything we previously imagined. Our problems with it stem from our own inability to cope with its magnitude. Understanding this principle helps us to achieve a useful perspective on the difficulties which have plagued us for decades.

And our generation particularly has felt the disturbing shuddering of a formerly stable foundation, not so much because of waywardness and intransigence in the brotherhood, as because we stand, as it were, on a tectonic plate of human history, as the age of the Gentiles draws to a close and the era of the kingdom of God approaches. So we should not be surprised that the topic of Revelation creates controversy. But with a broader understanding than we previously had we can see the controversy for what it really is: another inevitable symptom of our changing world, with its promise of wonderful things to come.

It would be naïve to imagine that a new way of understanding the depth and scope of Revelation removes all the problems that may have plagued our earlier efforts. The fact is that we are still trying to understand the word of prophecy, which has never been easy.

Sometimes we miss the implications of the passage in which Moses provides the test for believing a prophet. The central question is: “How shall we know what the LORD has spoken?”

“And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him” (Deut 18:21-22).

The confirmation of prophecy for man is always retrospective. It is only by looking back on what has happened that we receive confirmation of the earlier prediction. Our search for meaning, therefore, must be on-going and developmental. It can never be fixed and static. Furthermore, we are given no instruction ourselves to be prophets, except in the sense of being people who speak out for God. We have no license to make predictions, except for those essential and plainly expressed central teachings relating directly to the coming of God’s kingdom. We all, quite naturally, have our favorite personal expectations
but not infrequently they prove to be unfounded and we have no license to claim that they are direct from God.

In addition to this, the prophecy of Revelation was given by Jesus the Messiah, whose words are often hard to understand. The Jewish leaders never understood what he was saying about the future: “I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. They understood not that he spake to them of the Father” (John 8:26-27).

- When he was only twelve, even Mary and Joseph were mystified by the explanation he gave of his disappearance in Jerusalem: “And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them” (Luke 2:50-51).
- His closest friends, we are repeatedly told, could not grasp what he meant “Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?” (Matt 15:15-16).
- When he spoke of his approaching death: “Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken” (Luke 18:31-34).
- Mary wisely kept his sayings in her heart: “And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:18-19).
- The disciples, when they looked back on what he had told them, began to understand: “These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him” (John 12:16).

Is there any reason for us to have a better grasp than they had? And, particularly, can we really expect to have the full picture in advance, when those closest to him, who had spent three years in his company, had to rely on the benefit of hindsight, the acid test of prophecy given to Moses?

**Mental horizon**

The principal benefit of seeing the Apocalypse as a book with layers of valid meaning is that achieving this extends our mental horizon. It does not make our searching any simpler but it does help to remove some of the distracting irrelevancies that can cloud our vision, and particularly, perhaps, that instinctive and debilitating sense of wrong-doing which can so unnecessarily hamper our search for understanding when we move away from a long-held understanding. In this connection, a homely comparison that comes repeatedly to mind is that of a childhood sweet, available in my own youth but known also to my Victorian grandparents. Given a popular name that would today be offensive to many, it
was made up of layers in different colors. Only sustained and persistent sucking could reveal what lay in its glorious interior. This can be a helpful image as we contemplate our efforts to understand the last book in the Bible.

Perhaps, in closing, we should remind ourselves of the words John used to introduce his account of the vision he was given: “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand” (Rev 1:3). A blessing is promised to those disciples who apply their minds to understanding the book. A similar blessing is held out to those who hearken to its message and who not only hear it but also who seek to make its principles the motivation of their lives by keeping them faithfully. There is good reason therefore, for every disciple of Christ to come to grips individually with this wonderful book, especially as, like John, we live in an age when, we believe, “the time is at hand.”

If these promises mean anything at all, they mean that each one of us, by humble and prayerful application to these last words of our Master, can arrive at an understanding that will sustain and strengthen us as this age comes to a close. And we will be able to say, with the faithful apostle in exile on Patmos: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20).

[Concluded]

Robin Lamplough (Pinetown, South Africa)

Letters

August Special Issue

Dear Brother Peter

May I congratulate you on your August special issue, which provides a great deal of helpful advice for reading the word of God. The best way to get to know God’s word, of course, is to put it into practice. Only when one has turned the other cheek or tried to love one’s enemies do such commandments take on their true meaning, in a way that desk-bound study will never achieve. This gives hope to all of us who consider ourselves not to be especially studious — everyone of us can attempt putting these teachings into practice. As the Psalmist says, “I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts”.

Through its second hand book service the Christadelphian Office (www.thechristadelphian.com) is still able to supply a number of the titles mentioned, including Harrington-Lees’ “The Joy of Bible Study”.

Sincerely your brother,

Andrew Bramhill (Editor, The Christadelphian)
The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Ready-to-Use Character Plays (2)

A good play has a message in it. Here’s one for your Sunday school or CYC to do. “The Case of Frances Fault-Finder” is one of several short plays about developing Christ-like character. All the plays in the series are set as dialog between Dr. Goodword and a patient who comes to his Spiritual Clinic. The afflictions that the good Doctor treats are chronic disorders like pride, hypocrisy, and temptation.1

The play is short and simple. Add a few props and costumes and you are ready to go to work. Encourage the kids to put feeling into it and be sure to have someone behind a camera. Your cast and crew will enjoy watching the play afterward, and so will the rest of the ecclesia. The message doesn’t grow old.

The Case of Frances Fault-Finder

Characters:
Announcer, Doctor Goodword, Frances Fault-Finder, one or more Bible readers.

Props:
The setting is the Doctor’s office. A desk (card table) and two chairs will do. The Doctor has a pencil, pad, and Bible on his desk. Give Doctor Goodword a white coat, spectacles, and a moustache. Fancy up Francis and you are ready for the camera(s) to roll.

Enter Doctor Goodword and Frances. Fran has a serious case of beam-in-my-itis.

Script:2
Announcer: Here we are at the Spiritual Clinic of Doctor Goodword, where we find the wise old physician of the soul turning his attention to the case of a certain young Frances Fault-Finder. At the moment the young lady has the floor.

Frances: (Standing) And this friend of mine — she is such a gossip! There isn’t a person in the entire ecclesia that she doesn’t talk about ...

Doctor: (Cutting in) Will you be seated, please, Miss Fault-Finder?
Frances: Thank you, sir. As I was saying — this friend of mine is just ...
Doctor: (Cutting in) Now, let me have your full name again, please?
Frances: Frances Fault-Finder.
Doctor: And your address?
Frances: No. 1 Trouble-Maker Street.
Doctor: Oh, yes. That’s over in Meddlers Park, isn’t it?
Frances: Yes ... and, Doctor, you can’t imagine what a neighborhood I live in. Why, the people there are ...

Doctor: (Cutting in) Let me see if I have this correct now. Miss Frances Fault-Finder, No. 1 Trouble-Maker Street, Meddlers Park. Do I have that right?

Frances: (Slightly annoyed) Yes, of course.

Doctor: Now, Miss, what is your ailment?

Frances: Why, Doctor, you misunderstand me. I’m not here for myself.

Doctor: Not here for yourself?

Frances: Oh my, no! You see, there’s nothing wrong with me. My spiritual health is fine. It’s my friends I’m concerned about.

Doctor: I see.

Frances: Now, take Cindy Little, for instance. She’s a lovely girl. But so selfish.

Doctor: I see. I’ll just make a note of that. Anything else you think I should know?

Frances: Let me tell you about Mark Himwell. Now don’t get me wrong, Doctor. I think Mark is a very nice boy. The only trouble with him is he’s too bossy.

Doctor: Uh huh.

Frances: He wants to run everything all the time.

Doctor: I see.

Frances: And Mimi Furst. I hope you don’t think I’m picky, Doctor. It isn’t that. It’s just that I want you to know about these people so you’ll be able to help them.

Doctor: Yes, I understand.

Frances: Now, Mimi is the kind of girl who craves attention. She’s a terrible show-off. Are you making a note of all this, Doctor?

Doctor: I have it down. You go right ahead.

Frances: Good. And there’s Barry Burdens, too. A great talker and all, but he’s always complaining about something.

Doctor: It’s too bad about Barry, isn’t it?

Frances: It certainly is. Poor Barry. I hope you’ll be able to help him. ... Did I tell you about Karen Service yet?

Doctor: (Sounding annoyed) Let me see. No ... No, I don’t believe you did. What’s wrong with Karen?

Frances: I don’t think I like the way you said that, Doctor.

Doctor: I’m sorry. I didn’t mean any offense, I’m sure.

Frances: It sounded as though you might think I’m too critical.
Doctor: Go on with your story, Miss. Tell me about Karen Service. What’s her ailment?

Frances: Karen is such a fine girl in so many ways. Wonderful leader, hard worker and all.

Doctor: But she has her faults?

Frances: She certainly has! And plenty of them!

Doctor: I recognize the symptoms. It’s just as I thought.

Frances: Do you think you’ll be able to help them, Doctor?

Doctor: I’ll give you a prescription that will do the trick, I’m sure.

Frances: For all of them?

Doctor: For you, young lady!

Frances: But I’m not the one who’s sick. It’s these friends of mine that I’m concerned about.

Doctor: Yes, I understand. So you follow this prescription and I’m sure everything will turn out all right. It won’t be long until you’re back in the pink of condition.

Frances: (Getting upset) You don’t seem at all concerned about my friends, Doctor. They’re the ones who need help!

Doctor: This will help them, I’m sure. If you follow this prescription faithfully for even one week, I’m positive you’ll find that your friends have improved one hundred per cent.

Frances: I don’t see how my friends are going to be helped if you give me a prescription!

Doctor: I’ll give it to you now, and I want you to read it over once before you leave my office — and once a day for the next fourteen days.

Frances: May I see it, please?

Doctor: (Opening his Bible to Matthew 7) Yes, here it is — all set for you.

Frances: It’s from the Bible, isn’t it?

Doctor: Yes, all my prescriptions are from the Bible, Miss Fault-Finder. There’s not a spiritual ailment known to man for which the Bible doesn’t have a remedy. (Handing his Bible to Frances) Read Matthew 7, verse 5, please.

Frances: (Reading) “You hypocrite…” (indignantly) Hypocrite?! The very idea!

Doctor: Go on. The prescription will do wonders for you.

Frances: “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”

Reader: “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you” (Matt 7:1-2).
Reader: “Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door” (James 5:9).

Reader: “So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer” (Rom 14:12-13).

Curtain.
If you would like printable copies of the plays in the series, just drop me an email.
I will send them to you as PDF files.

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

Notes:
1. Source information wanted. The plays in this series are quite old. They are not Christadelphian in origin and the source is unknown. Anyone who recognizes the plays and has information about their origin is asked to contact me. I would like to credit the source if possible — Jim Harper.
2. Play scripts have been revised, and in some cases familiar Christadelphian words like ecclesia, CYC, daily Bible readings, etc. have been introduced.

Pictorial puzzle by Robert Roberts

Explanation Of Enigma

No. 1: Joseph dreams of the sheaves making obeisance. No. 2: He dreams of the sun, moon, and stars doing the same. No. 3: His father sends him to his brethren at Shechem. No. 4: His brethren, with their flocks, depart to Dothan. No. 5: Joseph cannot find them at Shechem, but is directed to Dothan. No. 6: His brethren see him coming, and plot mischief. No. 7: They lower him into a pit. No. 8: They afterwards sell him to the Ishmaelites. No. 9: Jacob is shocked being shewn Joseph’s coat rent and stained in blood. No. 10: Jacob refuses to be comforted. No. 11: Joseph, imprisoned in Egypt, becomes manager of the prison, and interprets the dreams of the butler and baker. No. 12: He is sent for by Pharaoh.

From The Christadelphian Children’s Magazine 1884
Youth Speaks

Be Ye Reconciled

Broken relationships
As humans God has created in us a need to be in relationships with people. Those relationships matter a great deal to us, and when they breakdown, if the relationship was one that truly mattered to us, we will go to almost any length to go back to the way things were, and pay any price to do so.

That is the definition of reconciliation: the act of going back to the way things were before, taking a broken relationship and making it work again.

The ecclesia at Corinth had a lot of problems: they were blending philosophy and the gospel. They argued from Greek philosophy that their bodies would die but their spirit would be raised so they were free to use their bodies however they liked.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.” (2Cor 5:10-11).

They lived in extreme wealth and prosperity, and many of its members would have been part of the cities’ trade and commerce. Many of those same members were pushing for a return to the respectability of the Jewish law, which even the Grecians and Romans could admire, and was seen as almost prestigious. Rabbinical thought, as inspired by Babylonian ideas, influenced most of the ideas and concepts of the Greek philosophers, like Plato and Aristotle. They got most of their ideas on spirits and the afterlife from the mysticism of the Judaism of the time. This in turn filtered back into the ecclesia from the Gentiles. If that wasn’t enough, its members were under assault almost endlessly from temptations, as there was a temple to Aphrodite in Corinth, which had over one thousand priestesses.

The ecclesia at Corinth was in the same state as that of the world today. The whole world has become like Corinth of old, and the temples to the modern gods of greed and covetousness fit in our pockets. And to top off all their problems, their relationship to the man who had given them the truth had almost completely broken down; he had been the link between surrounding ecclesias for over a year and a half. In the same way the whole world today has broken its own relationship to God.

Paul tried to correct them with a visit, but it did not go well: the Corinthians rejected him and wanted nothing to do with him, believing that he was not interested in them anymore. He did not go back, for he did not want to continue rebuking them. Rather, he wanted to return as a friend.
“For I made up my mind not to make another painful visit to you. For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all” (2Cor 2:1-3).

As a last resort, Paul wrote a letter with the intention of rectifying the situation. Its effect was to cause this rebellious and out of control ecclesia to seek reconciliation, to realize their need and desire to return to friendship with Paul.

“For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it — though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong, nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God” (2Cor 7:8-12).

The ecclesia repented of its issues, but it seems they did not know how to go about returning to a relationship with Paul.

**Injured parties**

It is interesting to note that to their credit, unlike almost everyone today, they did not try to come up with their own way to appease Paul’s “anger”, or his authority as an apostle, which they had challenged many times. Reconciliation is not something we the offenders can do, or deserve. We can only receive it and accept it if offered. It is entirely dependent on the injured party to offer it or not.

Adam and Eve did not understand that and tried to reconcile by themselves. They desired to go back to the way things were, but they did not have that right. They had no idea how to go on until the Father clothed them and told them the method that by which He would bring mankind back to Himself.

Paul instructed the Corinthians as to what he desired of them: first to allow themselves to be reconciled to God, and then to himself.

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (Col 5:20).

“We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also... Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty” (2Cor 6:11-13, 17-18).
In order for this reconciliation to be effective, Paul tells them that they ought to behave as friends. If they believe that they have been forgiven and want to return to being friends again, it is necessary for them to act like and treat him as a friend. That’s all there is to it.

“Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. Make room in your hearts for us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy” (2Cor 7:1-4).

It’s somewhat incredible how uncomplicated and simple the way back to friendship with the Father is.

The example of Peter

As a further example of this, we can look to Peter. After denying Christ three times, he encountered the risen Jesus again, this time at the sea of Tiberias. So after the miraculous catch of fish:

“Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, loveth thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, loveth thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, loveth thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep” (John 21:12-17).

And so, for the first time since his death, they all sat down and ate again. Peter and Jesus were reconciled.

Part of reconciliation from the Father and Christ’s point of view, is that you have to act like you are a friend, you have to show the behaviors that a friend of God is expected to show. The Father, through Christ, has given us an offer of friendship. So the least we can do in return, is act like we want to be, and are, His friends.

Paul in his second letter to the Corinthian’s held nothing against them. He was called a liar, a false apostle, abusing his authority, an embezzler of the donations given to him, and was accused of being uncaring of the Corinthians. Everything he gave them was thrown in his face. And it seems — that it was led by one person.
“Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you” (2Cor 7:12).

And Paul’s response was not only to forgive him, but to implore the ecclesia he had led into accusing and rejecting Paul to forgive any who had done so.

“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you. But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him. For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;” (2Cor 2:4-10).

So when we remember our Lord and Savior, let us believe that we are reconciled. That we are restored to friendship with the Father through our friendship with the son.

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (John 15:12-15).

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2Cor 5:18-20).

Caleb Plew (Avon, IN)

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.

1. Time doesn’t change the importance of reconciliation.
2. Reconciliation doesn’t need a lot of time.
3. Reconciliation follows regard for the prayer of our Lord Jesus, “that they may be one” (John 17:22).
4. Reconciliation isn’t much of an issue where there is no preaching.

The Christadelphian Tidings, 2003 p. 338
Pastoral Time in Panama

During July, the two ecclesias in Panama enjoyed several occasions of fellowship on both sides of the Isthmus. On Sunday, July 3rd the Panama City members met at the Colon Ecclesial Hall for a Remembrance Service and Bible Study, as well as a hot meal of ample traditional food. The welcomed addition for these combined events is the extra meeting room of equal size as the original hall — to help for the overflow attendance, plus it is very useful for Sunday School and layout for food tables. A total of 47 were present — 24 brethren and sisters, plus youth and children.

On Wednesday evening two public lectures were held at the Colon Hall with 15 members present, plus two visitors. We are pleased to report an 87 year-old woman (the mother of one of the Colon sister’s) is receiving instruction for baptism. She had previous attended the Catholic Church, and now realizes she had been lied to and deceived all her life! She now attends as many ecclesial activities as she can.

Saturday, July 9th was a special day! Both ecclesias met at a former USA base — Fort Clayton — now called “Ciudad de Saber” (City of Knowledge), where multiple Universities have campuses. There are also many other organizations on the grounds, such as the Kiwanis — the two ecclesia’s rented an outdoor pavilion from this group for the day. We enjoyed perfect weather and it was an ideal location for the two Bible studies, a picnic and a number of fun games. The games for all ages included a water balloon toss and musical chairs. The 50 of us present were also supplied with an abundance of BBQ food during the course of the day.

The second Sunday (July 10th) of our fraternal week we all met at the Panama City Hall — about 45 of us. Brother Tony Howell, former member of this ecclesia now living in the USA, gave the word of exhortation. He was visiting with his wife, Sis. Marcia, as were Bro. Clive and Sis. Christine Drepaul from the New York Brooklyn Ecclesia.

The study theme for the week was based on ‘The Purpose of the Ecclesia’ taken from articles in *The Christadelphian Magazine* in 2014 and 2015. Our studies were based on the above theme and delivered by Brothers Clive Drepaul and Don Luff. One of the many blessing at all these activities was the presence of lots of youth and children, plus a number of interested friends. There is active discussion to provide regular activities for this next generation of Christadelphians.

Written by
CBMA Panama linkman, Don Luff
Submitted by Jan Berneau
Panama — Sister Latina’s Story — at 90

The following is a reduced version of an article from The Bible Missionary, April, 2006 (No. 180 page 26) about Sister Latina Hawkins from the Colon, Panama Ecclesia — when she was 80. By the postscript at the bottom and by the attached photos, we are pleased to report that our sister is now 90.

Sister Latina Hawkins was born on August 7, 1926, on the Island of San Andrés, which belongs to Colombia. If there is one word which describes Latina, it is ‘determination.’ Her father was a Roman Catholic, but she went to the Baptist church with her mother. Her uncle was a Baptist pastor and he taught Latina from the Bible from an early age. He would get the family up at 5 am to pray and read the Bible. Unfortunately, the fear of hell-fire and torment was part of his instruction. He told the children, “If you don’t behave, the devil will come for you and take you to hell.”

On the other hand her father insisted that she attend a Catholic Primary School on San Andres which, of course, was operated by priests and nuns. Once a week, all the children had to go to the chapel “to kneel in front of the little window to confess our sins to a priest. I refused to go. I could not confess my sins to no priest — he was just a man, not God. My father beat me twice because I would not go, but finally gave up because I wouldn’t give in.” Anyone who knows Sister Latina will know that she is indeed very determined. She went to the Catholic School for six years and after that to an Adventist School for two years, where teaching was from the Bible. She remembers that her favourite book was Daniel. When she was fourteen they wanted to baptize her but she would not because she didn’t agree with all their teachings.

Latina married, had two children and moved to Panama and the Colon area in 1951, to a place called Silver City (now Rainbow City) until 1962, when she moved into the city of Colon. During this period of time, she raised three more children who were not her own — they simply needed a mother and a home.

She told me that in the early 1970’s the Christadelphians moved into a building right next door to where she lived on Front Street. She would stand outside the door for the Sunday Memorial Service and Tuesday Bible Class and listen each week. Sister Trudy Gibson would come outside with her baby son Jay and Latina used to offer to watch him so that Trudy could go back into the meeting.
Brother Noel Gibson invited her to come in several times, but she told him, “I will make up my mind someday.” One Sunday in 1975, she did go in, and thereafter started attending all the meetings. She has never missed since, her husband was Catholic, but never stopped her from attending. He used to worship in the house, by kneeling down and praying to Saint Jude, until Latina showed him in the Bible that it was wrong to do that and he took the idol out of the house.

Sister Latina was baptized on September 2, 1976, in Gatun Lake. The ecclesia is her life. Her parents passed away years ago and she is the second youngest of thirteen brothers and sisters, though she is the only one still living and, moreover, the only one in the truth. In her own words, “Christadelphians is my family, and my brothers and sisters.” She remembers when there used to be about 50 brethren and sisters and she prays for more missionary help and for more members. She’s sad that so many people “just like churches with music and speaking in tongues — nothing serious anymore.”

Sister Latina — August 2016 — comments by Sister Nishla Neblett

On August 7, 2016, Sister Latina was thankful the Lord blessed her with a 90th birthday and happy to have peacefully celebrated it with her brothers and sisters in Christ — her family! As an elder, and the oldest member in the Colon Ecclesia, we see her as the “watchful eye” in the ecclesia. She always makes sure things are done in decent order.

For many years she contributed her time every Saturday to make sure the ecclesial hall was spotless for Sunday morning. It took a long time to convince Sister Latina to turn over the duties to other members. She continues to be observant, making certain the ecclesia is clean, the memorial table is presentable, and sisters are conducting themselves in an appropriate manner. Even though she is slower at times, she is grateful she can still move around and do for herself. She looks forward to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ and has the beautiful hope to be part of his kingdom.

CBMA Linkman, Don Luff

Visits to members and friends in South America

One of the challenges of the mission field is providing service to brethren and sisters and contacts in isolation. Email, telephone and Skype are a tremendous help in teaching, maintaining friendships and providing spiritual support. But even then, members need the lift provided by personal visits and it’s important to meet and talk personally with promising contacts as they grow in the Truth. With these factors in mind I was able in July and August to visit two brethren and two friends in South America.

Porto Alegre, southern Brazil

Bro. Emerson Acosta has long been a strong Christadelphian presence in his community in addition to his ubiquity on the internet. He and his family
are riding out the political and economic difficulties in the country. Emerson is an expert in workplace safety but with the downturn in construction he makes do as doorkeeper for a condominium complex. His wife Viviane works two shifts teaching mathematics and their children, Kevim and Ellem, hold down jobs while going to university. I was happy to see the family installed in their new house, a great improvement from the small apartment they had been living in.

Emerson has such a warm and outgoing personality that, as he says, he has “a million friends” and is incessantly involved in discussions and debates with members of the religious groups which seem to proliferate in Brazil as nowhere else in the world. Indeed Emerson first heard of Christadelphians through reading the history of the church he attended as a youngster, which has Campbellite origins and continues to consider us cousins. We spent many delightful hours in conversation and Bible study and began weekly telephone Bible classes when I returned to the US. I was sorry to leave, but had to get to my next stop in Argentina, some 600 miles to the southwest.

Rosario, Argentina

Here I got to meet long-time postal student Ariel, his wife and some of his family members. In the course of our discussions in my hotel room and as he gave me a walking tour of the city we came to realize there wasn’t yet a total meeting of the minds between him and our community. In addition, his association with us has provoked some unfortunate personal conflicts which he is trying to work out, but we have stayed in touch and hope to continue working on these issues.

Asunción, Paraguay

This was my first trip to Paraguay, but a place about which I had long been curious. My main purpose was to spend some time with Pedro Galeano, a Paraguayan brother resident in Brazil, where I had always visited him previously. On this occasion I took advantage of his visiting his native country to get to know...
his roots and extended family: he has 10 brothers and sisters plus nieces and nephews almost too numerous to count, many of them in university or starting out in their professions. But for me the most fascinating aspect of the family gatherings was the fact that though we all began speaking Spanish together, as more and more relatives arrived until a certain critical mass was achieved, all of a sudden I no longer understood what anyone was saying. They had all switched over to speaking Guaraní, the indigenous language which Paraguay alone in this hemisphere has managed to keep alive and to which the people naturally revert to in informal situations. I had tended to dismiss the accounts of Paraguay’s maintaining its aboriginal language (in addition to Spanish) as somewhat similar to the efforts to revive Erse or Welsh in the British Isles, but in fact it is spoken by almost all citizens. Pedro and I got in several profitable sessions of Bible reading and study (in Spanish) and will establish a program of weekly phone classes, God willing, when he returns to his home in Brazil.

The other purpose of my going to Asunción was to meet a young man named Andrés, whom my wife Jean considers her best postal student of all time. He grew up in Argentina in a small but fervent offshoot of the Seventh-Day Adventist movement and worked in that church for a number of years. His wife Angela, a Paraguayan born and partly raised in Germany, was brought up a strict Mennonite. Andrés now works as a clinical psychologist, his wife is a civil engineer and they have a young daughter and son.

Fresh out of the seminary in his youth, Andrés discovered that his church had not originally been Trinitarian and began to ask why. This led to his becoming unpopular in his own circles and ever more determined to come to the truth of the matter. Then in 2007, when he was in the interior of Brazil giving a Bible class on Jesus’ humanity, someone in the audience told him he was presenting the teaching of the Christadelphians, of whom he had never heard. Intrigued, he went to the Internet to check us out and requested the postal course, so that over the years he and his wife went through all the material we have in Spanish, returning their questionnaires without fail nor a wrong answer and, Jean adds, in beautiful handwriting! Two years ago they both formally renounced their previous religious associations with the avowed intention of becoming Christadelphians. Several hours of intense discussion I had with Andrés in Asunción (while Angela and the children were moving house in another part of the country) tended to confirm the genuineness of their present understanding of the gospel message and so if it is God’s will, Jean and I hope to return to Paraguay soon to baptize them into the true faith in Jesus.

Written by Jim Hunter, CBMC Linkman
Addresses for Bequests and Donations

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Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Alcohol Help Line provides fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. Phone: 866-823-1039

Christadelphian Care Line provides fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems, as well as family issues. Phone: 866-823-1039
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.

ANN ARBOR, MI

We are thankful to announce the following baptisms so far this year from our Sunday School/CYC scholars: JOANNA GORE and OLIVIA BRINKERHOFF.

We welcome by way of transfer Bro. Bryon and Sis. Jen Wood from Denver, CO, and Bro. Charles Cintron from Orlando, FL. We commend by way of transfer to the following ecclesias: Sis. Jennifer Styles to Thousand Oaks, CA, Bro. Joe Sparacino to Esslingen, Germany, Bro. Dan Fine to Royal Oak, MI, Sis. Christy Michaels to the Milford, MI, and Bro. Adam Ifill to Pomona, CA.

We are sad to report the falling asleep of our Bro. Lindbergh Van Reuter in September. The brother of our Bro. John Bilello, Bro. James Bilello also passed away in a tragic boating accident in October (See Baltimore Intelligence). We pray the sleep of both these brethren will be short as we await our Lord’s return and for comfort to those that mourn.

In addition to the many Detroit area combined ecclesial activities throughout the year, the Ann Arbor Ecclesia has also enjoyed our Winter/Spring Study Day on Bible Prophecy and Current Events with “Team Billington” from Brantford, ON, a combined memorial service with the Toledo, OH Ecclesia, a combined Bible Seminar with the Livonia, MI Ecclesia and we look forward to our Thanksgiving Gathering in November, God Willing, to be given by our Bro. Steve Davis from Boston, MA.

We also went “live” with our streaming video of our weekly memorial service and many viewers have enjoyed participating remotely on regular basis. This has been particularly timely as several of our members have been struggling with illness throughout the year and unable to attend in person. All are welcome to join our weekly service Sunday at 10am (EST) at the following link: www.biblereadings.com/annarbor/webstreaming.

Dan Styles

AUSTIN LEANDER, TX

Since our last reporting, we have been blessed by several baptisms of our Sunday school scholars. LUKE BANTA, brother of Sis. Andrea Banta and Sis. Amanda Banta Buck was baptized on May 25, 2014. We welcomed as a new sister, on December 23, 2015, SAVANNAH JACKSON, daughter of Bro. Will and Sis. Jacqueline Jackson. ANDREW BEARDEN, was baptized August 3, 2014, and MATTHEW BEARDEN was baptized May 1, 2016. They are the sons of Bro. Fred and Sis. Laura Bearden. We rejoice with our new brothers and sisters on their walk toward God’s Kingdom.

We also rejoice with Sis. Amanda Buck, and husband, Thomas Buck in the birth of
their daughter, Hadley Johna Rae, born May 8, 2015.

We are saddened to report the sudden loss of Sis. Marti Hagler. Sis. Marti fell asleep October of 2015. Our prayers are with Bro. Jim Hagler. She is greatly missed by our ecclesia.

We are pleased to welcome by way of transfer, Bro. Mark and Sis. Janet Morss from the Houston West, TX Ecclesia, Bro. Rob and Sis. Jodee Webb from the Hamilton Greenaway, ON Ecclesia, Sis. Jeni Berry from the Houston Wilshire Ecclesia, and Sis. Betty Vogel from the Kouts, IN Ecclesia. We commend Sis. Tabitha Hall to the Sarasota, FL Ecclesia, and Bro. Matthew Bearden to the San Diego, CA Ecclesia.

We have enjoyed the fellowship of so many visiting brothers and sisters from other ecclesias from Texas and around the world, and thank the many brethren that have shared words of exhortation with us.

Paul Burkett

BALTIMORE, MD

We extend our sympathies to the extended family of Bro. James Bilello, 73, who was killed in a boating accident while fishing on Long Island Sound, on October 5, 2016. Bro. James was baptized on November 12, 1961, in the Jamaica, NY Ecclesia and was a founding member of the Suffolk County, NY Ecclesia, where he served over the years as Finance and Recording Brother. He was a member of the Floral Park, NY Ecclesia until it closed and was living in isolation in Bay Shore, New York when he fell asleep in the LORD. He leaves behind his daughter, Sis. Karen Lombardo, and his wife, Roxanne, in New York, and his older sibling, Bro. John Bilello along with his wife, Sis. Mary, his nephews, Brothers Peter and Matthew Bilello (all members of Ann Arbor, MI) and Bro. Andy Bilello (Baltimore, MD).

Andy Bilello

(A similar note was received from the Ann Arbor Ecclesia)

BEDFORD, NS

The undersigned is now Recording Brother of the Bedford Ecclesia, and we thank Bro. Dale Crawford for his previous term in this position. He has left me a big task to live up to. In June and July we were blessed with visits from the following Brethren and Sisters: Frank and Dorothy Abel (Hamilton Book Road, ON); Marilyn Creer (Greenaway, ON); Andrew and Esther Lower and family (Bournemouth Central, UK).

We are also pleased to report the baptism of CAROL-ANN STEWART on July 30, 2016. Carol-Ann had been attending our seminars and Bible classes over the last two years, and became convinced that we were reflecting the original Gospel as taught by Jesus and the apostles. She then saw the need to forsake all other attractions and ideas so as to join us in our walk towards God’s kingdom.

During the weekend of 17th and 18th of September, we were pleased to have the company of Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto Church Street, ON), who spoke to us on the subject of “I Will Arise and Shake Myself — A Life of Samson.” We thank Bro. Dev for visiting and for his talks. Over the course of that weekend we enjoyed the company also of Bro. Cliff and Sis. Julia Baines, Bro. Paul Baines, and Bro. Brad and Sis. Deb Goodwin (Sussex, NB), and Sis. Hannah Young (Houston North, TX). We
thank all our visitors from near and far. We find that visits from out of town are few and far between. If you are thinking of visiting, please contact us for meeting places and times (email kiwijohn47@hotmail.com). We would love to see you!

John Ching

BROOKLYN, NY
We rejoiced at the baptism of INDERA CASTILLO, a young lady who has attended meetings for a while and also received first principles instruction. We have also been blessed with two new babies: Analia, daughter of Bro. Dillon and Sis. Anastacia Gittens, and Zia, daughter of Bro. Gideon and Sis. Asha Drepaul.

Our outreach has been given a boost by the “Jesus is King” 2016 preaching kit, a gift from Simi Hills Ecclesia in California. The meeting room was given an interior facelift, and we added a pavilion at the back. We ‘adopted’ ecclesias in Panama and Barbados, to help them with sending regular community magazines. We are also grateful for the two visits of Bro. Selvin Sawyers and family of the Union, NJ Ecclesia. We place on record our gratitude to Bro. Selvin for his uplifting words of exhortation, and insightful workshop leadership.

Clive Drepaul

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, IL
The Lord has again provided the growth we pray for as we sow and water. Our new brother, THOMAS JACKSON, was baptized on June 11, 2016. He has attended classes at our Bible Education Center for almost three years. We continue to offer four classes a week at the BEC, many of them led by remote teachers from all over North America, using internet-based video conferencing tools. The same tools permit remote students to participate in the classes. We are also blessed to have the help of on-site guest volunteers from near and far. We encourage you to consider being a volunteer yourself!

And we are grateful we continue to have the support of guest speakers on Sundays, from other ecclesias in Illinois, and beyond. We thank brethren Jonathan Smith, Anthony Green, John Fischer, Guy Grant, and Steve Johnson (Bloomington, IL); Russ Johnson, Dan Richard, and Trent Johnson (Chicago, IL); Randy Kniffen (Marion, IL); and John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI).

In August we hosted our fourth annual women’s study weekend. The instructor this year was Sis. Cathie Moynihan from Guelph, ON, who spoke on “Running the Race.” Last December, we were blessed to have our first baby born in the ecclesia: Isabella Smith, daughter of Sis. Emilee Smith and her husband Luke. We look forward to the second this coming January, expected by Sis. Abigail Richard and husband Bro. Nathan.

See our web site (BibleEducationCenter.org) for information on our classes and other activities. If you would like information about volunteering, or about attending classes remotely, you can email us from the site.

Paul Zilmer

CHICAGO, IL
The Chicago meeting is pleased to announce two recent baptisms. ISAYA EBENGO, 18, was baptized this August after attending Operation Onesimus for the second time this summer. Isaya is originally from Congo, and his large family has a history
of survival as refugees, eventually meeting Christadelphians in Pretoria, South Africa. His adopted father, Bro. Ramazani Emena, was baptized by Bro. Lucas Scheepers and the family moved to the Chicago area three years ago. Isaya has been a great example to our young people especially. Separately, RACHEL STULL, 20, was baptized by her father, Bro. Mike Stull, in October. Rachel grew up in our Sunday school and increased her faith in her college years. She has been a delight to watch and noted how encouraged she was when Isaya was baptized and made a very public confession to all around him. Rachel continues her college out of state, but returns during breaks and when able.

Since our last announcement we have welcomed Bro. Robert and Sis. Marta Marzoughi and their two children, all originally from Iran and living in Sri Lanka. They initially were located as refugees in Kansas City, but moved to Chicago this summer due to work, and because they knew our Bro. Milad and Masih well from Iran. They have been an enthusiastic addition to our meeting and attend all possible classes and meetings. We also received another Congolese family, Bro. Djuma Wilondja, wife and three children, who were living in Orlando until October. Djuma was connected to Bro. Ramazani in Africa and was the one who initially led him to Christadelphians in South Africa.

Needless to say, we are nearly overwhelmed with over 30 former refugees who attend our meeting each week. Our services have an entirely new flavor with a truly international element. We thank God for his amazing surprises and provisions each day!

Dan Richard

CRANSTON, RI
The Cranston Ecclesia has some wonderful news. REBEKAH ENTWISTLE daughter of Bro. Ray and Sis. Lori Entwistle, along with JEREMY O’NEILL and NICOLE O’NEILL, son and daughter of Bro. Steven and Sis. Patricia O’Neill gave a wonderful confession of their faith and have been baptized into the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ. As a result of these baptisms we’ve had more visitors than can be named. However we thank Bro. Aaron MacAdams from the Worcester, MA Ecclesia and Bro. Jason Dineen from the Abington, MA Ecclesia for delivering words of exhortation.

Bro. Raymond and Sis. Elizabeth Calise and Sis. Janel Choquet have transferred membership. We commend them into the care of the Boston, MA Ecclesia.

Jeff Wallace

ECHO LAKE, NJ
We have been pleased and blessed to have the following activities and visits from several brothers and sisters during the last few months for which we truly thank our Heavenly Father for their presence; among these Brethren and Sisters were Cornelius Kellett and his daughter Deborah Kellett (Washington, DC); Sharon Isaacs (Atlanta Area, GA); Dev Ramcharan (Toronto Church Street, ON) who gave a stirring weekend study on “A life of Samson”; David Birchall (London, ON) who gave a exhortation on “Excellence” and Louise Birchall who is the coordinator of the Save the Children campaign; Matthew and Ruth Link who have just transferred their membership from the Washington, DC Ecclesia to Echo Lake; Margaret Ann Packie...
and Carolyn Antonaccio (Union, NJ); and Ron and Patti Kidd (Book Road, ON). Bro. Ron gave an exhortation on “Sarah, the mother of nations”. Bro. Tom Cannon from the Abington, MA Ecclesia gave an exhortation on Psalm 144.

We also welcomed our sister, Jean Drepaul who visited us for several months from the South Florida Ecclesia during the summer months and has now returned to her home ecclesia for the winter months.

Our sister Julianna Joseph is spending the entire fall and winter months in the South Florida Christadelphian Ecclesia as having been suggested by her physician because of health reasons, and will return in the Spring, God willing, to Echo Lake.

We also welcome a young sister who has just moved here from the Caribbean Islands by the name of Audra Small. She is a blood sister of our brother Nigel Small, who has been a very active brother of the Echo Lake Ecclesia for many years. We also welcomed Sister Borgette Charles, who has become a frequent visitor from Albany New York where she lives in isolation. She is the mother of our own brother Keon Charles.

We also would like to inform the brotherhood of the falling asleep of our sister Edith Coleman, who departed on Sunday, October 23rd. She lived to be 104 years of age. She had been a member of the Christadelphians ever since she graduated from the Sunday school at about age 18. She was confined to the nursing home at age 103. She joins her husband (Oliver Coleman) at the Mausoleum in the Beth Israel Cemetery; he fell asleep in Christ some 20 years prior to her death. Sister Edith was a faithful attendee at the meeting and took to such duties as playing the organ each and every Sunday until poor health overtook her about 15 years ago.

We also ask for your prayers for our Sister Jean Link who is undergoing “chemo therapy” on a daily basis regarding the cancer that is being destroyed in her system at the Sloan Kettering Hospital where she travels every day, back and forth to New York for treatment.

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**GRANITE STATE, NH**

We are very happy to announce the recent baptism of LEAH ANDREWS, daughter of Bro. Bill and Sis. Kelly Ellison of the Westerly, RI Ecclesia. Sister Leah and her family moved into our area a couple years ago and have joined us nearly every Sunday since. We were very excited to witness Leah putting on the saving Name of our Lord Jesus Christ on Sunday, October 30th. How encouraging it is to see the hand of God bringing yet another of Adam’s race into His service with the bright hope of the coming age before her! May the Lord bless her in her new life and may He always guide her steps on the path that will lead her, by His grace, into His Kingdom!

We are very pleased to announce that Brother Patrick and Sister Carol Brown have transferred into our ecclesia from the Largo, FL Ecclesia. We are happy and excited to welcome our brother and sister and have already been inspired by their “can-do” attitude toward service in the Master’s Name. We look forward to loving fellowship and service together as we wait for our Lord’s return.

We are also pleased to share that we have been blessed by the recent arrival of several families from Tanzania, Africa. They were relocated from Africa to nearby Concord, New Hampshire and have been coming to meeting and studying God’s Word with us on a regular basis. Transitioning into this new situation has been quite a challenge

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Reuben Washington
for them especially with the difficulty of having to learn a new language; but the Word, which was introduced to them in Tanzania has created a strong connection helping us all to overcome the differences of our cultures. The opportunity that we have been given to help these families to continue in their study of the Word has been a real blessing for our ecclesia, and we pray that Yahweh will continue to be with them to bless and guide.

Steve Smith

KITCHENER WATERLOO, ON

We are very pleased to welcome as a member of the Kitchener Waterloo Ecclesia Bro. Andrew and Sis. Donna Webb from the Toronto East, ON Ecclesia. We look forward to their company and contribution to the ecclesia as we await the Lord’s return to set up the Kingdom of God.

We are sorry to lose by transfer to the Brantford, ON Ecclesia Bro. Fred and Sis. Pat Bouttell. We will miss their company and thank them for their work during the years they have been members of the ecclesia. After a summer break we have resumed weekly seminars, with some interested friends attending regularly.

Martin J Webster

LOS ANGELES, CA

This is the first time in a long time that we have reported news from the Los Angeles Ecclesia, but I thought that we should on occasion provide news for the magazines.

The Los Angeles Christadelphian Ecclesia began reporting its intelligence in The Christadelphian in 1904. While we moved from the city of Los Angeles into the city of Bell in 1952 and into our current location in Santa Fe Springs, CA in 1980, we are still in the county of Los Angeles and retain the original name of the Los Angeles Ecclesia. Our meeting place is 22 miles from LAX.

We currently have 61 baptized in the meeting; having added by transfer recently Bro. Luke Banta of Austin Leander, TX and Bro. Bob Llamas is back from Coachella Valley, CA. We are pleased that Bro. and Sis. Martin and Lanette Banford with their two children have returned from their month-long visit to the Sales, UK Ecclesia. Our Sunday school continues to grow with five who are three and under. However, most of CYC age are away at university or in other pursuits. Recently, Rhys Richter was added to our Sunday school list. Our associate list continues to grow with elderly moving to other areas. Sis. Connie Wiedeman has moved to Apple Valley with her daughter. Sis. Opal Broyles, who is now 102 is living in Lemoore, CA, near her daughter. We have three on the associate list in the Hawaiian Islands.

Our outreach effort continues with a lecture on “Jesus for King in 2016”, on the eve of the presidential elections; being part of a Southern California coordinated effort. We were happy to have Sis. Sue Armstrong visiting from the Detroit Royal Oak, MI meeting with her children who live locally to us. We continue to welcome visiting speakers once each month. We were privileged to have Bro. Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA) give his excellent and heart-warming talk on the Kindertransport and his project “Part of the Family” which is now in book form and available from Amazon. Until next summer, we have returned to our regular meeting time of 11:00 am, with Sunday school at 9:30 am.

James E Land
PITTSBURGH, PA

On April 3, 2016, Bro. Zach Kemp’s membership was transferred to our ecclesia from the Northern Virginia Ecclesia. We enjoyed a study weekend presented by Bro. Paul Prater on April 30th and May 1st on the subject of “The Seven Abominations in Proverbs 6.”

On July 30th, we witnessed the beautiful wedding of Bro. Zach Kemp and Sis. Rebecca Pommer. We pray for God’s blessing on their life together and on their service to our Lord.

Bro. Troy Davis, who lives in isolation in Erie, PA, is now a member of our ecclesia. Our brethren have been keeping in touch with him faithfully. We welcome Bro. Peter and Sis. Pat Hemingray into our ecclesia by transfer from the Royal Oak, MI Ecclesia. It is wonderful to have their help in our service to our Master.

We thank brethren Tim Bailey (Enfield, Adelaide, Australia) and Roger Snyder for their encouraging words of exhortation.

David Pommer

SAN FRANCISCO PENINSULA, CA

Our ecclesia continues to thank our Heavenly Father for the many blessings He continues to bestow on us.

With great sadness we report the falling asleep of our Bro. Richard Naylor on February 1, 2015. Richard was originally from Little Rock, Arkansas. He suffered from progressive and crippling rheumatoid arthritis for some 20 years. His physical condition had become so wretched that his death brought a merciful end to his suffering. On February 11 we were shocked when our beloved Bro. Robert Sleeper also fell asleep. He had been diagnosed with stomach cancer just over a year before, was treated for it, but it recurred. We thought he had several months, but that was not God’s plan.

As we mourned the loss of these two brothers, our merciful Father, over the next months came Sis. Beth De Souza from Baltimore, MD Ecclesia with her husband, Malcolm, and two adorable daughters. We had Bro. Phil and Sis. Bonnie Gilmore from Australia and their two lovely children with us on a six-month work contract. Lauren Land and Ryan Riba from southern California moved here for school. Lauren is still in school and Ryan is now working in his field.

Sis. Sierra Gaston moved from Mendocino, CA to finish her degree in our area, so she has been a faithful attendee since Fall 2012. She finished her schooling and is now working in the area with an energized start up. She is very talented artistically. We enjoy having her with us.

Bro. James Robinson (Book Road, ON), after spending a work-study year here, returned home for his final university year, then returned here to work. He is a real powerhouse of enthusiasm and has done a tremendous job revitalizing our young adult CYC. He loves being involved with VBS each June. He has been with us for nearly four years now.

Bro. Ben Gallagher transferred to our ecclesia from Sacramento, CA in October 2013. He has continued to be an enthusiastic and dedicated hard worker and real asset to our ecclesia.
In the summer of 2015 our Sis. Keren Robertson was finally joined by her husband, Bro. David Dawson-Bowman and his daughter, Sis. Rebecca Dawson-Bowman. Since he is from the Glasgow Ecclesia in Scotland, it was a bit of a wait for him to get through immigration. He is now settled here and going to community college with Rebecca. Meanwhile, his oldest daughter, Sis. Naomi, who was able to immigrate nearly a year ahead of him, has just started at USC in southern CA where she is pursuing a graduate degree in Occupational Therapy. We now see her on occasional weekends, but she plans to resettle back here in a year when her schooling is finished. Keren and David have bought a house here so they are definitely settled in our ecclesia. The whole family makes a lovely addition.

We enjoy the company and support of our regular visitors, Lisa Volkman, Mike and Sharlene Crader and Martha Frisby. All of these attended our LTRTB Effectively seminar in February 2016 although they each had a connection with us prior to that.

We are blessed by the addition of all these brothers and sisters and young adults and look forward to their continuing contributions to our ecclesia.

Dolores Sleeper

SUSSEX, NB

Sis. Emily Baines has moved to England recently and her membership has been transferred to the Rugby Christadelphian Ecclesia. She will be missed by all her Brethren and Sisters in Sussex and love and care for her has been commended to her new home ecclesia.

Paul Baines

WASHINGTON, DC

The Washington DC Ecclesia has enjoyed the visits of many Brothers and Sisters since our last intelligence and wish to thank the following brethren for their words of exhortation: John Woodward, Andy Bilello, John Handy and Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD); David Fertig, Mike Kemp and Lee Huff (Northern Virginia, VA); Phil Snobelen (Vancouver, BC), Matt Colby (Hamilton Book Road, ON), Paul Gaitanis (Richmond Petersburg, VA), Tony Moore (Barnet, UK), Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA), Dafydd Jenkins (Cardiff — Museum Place, UK), Manny Schiavone (Enfield, AUS) and Tim Galbraith (Hyderabad, India).

We wish to thank Bro. Stephen Whitehouse (Hall Green) for his study weekend in October 2015 on “Jesus a High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek.”

In November we had our Family Bible Weekend at Camp Hashawha with Bro. Ryan King on the topic “Jeremiah and His Friends.” God willing this year’s camp will be Nov 18-20, 2016, and Bro. Dennis Bevans (Baltimore, MD) will be our speaker on the topic “1 Peter: Love Learned By Experience”. In December we welcomed the CBMA/ CBMC who had their yearly meeting here and in Baltimore. We had opportunity to sit in on their planning meetings and wish to thank all who labor and work to proclaim the Gospel message in North America and around the world.

In February 2016 we received a letter from the Ozone Park, NJ Ecclesia commending Bro. Nathan Rupenarine to the Washington, DC ecclesia. We are pleased to welcome him to Washington. In April we enjoyed fellowship with the members of the Baltimore ecclesia when we hosted our Semi-annual Baltimore/Washington Gathering and Study Day. We would like to thank Bro. Jonathan Bowen of the
Brantford, ON Ecclesia for his words of exhortation and talks on “Preparing for Armageddon”.

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

In August Bro. Matt and Sis. Ruth Link transferred their membership to the Echo Lake, NJ Ecclesia when Bro. Matt accepted a new job in NYC. They will be greatly missed as they were both very active in the ecclesia. We commend then to our brothers and sisters in Echo Lake.

It has been a little more than a year since Bro. Roberto Lara was stricken with a rare form of cancer that require the amputation of his right foot (lower part of right leg). We are delighted to report he has now been fitted with a prosthetic and recent tests show he is cancer free. We thank our heavenly Father who has heard our prayers. We wish to thank all those who prayed on his behalf and provided support during this trial. We ask all to continue your prayers on his behalf as he adjusts to his new life.

Bro. Roberto Lara has been appointed the new recording brother of the Washington, DC Ecclesia. All future mailings to this ecclesia should be addressed to: Washington Ecclesia, C/O Roberto Lara, Recording Brother, 9240 Riggs Road, Adelphi, MD 20783.

Bob Kling

WICHITA FALLS, TX

Greetings in our one of life in Christ.

Since last reporting our ecclesial news we have welcomed the following Brethren and Sisters around the table of our absent Lord: Stan Newton (Pomona, CA); Emily Tunnell (San Diego County, CA); Ed Newton (Verdugo Hills, CA); Sylvia Clubb (Royal Oak, MI); Cheryl Kitch and Sandra Maggart (Albuquerque, NM); Verghese Kurien, and Thiruvella Kerala (India); Tyler Cherry and Aaron Cherry (Houston West, TX); Jeanna McLaughlin (Abilene, TX); Miah Hefner, and David Ishman (Austin Leander, TX); Daniel and Malinda Beutel (Tulsa/Joplin, MO); Ronnie and Kristen Hefner, Brandon Hefner, David Phillips (Houston North, TX); and Peter Trotter, Jacob Matthew, Antonio and Marcia Howell, Michelle Massip, Tabby Evans (Dallas, TX). We thank Brethren V Kurien, B Hefner, E Newton, A Cherry, D Ishman, D Phillips, P Trotter, R Hefner and A Howell for their words of comfort and exhortation.

Plans are underway for our annual Spring Gathering, “God Willing” over the weekend of April 14th - 16th, 2017. We are pleased to announce Bro. Paul Billington, Brantford, ON will be our class leader and his theme for the weekend is “The restitution of all things.” We hope many are able to join us at the T4C camp as we consider the things concerning our Lord’s return.

John A Clubb

NOTICE

The news this month is quite extensive. This is because the delay in printing the magazine has resulted in a delay of publishing Intelligence, for which we apologize. Although this magazine is “November”, which would normally include no intelligence submitted after October 5th, this issue includes items submitted through November 20th.
The Devil, You Say!

Before the afternoon Bible class, about the “Devil” and “Satan”, some of us had a lunch-time discussion about the derivation of “deviled”, as in “deviled eggs” and “deviled ham”. So I went to the #1 research tool on the planet, Wikipedia! The best evidence I could find said the term “deviled” was a culinary term that began in the 1800s, to describe hot spiced dishes. The term presumably refers to the devil and the heat of “hell”, since anything with peppers and the like is, in effect, as “hot as hell”! (This is cited generally from The Oxford Companion to Food.)

So while I was at it...

“Devil’s food cake”: this name seems to have been developed as a contrast to the already common “angel’s food cake”. This white sponge cake was presumably named “angel’s food” because it was so light and airy, like a cloud — and, of course, that’s where angels were supposed to hang out, floating around on clouds strumming their harps. So the rich chocolate cake — being dark and dense instead of light and airy, and thus the opposite of “angel’s food” — was naturally called “devil’s food.”

A similar cake, the red velvet cake, was closely linked to a devil’s food cake, and in some early 20th century cookbooks the two names were used interchangeably. The name came originally from the reddish tint left by the natural cocoa color, but later the red color was achieved by adding red dyes (before those were found to be harmful). Today, we have Dutch-processed cocoa available to us that improves the chocolate taste as well as giving a deeper and darker, almost black, color. Possibly, both the dark color and the bright red color suggested the “devil” to some cooks. This red velvet cake was sometimes called “red devil’s food.”

Incidentally, my grandmother, a lifelong Christadelphian, felt ladies should never wear red dresses because of Rev 17:4:

“The woman [the great prostitute: cp v 1] was dressed in purple and scarlet... She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.”

But on the other hand, there’s an old song warning about the “devil with the blue dress on.” So who’s to say? If we’ve learned anything about the real “devil”, we know that he, or she, or it, comes in many dresses, many suits, and many other disguises!

Then there is the old saying, “The devil is in the details.” Where did that come from? The saying is at least 150 years old, and cannot be attributed to any single source. It expresses the idea that problems and difficulties are often hidden from plain view, and any new undertaking or purchase or relationship ought to be approached carefully. What appears very attractive at first sight may soon
reveal previously unseen flaws or pitfalls. So read the contract or agreement carefully. Have an expert give your “dream house” the once-over (or the twice-over) before you make an offer. Take time to observe your intended spouse in various settings and circumstances before you tie the knot. Think long and hard before committing yourself to a long-term payment plan for something you don’t really need. What you can’t live without now may saddle you with a debt you can’t live with later!

One more and then I promise to quit.

“Devil’s advocate”: In common usage, this describes someone who takes a position simply for the sake of argument, or in an effort to test the quality of the original argument and possibly identify its weaknesses. But how did the term originate? During the Catholic Church’s canonization process (that is, the process by which the Church determines the fitness of nominees to become “saints”), the devil’s advocate is a church lawyer appointed to argue against the canonization of the candidate. His job is to act as a sort of prosecuting attorney, taking a critical view of the candidate’s character and accomplishments, and arguing against any “miracles” which the would-be saint is alleged to have performed.

George Booker

With thanks to xkcd.com
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

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 Bro. Ken Green, 443-497-3497 or e-mail 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@csll.ca.

DECEMBER, 2016


FEBRUARY, 2017

18-19 Saanich Peninsula, BC Annual study weekend. Speaker: Bro. David Levin. Subject: “Resurrection.” Contact: Bro. Duncan Kenzie 250-655-3228, or djkenzie@gmail.com, for more details.

MARCH, 2017

18-19 Baltimore, MD Spring study weekend. Speaker: Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). Bro. Ted’s topic is: “The King’s Highway”, an in depth study of themes and lessons from Jesus’ sermon on the mount. Start time for Saturday classes TBD. Classes resume on Sunday at 9:30 am, and Memorial service at 11:00 am. Lunch to follow. Afternoon public lecture TBD. For information: Sis. Carol Link at linkgang87@gmail.com.
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@cssl.ca.

14-16 Wichita Falls, TX Spring Gathering at the T4C camp, Freestone, TX. We are pleased to announce Bro. Paul Billington (Brantford, ON) will be our class leader and his theme for the weekend is “The Restitution of All Things”. We hope many are able to join us at the T4C camp as we consider the things concerning our Lord’s return. For registration contact Bro. Larry Beutel, at Lbeutel@alsco.com

May, 2017

19-21 Southern California Men’s Weekend, Cachuma Lake Camp Ground. Come join us for a camping weekend around God’s Word. Studies will be lead by Bro. Dev Ramcharan on “David — Model Man of God”. All meals provided, donations accepted at the weekend. Levi Gelineau leviandjessica@gmail.com or Gordon Hensley simi.rosa.hens@gmail.com.

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.

15-23 Midwest Bible School will be held at Trine University, Angola, IN. Our speakers are: Bro. Ron Cowie (AUS) on “Jesus The Master Teacher”, Bro. Roger Lewis (NZ) on “Who Was The Nameless Man Of God?” and Bro. Jay Mayock (CA) on “All in All (Psalm 8).” For registration information, contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 44943 Yorkshire Drive, Novi, MI 48375, 248.462.5740, E-mail: mike.live@gmail.com or visit www.midwestbibleschool.com.
The Christadelphian Tidings
of the Kingdom of God

Editorial:
Sports

Service in Christ

First Principles:
Only Christ

Old Testament
Bible Students

The “Life Cycle”
of Sin

Reflection:
Social Media

Thoughts on the Way:
Was Judas the “Friend” of Jesus?

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Editorial

Sports, Their Use (and Abuse)

“For while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come” (1 Tim 4:8 ESV).

“All things are lawful for me,’ but not all things are helpful. ‘All things are lawful for me,’ but I will not be enslaved by anything” (1Cor 6:12).

Fall spectacles

In the fall, at least in North America, many minds turn to the start of the college and professional (American) football seasons. Many college graduates avidly follow the fortunes of the gifted athletes who play on Saturday — gifted not only for their athletic ability but also by their good fortune in being able to attend college for free. Many CYC’s hold youth weekends combined with sport challenges. Being the product of an English education, I am free from the compulsion to follow any college team, and as I have spent all my time in America in areas with what was at the time a somewhat pathetic professional football team, that sport also has not greatly impacted me, although I seem to be somewhat unusual in that, even in our community.

However, football is perhaps a special case. Sometimes a connection is made between football and gladiatorial combat — sometimes by those who defend the game. Tertullian mentioned three aspects of gladiatorial combat: the physical harm to the contestants, the moral harm to the spectators, and the pagan cultic ritual that surrounded the shows. I am not sure about the pagan cultic ritual, but if you attend a modern major college game with its 100,000+ spectators, rituals are a major part, including, in many cases, a strong patriotic and military presence. I think we can appreciate the skills of the players, the intense teamwork required, and the complex strategy. How often it all comes down to a “two minute drill”, which of course lasts for a least twenty minutes.

Sports and exercise

There is no doubt that exercise and most form of sports promote and improve a long, healthy life. Simply walking or any other form of moderate exercise for twenty minutes a day can improve heart health and potentially extend life span. In general, the health benefits of moderate exercise far outweigh the risks of getting hurt. This reflects exactly what Paul said two millennia ago: “bodily training is of some value”. And so it is with sports: participation, especially for young children and all those of school-age, is of significant value, as it promotes a healthy life-style, occupies their time wisely, encourages good social interaction, and is something that all parents should promote. Joining a sports team is also beneficial, but the culture in many towns is for the parents to get far too deeply involved as to whether the team of their child wins, or how well he or she plays. Winning is not everything in sports.
I must admit I grew up in a different culture. I played sports, but no parent of any child ever attended any of my games, and mostly they were indifferent to the result. Participation was encouraged, but certainly there was no intense pressure to win. The games I was at as a parent in this country showed that the ones with the most intense desire to win at any cost were the parents, not the children. It was their behavior in the game that was the most troubling. 

(In most of the following discussion, the numbers are based upon the current state of affairs in the USA. Canada differs, in that the maximum athletic scholarship there is limited to tuition, but the huge difference between college costs in the USA and Canada means that for a Canadian student to go to the USA is rarely a wise idea.)

Unfortunately, almost all sports can cause injuries. High school athletes account for 2 million injuries in the USA, while for children under the age 14, 3.5 million require medical treatment for sports injuries. However,

- Overuse injuries are responsible for nearly half of all sports injuries to middle and high school students. In other words, focusing on only one sport, even though the student might become accomplished at it, will often result in unnecessary injuries.
- According to the CDC, more than half of all sports injuries in children are preventable. In other words, correct protective equipment (bicycle helmets, pads for skateboards etc.) should always be used.

Once again, the parents are the ones to ensure the child does not indulge in sports excessively, and always ensure he or she is well protected. Once again, to be enslaved by a sport is highly undesirable, both for spiritual as well as for religious reasons. In addition, from a strictly practical point of view, it is more realistic to study to obtain an academic scholarship. In order to even hope for an athletic scholarship, the parents have to invest enormous amounts of money and time, and the student has to sacrifice whole chunks of time they could otherwise devote to social or spiritual activities, all to chase what so often is a will o’ the wisp.

Football again

“He will roll you up tightly like a ball and throw you into a large country” (Isa 22:18 NIV).

So back to football. Should you encourage/let your (male) child participate in American style football? There are many aspects of football that are good. To be any good at it, you have to be imaginative, disciplined, practice teamwork and put the good of the team ahead of yourself. In fact, of all sports, it is probably the most team-oriented since every player has a specific assignment on every play that must be carried out in coordination with his teammates, — and you’d be surprised how much study is involved with learning your assignments. You have to know your job the instant the play is called, especially if it’s one called by the quarterback changing plays at the line of scrimmage. There’s a lot of discipline involved in the sport. For one thing, you have to build yourself up for the game with a lot of exercises and running that are no fun in themselves. If you do not,
you’ll be easily hurt or be too tired to compete by the fourth quarter. In the USA, over 1 million young men suit up every year, and the vast majority will finish the season stronger in body and perhaps character than when they started.

**The problems — physical**

But there are some serious disadvantages one should consider. The game is physically dangerous. Despite improvements in the safety of equipment, warnings are issued by equipment manufacturers stating the inherent risk that goes with playing the game. There was a young brother in Washington, D.C. who was killed during a high school football game. Is it right to deliberately play as dangerous a sport and then pray to God to keep one safe? I know that we risk injury playing any sport. And of recent times, other than the risk of serious injury, there has developed increasing concern about the long term consequences of concussions, especially on young brains. So unless the game changes in a dramatic way, there is always a real risk of some long term brain damage from the concussions that will most likely occur.

**The problems — spiritual**

The whole principle of football, with its emphasis on blocking, is explosive physical contact. The result inevitably is a surge of adrenalin and the resultant increase in aggression. A good block received, or a hard tackle, and the next time you have the opportunity, you want to “level” the opponent. Not quite like you are filled with Christian love, or have turned the other cheek.

Again, when we might be challenged with the return of conscription, to have played football is a highly negative consideration. At least one brother was refused exemption and sentenced to prison, which he believed was due to his starring role in his team. Beware of achieving your dream!

Of course, there is no direct or indirect prohibition to be found in the Scriptures, so it is up to each individual family to prayerfully decide for themselves

*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.

**Notes:**
1. Playing in the National Football League is no punishment. Rather, it is a great honor. The same is not true about gladiator games; they are often rooted in punishmen. Rather, football is a game of pride that is dramatically moving toward safer innovations, strengthening its case for a prosperous future in a medically conscious society. http://thesportsquotient.com/nfl/2014/10/4 is-football-a modern gladiator-game.
2. “For where there is pleasure, there is eagerness, which gives pleasure its flavor. Where there is eagerness, there is rivalry which gives its flavor to eagerness. Yes, and then, where there is rivalry, there also are madness, bile, anger, pain, and all the things that follow from them, and (like them) are incompatible with moral discipline” Tertullian, (c. 200 AD), De Spectaculis, p. 271.
4. See NY times article “Expectations Lose to the Reality of Sports Scholarships.”
Exhortation

Service in Christ — The Book of Philemon

This exhortation will start in the little book of Philemon and explore some of the important principles that come out of it. This letter is an example of how Paul used the principles of the Gospel to resolve a complex and hard personal problem between brethren. While the precise scenario is foreign to us, the problem and how the Apostle Paul set out to find a solution is helpful to us, and brings us to examine our relationship to Christ and each other.

The scenario at the core of this letter is that of a slave named Onesimus who ran away from his owner named Philemon to Paul. He sought to stay with Paul and serve him, and not be sent back. All three men are brethren in Christ, apparently from the ecclesia in Colossae. There were expectations that they could have of each other. There were also the laws of the land in which ownership of people was the norm, in which a runaway slave, if caught by his owner, could be beaten or worse. Therefore all three people involved could make a reasonable case based upon their common religion and the legal status of the people involved that certain actions should be taken. This scenario can teach us about how to manage personal problems when there are conflicts between the laws of the land and the laws of Christ, or more generally how to manage complicated personal conflicts.

Onesimus’ perspective

Let’s think about this from Onesimus’ perspective, the runaway slave who is the least powerful of the three. His life is dependent on the mercy of Paul and his owner Philemon. Paul commented that Onesimus was not a profitable slave to his owner, yet he became profitable to Paul. In other words, it seems, Onesimus was not a very useful slave either in the type of work he was doing for his owner, or that his temperament was not good. After he ran away and joined with Paul, it seems he was an effective worker with Paul for the preaching of the Gospel. Therefore Onesimus could hope that he would be allowed to stay with Paul, for as a fellow believer, isn’t the best place for him to be a place he could work for the Lord? He may have been no good at what he did before, but he could see that he could be useful with Paul.

The owner’s perspective

The owner, Philemon’s perspective of this would likely have been based upon legal right and ownership. Even as an “unprofitable” servant, Philemon was hurt economically and socially by his slave running away. While there is no evidence that Philemon would take Paul to a magistrate to appeal to law to sort this matter out, it seems that he would have been able to. By Paul’s greeting of him, calling him a beloved friend and fellow laborer, Philemon is declared to be a faithful believer and someone with whom Paul could agree and find common cause. Philemon may have felt taken advantage of, or cheated by Paul. Paul may
have spent time in Philemon’s house, or at least met both Philemon and his household together, and he may have felt that Paul urged his slave to run away. Due to Paul’s spiritual authority, Philemon may have felt he could do nothing against this preacher who could be seen to have stolen from him.

Deuteronomy 24, and other parts of the Law of Moses, has things to say to those who employ others to do work. The overarching principle is of fairness and mercy to those who do not have as much, or are of a lower status, yet are fellow Israelites. The Law would lead people to understand that all others who worship God are their brothers and sisters, and it would be completely unacceptable and sinful indeed to oppress another. Thus it would be awkward, at least, to be an owner of a fellow believer in Christ or fellow spiritual Israelite. In New Testament times, the law of the land, Roman law, not only allowed exploitation and enslavement but upheld the rights of masters as paramount to the foundation of society. Despite this, a Christian should have some conscience and understand that their position was different.

“When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee. And if the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge: In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee. The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin. Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow’s raiment to pledge: But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing. When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing” (Deut 24:10-22).

The Law of Moses goes far beyond simply paying one’s employees promptly instead of beating them into submission. However, the discussion of pledges indicates that a righteous God-fearing person ought not assert his rights, but be merciful to one whose ability to give is small. If one lent some money or items
to someone who was poor, it would be custom to ask for a pledge, collateral, an object of some value to be held until the debt is paid. In the story of Tamar and Judah in Genesis we can see this custom playing out, in a very bad set of circumstances. In the passage above, the law states the owner of the pledge can't go into the other's house, he must respect his neighbor, the one who has borrowed from him, and wait outside until the pledge is returned. The next verses extend the principle even further, for the pledge, if it were some poor person's only coat, must be returned before night so he can sleep and be warm. This means the one who received the pledge would have to forfeit his right to keep the pledge and give it back, even before the debt has been paid. Also, the law declares one can't take a widow's garment as a pledge, for a widow is someone, it is assumed, who would have nothing else. This is a law requiring grace, because the holder of a debt would have to give up potentially what is allowed to him because the one he lent to is so poor he has nothing. Other passages make it clear that an Israelite is to give with an open hand, even to such desperately poor people, the implication being that they may not be able to pay back the gift.

The condition of a slave is even worse than this picture of extreme poverty, for a slave does not receive pay for his labor. The spirit of open handed generosity extended to not taking one’s entire crop, but leaving bits of it for the poor to come and collect. This is so far from the culture of business and making money that we are used to in our capitalist age, that it is perhaps hard to imagine that making as much money as possible would not be the principle aim of people. This is the way of thinking taught in the Law of Moses. For Christians in the first century AD or the 21st century AD, while we are not under the Law of Moses, the principles of it are clear enough to one who has ears to hear. We are called to conduct ourselves accordingly to our brothers and sisters, especially if we find ourselves in a position of wealth and power. These are the principles that would affect Philemon, the man with the runaway slave.

**Paul's perspective and solution**

Paul seeks in his solution to do right and keep the unity and integrity of the faith, so he sends Onesimus back to his owner with words of encouragement and guidance for his owner. It would be very easy in a case like this for Paul to show respect of persons, to favor the person he liked the most, or to honor the rich man because he is an important person, or to favor the poor slave in a desire to look good. A righteous judgement is not about the relative position or status of the people involved, it is about making a decision based on principle. This is the same lesson from the Law of Moses: “ Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour” (Lev 19:15).

The same principles of rightness and equity should prevail for whenever any one of us has to judge between brothers and sisters. We can't use partiality and emotion, but principle. As we would expect, the Apostle Paul gives us a great example to learn from.
This dispute between a slave owner and his slave, if not handled well, had the potential to divide the early Christian church along social class, or alienate one social class against another and set a destructive precedent for the Colossian church and others to come. Just as the dispute in Jerusalem over the distribution for the widows had the potential to divide the early ecclesia there along lines of ethnic and cultural origin, this dispute in Colossae could have divided the Gentile ecclesias along class lines.

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt 5:14-16).

Christ here tells us we are to be the Light of the World, easily recognizable as distinct and different than all other people. Most people, if they were a slave, would feel justified to take from their owner and escape if they could. A disciple of Christ is not to think like this, for an overarching principle is that of honoring commitments. Christ continued in the context of oaths, to teach his disciples to let your yes be yes and your no mean no. In other words be honest and sincere in all you do. A disciple of Christ is to be not only doing the right things but to be known by all around to be doing good, even to patiently accept injustice and hardship, not running away from it through deception.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away” (Matt 5:38-42).

Here, Christ exhorts his disciples to do the seemingly absurd thing of loving one’s enemies and doing good to one’s oppressors. We are maybe too accustomed to hearing this phrase to realize how radical it really is; how much this commandment is contrary to normal human thinking. Onesimus is being commanded to live this. Later on in the Sermon on the Mount Christ exhorts his disciples not to be anxious but trust in God’s kingdom. No one could have had more anxiety for the future than a runaway slave being sent back to his owner. These are the fundamental teachings of Christ that Paul builds upon, and gives explicit teaching for masters and servants, as well as the other key relationships people can be in at various times in their lives.

The parts of Paul’s letters where he expounds how a Christian should behave if they are a servant, and for believing masters, are found in a few different places, and the basic ideas are repeated. Paul also instructs believers how to conduct themselves in Christ in their other relationships, including how we need to serve our human masters in faithfulness and sincerity, doing all as if to Christ.
“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him” (Eph 6:5-9).

“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons. Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven” (Col 3:22-4:1).

The call of a Christian is to be a servant. Therefore this little book has a deeper message for us. As if to highlight this principle, when Paul addressed Philemon at the beginning of the letter, it is as dear friend and fellow worker. Likewise, in the chapter of salutations at the end of Colossians, Paul referred to a brother Tychicus as a faithful minister and fellow slave in the lord and Onesimus, a faithful and dear brother who came from Colossae. It seems this is indeed the same Onesimus that is the subject of the letter to Philemon, and Paul is sending these two as messengers to tell them of the preaching work they have been engaged with. It seems possible then that this letter to the Colossians was written at the time Onesimus was with Paul. If we can accept a further speculation, this may be the circumstance in which Paul sent the once unprofitable slave back to his owner, though now he is a faithful brother and living up to the meaning of his name, Profitable, at least in Paul’s estimation.

**Conclusion**

As we begin to bring this exhortation to its focus on Christ, we need to consider one more passage.

“Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ’s servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men” (1Cor 7:21-23).

This teaches that if we were called while free we are Christ’s slave, yet those called while slaves are a special case, for they have the honored position of being the Lord’s Freemen if they were able to attain freedom through legal means, by either buying it or being freed. Slaves were a significant part of the population and probably many in the early Christian churches were slaves, so Paul gives instructions to slaves to seek to be free if they could and use that freedom in Christ’s service, but for most who could not hope for that, they were
not to be troubled. However, this is a parable for us, who have opportunities and immense privileges by virtue of living in the place we live. We are called to use what we have in Christ’s service, for we are to see ourselves as Christ’s servants. Furthermore, by nature we are all slaves to sin, and have been bought for a price. Our former slave master was sin, the most cruel of slave owners who will rule us and lead us only to death if we are not freed from him. Christ has redeemed us with his blood, the sacrifice of his life, to show us the way we must go. Therefore, we are asked, in exchange to voluntarily serve him, not out of fear of punishment, but out of love and gratitude.

“Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them. If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself: And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever” (Exod 21:1-6).

This principle of voluntary service as the highest form of service is taught also back in the Law of Moses. Exodus 20 is the Ten Commandments, so this principle of owners and their Israelite servants is one of the first things the Law puts forward. The servant who would not leave his master when he was allowed to, but chose to stay out of love for his family and his master’s house could be struck through the ear, permanently marking him as a servant forever (Exod 21:6). This would be a scar they would carry, but would be a sign of honor, commitment and love. For us, this striking through was done at the cross of Christ, and is effected in our lives by our voluntary accepting of it and carrying it out in our lives.

We must not be like the disciples the night in which Jesus was arrested who fled from their lord; behavior more like that of runaway Onesimus than faithful servants and disciples believing in the Messiah and his message.

We have considered the short book of Philemon and the scenario in it where Christian love is tested, where a difficult decision must be made to resolve a painful dispute between brothers. From this we examine the principles from the Old and New Testaments about serving human masters, and ultimately about our service to Christ, and by doing so being made free from slavery to sin. The highest form of service in the Bible is not servitude by fear and force, but by voluntary service out of love, which the runaway slave Onesimus and ourselves are all called to.

The ritual sharing of bread and wine is the symbol appointed to us of our relationship to Christ. By taking bread, the symbol of his body, we associate ourselves with our master and declare our wish to carry out, in some small way, his life in our life. To take on the name of Christ is, by definition, to be a servant of a servant, but it is this service that is paradoxically freedom from serving sin.
Wine is the symbol appointed to us of his life sacrificed to defeat the power of sin. By taking this wine, and sharing it from hand to hand among those of our shared faith, we declare that we will sacrifice our lives to find life in his service.

We are called to examine ourselves, to take heed of our walk before him, for we are warned that “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1Cor 10:12). We are not to be complacent or confident in ourselves in any way, for everything we have has been given to us by grace.

Let us remember the slave in Exodus, thinking of ourselves as this servant who loves our master, our master’s house, and would not want to go anywhere else. Let us serve our Lord forever.

“And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever” (Exod 21:5-6).

Wesley Butler (Vancouver, BC)

Slaves Who Were “Christadelphians”

In the Southern United States before the civil war, at least two believers were named as slave owners, each of whom had at least one slave who was baptized. Owners and slaves alike were in full fellowship with Dr. Thomas. There were undoubtedly others, but the first recorded believing slave is a “Brother Braxton,” owned by Lemuel Edwards, a wealthy Virginia planter from Lanesville. It was highly unlikely that Dr. Edwards had just one slave, but only one is recorded as being a brother.

Much later, in 1860, Dr. Thomas noted that “the congregation of the faithful in Jefferson, Mississippi, now numbers twenty; of whom one is a slave belonging to sister Maghee, who can read, and is quite intelligent in the gospel, and is highly esteemed by the whites who know her; and being Christ’s freed woman, she is quite contented in the calling in which she was called; and much happier than the white slaves around her, who love and hug the chains of slavery which bind them to the chariot wheels of their hard taskmaster, the Devil [or human evil personified.]”

Thus there were at least one brother and one sister in Christ who were slaves of their Christian masters. How common this was I do not know with certainty: but as it was illegal in the South at the time to teach slaves to read and write, there cannot have been many capable of reading the Bible for themselves and therefore it would be more difficult, although not impossible, for them to make a good confession. But there must have been, in many Southern ecclesias, “a First Century air,” slaves and masters worshipping together, joined by the bonds of Christ.

(Adapted from Chapter 23 of “John Thomas, his Friends and his Faith”)

WWW.TIDINGS.ORG
Doctrines to Be Rejected, (17) Only Christ

Doctrines to be Rejected #13: That the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ merely.

This can be restated in a positive way: The gospel includes the covenants of promise granted to Abraham and David and involves the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth: “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Gal 3:8-9).

History

There was no mention in the synopsis by John Thomas, but Robert Roberts in the first Birmingham Statement I have seen, written in 1868, in the section on “Fables to be refused” said:

XXIV. — THREE-FACT GOSPEL. That the gospel is not the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ merely, but the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. — (Acts 8:12; 28:30-31)

Bro. Thomas wrote Elpis Israel: An Exposition of the Kingdom of God, with Reference to the Time of the End and the Age to Come, because the churches had lost sight of the things of the kingdom. The robust faith of the apostles had become a vague gospel of an after-life not requiring the resurrection of the dead, a judgment, nor the restoration of Israel. Christianity hardly required adherence to particular standards, but the most depraved souls winged their way to heaven. Elpis Israel, and similar works which followed it, represented the restatement of a gospel which, though never altogether eclipsed, had been ignored by generations of theologians. To quote:

“The truth is defined as ‘the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ’. This phrase covers the entire ground upon which the ‘one faith’, and the ‘one hope’, of the gospel are based: so that if a man believe only the ‘things of the kingdom’, his faith is defective in the ‘things of the name’; or, if his belief be confined to the ‘things of the name’, it is deficient in the ‘things of the kingdom’. There can be no
separation of them recognized in a ‘like precious faith’ to that of the apostles. They believed and taught all these things” (Elpis Israel, Part II, chapter 1, page 189).

“Repent ye and believe the gospel”

It is difficult, of course, to summarize “the gospel”. It encompasses almost the whole of our message, and occupies the largest parts of many of the books outlining our beliefs. I will, however, quote largely from a summary written by a former editor of The Christadelphian, Alfred Nichols, in his magazine.¹ We would note some inevitable overlap with the topic of the Kingdom, covered last month (The Tidings, November 2016).

We are accustomed to the somewhat vague conceptions of the gospel that are held outside our body, and to some current and radical ideas that “the gospel teaches us that the death of God in Christ has freed men from the tyranny of a transcendent Power”. But are we sure that we know and understand all the implications of the gospel ourselves?

Our Statement of Faith says that “the gospel consists of ‘the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ’.” So it does, but it means even more. The way the word is used in the Scriptures shows what a great divine conception it is, and how wide and deep are its implications.

The term gospel (Gk. Euangelion) originally denoted a reward for the bearer of good tidings; later the idea of reward disappeared and the word stood for the good news itself. This is the meaning of the New Testament word. But if it means “good news” — good news of what?

The gospel of God

Peter and Paul refer to “the gospel of God” for this is where the good news began: He is its source, its glory and its power. And it is, supremely, the good news that God is involved in the affairs of men to the extent that He has established a divine-human relationship of love and purpose.

Speaking of his attitude to bonds and afflictions, the Apostle Paul referred to this relationship thus: “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

This gospel of grace was what the ministry of Paul was about and his epistles abound in the word grace, for without it there would have been no savior nor the promise of God’s Kingdom on earth.

Grace is of the very nature of God: He revealed it to Moses who taught it to Israel; it was manifested by Jesus to the Apostles and the multitudes; and it was preached by the Apostles to the ecclesias. We should lack gratitude and feeling if we were not moved by all that the Apostle Paul wrote about this: not least of sinners “being justified freely by God’s grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24).
This is the heart of the gospel message: the good news that the compassion, grace and mercy of God overflowed in His sacrifice of love so that as Jesus declared: “God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). It is through the loving, obedient sacrifice of Jesus that He is reconciling to Himself all who will believe in faith.

It is this gospel of God which has His grace at its center, that gives meaning and beauty to the life and death of Jesus and that gives the purpose to what God intends to do, through Jesus and the saints, in His Kingdom on earth.

The Father’s grace in mightily blessing us with His call, unworthy though we be, is a supreme reason for thanksgiving daily to be on our lips and in our hearts.

The gospel of Christ

Like Father, like Son: all the love that God revealed to Moses shortly before the revelation of the ritual of the Law, Jesus revealed in his reading from the prophecy of Isaiah in the synagogue incident at the outset of his ministry. Second only to the self-sacrificing love of the Father, is the sacrificial denial of self in life, and the sacrifice of life in death to which Jesus submitted himself. The good news that results from this is that his perfect obedience won him the power to unlock the grave for others.

Jesus himself preached this “gospel” when he said: “Everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40). And he triumphantly proclaimed the fact of his good news when he told John on Patmos: “… Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Rev 1:17-18).

The Apostle Paul refers to the burial and resurrection of Jesus as “the gospel which I preached unto you”, and this accounts for his use of the term “the gospel of Christ” which occurs in several of his letters. Thus “gospel” covers the whole field of salvation: the promise of peace for the nations and glory for the saints.

What is of even greater importance for us now, is the assurance of this good news that God, the Father, is actively concerned, through Jesus, with our daily lives, and each second of time that ticks away is the guarantee that He never leaves nor forsakes us. All this was made possible by the sacrifice of the Son who promised that as the Comforter (parakletos) he too, would come alongside, or be with us.

There could hardly be better news for us and the world: or a greater gospel to preach to others.

The gospel of the Kingdom

Jesus “… came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14-15). There, he was referring not to the kingdom which he will establish at his second coming, but to his own sovereignty as the Messiah-King.
The primary sense of the Greek word basileia (translated kingdom) is sovereignty or kingly rule.

That is why Jesus emphasized that the Kingdom was “at hand” or “had come nigh”. He expressed the same idea to the Pharisees on their asking him “when the kingdom of God should come” for he answered: “Behold the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21) or, as the Revised Version renders it: “is in the midst of you”.

There is a parallel here with David whose throne Jesus is to inherit. David was anointed King long before he sat on the throne, and before he came to power he began gathering loyal servants who would help him in his sovereign task. When Jesus told the chief priests and elders that “the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof”, he was still speaking of a present sovereignty.

The chain of events which culminated in his death and resurrection led to the gathering of a sovereign host of servants who become “an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession” (1Pet 2:9 ASV). That is why Paul, who wrote of Jesus being “set at God’s right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph 1:20), could also write that God “hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6). This is indeed a sovereign status, which we ill deserve; but woe betide us if we prove traitors to our high calling!

A sovereign “nation” being prepared for the Lord who will sit as King needs a people and territory over which to rule, and it is for this consummation that Jesus and the saints wait. Jesus spoke of the time when he would “sit on his throne of glory” and told the disciples that they would “sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelves tribes of Israel” (Matt 19:28). Paul, probably taking his clue from the prophecy of Jesus, that when he sits on his throne of glory “before him shall be gathered all nations” (Matt 25:32), wrote that the saints shall judge the world. A sovereign role as earthly princes demands a dedicated response to discipline and training. Our response to a much higher role should be not less, but rather more.

The gospel of our salvation

Paul, writing to the Ephesians and the Colossians, wrote of another aspect of the Gospel: “The word of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (Eph 1:13). And as he shows in his letter to Titus, God, the Father, and Jesus, the Son, cannot be separated in their work of salvation. In his opening words he describes both of them as “Savior”. Thus, the gospel of salvation is the good news that both are totally involved in the salvation and life of those who believe. There could hardly be a better illustration of this participation in the affairs of the saints than that provided by Jesus in his parable of the lost sheep, which concluded with the promise that there would be “joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:7), thus linking the families of earth and heaven together.

Unless we are lacking in spiritual sense and faith, we want it this way. And when we are in trouble of any kind we plead in prayer through Jesus for the Father’s involvement in our problems, so that He can help us to solve them. But we are
not so ready totally to involve ourselves with Him and His purposes, and we are generally reluctant to commit all the serious decisions of our lives to His judgments and will.

If we make demands upon God, He makes demands upon us: “This is the man to whom I will look, says the Lord, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word” (Isa 66:2). The word “look” means that He will look at those who respond to His call with close attention.

The gospel of the grace of God which has such a wide application includes the good news of the commitment of men to the ministry of this grace — but it is here that we often fail greatly, because we so like to keep the course of our lives in our own hands. Jesus made clear that this does not satisfy his Father nor does it please him. He taught, and lived, denial of self: a complete and absolute denial, and Paul wrote that to “present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” was no more than our “reasonable service” (Rom 12:1). This gospel, in all its aspects, is a way of peace, and not of strife; it is a way of walking in fellowship or partnership with God, with Jesus, and with one another. It is a way which abhors the kind of “divisions” about which Paul wrote to the Corinthians: the formation of groups within an ecclesia — a practice which weakens the work of grace among its members. Above all it tarnishes the vision of a people being prepared for the all-in-all of the Father.

We have been privileged to receive a gospel of such grace that nothing that we can do will ever make us merit its rewards, but at least we can continue to strive to “walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory” (1Thess 2:12).

Peter Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI) and Peter Hemingray (Pittsburgh, PA)

Notes:

Special Invitation

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

You, your family, and friends are invited to the 42nd Annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 31st to Aug 6th, 2017.

Bro. George Booker: “In the Shadow of the Cross”
Bro. Mark Whittaker: “The Faithful Remnant”
Bro. Ed Carpenter: “The True God and Eternal Life”

Contact Bro. Brad Rek at 330-609-6957, or brad.rek@gmail.com. Visit our website at www.abrahamicfaithgathering.org for more information and to view talks from last year.
Old Testament Bible Students

Old Testament men of faith

With the five books of Moses in print, many Old Testament men of faith had recourse to the divine record for times of adversity and prosperity. We would like to consider a few of these faithful ones who through patience and comfort of the Scriptures had un-wavering hope.

Ezra in around 450 BC led a second group of post-Babylon Jews to rebuild Jerusalem and soon found out that there was an unexpected transgression: “Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonied until the evening sacrifice” (Ezra 9:4). In his penitent prayer he made reference to the forsaking of God’s commandments: “And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets” (Ezra 9:10-11). So the scribe Ezra would have been familiar with his Bible to have such resolute faith in dealing with the crisis in the camp.

Likewise, Daniel with the captives in Babylon and before a prayer similar to Ezra’s in the first year of Darius says this:

“I, Daniel understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah...” (Dan 9:2).

Here is another excellent Bible student! In his prayer that followed, there are expressions which highlight his familiarity with scriptures, such as

“neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets... Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which he set before us by His servants the prophets;...the curse... and the oath... written in the Law of Moses” (Dan 9:6,10-13).

Daniel and Ezra lived in critical times of Jewish history. Daniel was with the captives, approx. 550 BC. With the 70 years not yet complete, his impatience was perhaps eating away his endurance. Ezra was with the second batch of patriots, 450 BC, clearing the ruins of the city walls and temple in preparation for reconstruction. Both men needed fortitude which undoubtedly came from their love of the word embedded in their souls.

We move to another pair of Bible students, Gideon and Jephthah. With the passing of Moses and Joshua, the developing nation faced grave challenges. It was the time when “In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jdgs 17:6). Canaanite tribes unsettled the demoralized Israelites. Occasionally, “the LORD raised up judges who delivered them...” (Jdgs 2:16,18). Two of such judges were Gideon and Jephthah.
The oppressors were the Midianites, 1250 BC; and Israel was in dire trouble, because food resources were destroyed. Gideon was approached by the angel, “the LORD is with thee…” (Jdgs 6:12). His rejoinder was, “Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites” (Jdgs 6:13-14). So, Gideon had Bible instruction, orally, and a written record would probably have been available. His familiarity with Scripture, then, enabled him to have a meaningful dialogue with the angel, even as Habakkuk did:

“Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?” (Hab 1:12-13).

During the time of another famous judge, Jephthah, the Ammonites were now the aggressors, and their king made this claim, “because Israel took away my land, from Arnon even to Jabbok, and unto Jordan, now therefore restore those lands again peaceably” (Jdgs 11:13). Jephthah, in an amazing display of Jewish history, rebutted thus: “Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor of Arnon” (Jdgs 11:15), and then went on to state how Israel, in their wilderness journey, negotiated unsuccessfully with the Edomites and Moabites; the same approach failed with the Amorites, who declared war! The result? “…The LORD God of Israel disposed the Amorites” (Jdgs 11:16-23). Jephthah’s case was finally summed up thus, “while Israel dwelt in Heshbon…Aroer…Arnon for 300 years, why therefore did ye not recover them [the disputed territories]?” (Jdgs 11.26). Jephthah’s Bible knowledge was truly a defense against the enemy of Israel.

David

One cannot complete this “Living by Faith…” study without reference to Israel’s greatest Old Testament king, David! The kings were to make a personal copy of the law upon their coronation. This must have fostered a unique sense of devotion to the divine cause. David, in addition, showed himself an excellent Bible student as the following outline (by no means complete) illustrates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalm</th>
<th>Suggested Source</th>
<th>Lesson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:2</td>
<td>Josh 1:8</td>
<td>Meditation in God’s law, day and night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:8</td>
<td>Lev 25:18</td>
<td>Dwelling safely under God’s care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:12</td>
<td>Deut 32:41</td>
<td>God’s impending judgment on the wicked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:14</td>
<td>Josh 10:10</td>
<td>Providential defeat of Israel’s enemies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:31</td>
<td>Deut 32:30-31</td>
<td>God is our Rock of Salvation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33:12</td>
<td>Exod 19:5</td>
<td>Israel is God’s peculiar treasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34:16</td>
<td>Lev 17:10</td>
<td>God’s anger against transgressors, Jew or Gentile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Deborah
One woman of faith, whose words in Judges 5, bear remarkable echoes to incidents recorded in the Pentateuch.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judges 5</th>
<th>Pentateuch</th>
<th>Incident</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vs 5</td>
<td>Exod 19:18</td>
<td>Sinai “melting”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vs 4</td>
<td>Deut 33:20</td>
<td>The Lord out of Seir</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vs 30</td>
<td>Exod 15:9</td>
<td>Dividing the spoil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For all these examples of Old Testament faithful, Bible study was not just an academic exercise, but a vital arsenal in their defense of the Truth and a convincing activity for edification of the Ecclesia.

David, in a most famous Psalm writes thus, “How love I thy law! It is my MEDITATION all the day. Thou, through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my MEDITATION” (Psa 119:97-99).

Meditation is defined thus, “deep, deliberate thought; contemplation” (Webster)

Spiritual wisdom
So our Bible study should have as its goal spiritual wisdom. Did this meditative spirit pervade in any of the notable Old Testament faithful covered in this brief analysis, or in any others, so that their lives were well directed?

We will begin this consideration of Bible study and meditation with Deborah. A commission was given to Joshua which has an interesting sequence:

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth;
But thou shalt meditate therein day and night,
That thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein;
For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous,
And then thou shalt have good success” (Josh 1:8)

A succession of judges replaced Joshua as leaders. Deborah, with Barak, is on the scene against Jabin, Sisera and 900 iron chariots. Victory is miraculously achieved, as “the hand of the children of Israel prospered...” (Jdgs 4:24). A victory song ensued, “then sang Deborah and Barak...” (Jdgs 5:1). The words of this song show deep deliberate contemplation on the written record of the day, referencing Exodus and Deuteronomy. Likewise, when we sing as we should, “speaking to yourselves in Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs...” (Eph 5:19). We have the wonderful opportunity of to MEDITATE on the Scriptural source of the words we are singing.

Prayer
Prayer is another medium of meditation. Ezra and David, keen Bible students, are excellent examples of how Bible study can inform our public (Ezra’s) and private (Daniel’s) prayer.
Ezra 9:7 “since the days of our fathers...” what depth of thought is deliberately shown by this faithful servant!

Dan 9:4 “...keeping the covenant...” verse 11 “...the oath that is written in the Law of Moses.”

Again, meditation based on familiarity with the written record of the day! We are now left to examine the meditative spirit of Gideon and Jephthah. Gideon requested a sign to verify that the angel spoke to him (Jdgs 6:7). Was he contemplating Moses (Exod 4:1)? As the drama unfolded into another encounter, Gideon “perceived that it was an angel of the Lord” (Jdgs 6:22) and thought he would die! Why? As he was meditating, he was remembering the words written by Moses: “And he [the Lord] said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live” (Exod 33:20).

Jephthah was falsely told by the king of the Ammonites:

“And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land, when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now therefore restore those lands again peaceably” (Jdgs 11:13).

In reply, Jephthah made several references to the accounts of what happened after the Exodus, each time emphasizing what God had done to forge a nation: “the Lord God of Israel delivered... The Lord God of Israel hath dispossessed... So, whomsoever the Lord our God shall drive out” (Jdgs 11:21-24). These events, implanted in Jephthah’s mind come to bear fruits at a crucial time. Likewise, the words of Scripture must inform our response to challenges.

What do we take away from this brief analysis of Old Testament Bible students?

- A written record was available: “The law and the prophets”
- It was studied by men and women of faith: Joshua, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, David, Ezra, Daniel.
- For them, it was a sobering source of meditation, leading to prosperity and success.
- It strengthened FAITH, “Faith cometh... by the word of the Lord”

Clive Drepaul (Brooklyn, NY)
The New Testament Church, (15) Preaching

The church’s witness in the world

I would like to begin by reminding you of the preaching offices which we considered earlier, and, most important of all, that the apostles were the “special messengers” of Jesus Christ. We noticed at the time that this did not only refer to the twelve apostles because there were other apostles as well. Barnabas was an apostle, and Paul was an apostle, and there appear to have been others with this title. We realized at the time that we have no counterpart in our organization to the New Testament apostles. They appear to have been divinely appointed leaders of the new community, yet even they were subject to ecclesial decisions, as we see below, where in each case it was the church that gave instructions, one may say, to the apostles and sent them forth on their journeys.

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:2-3).

“When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question” (Acts 15:2).

Next we have the prophets. These were the people who spoke at their meetings and 1 Corinthians 14 gives quite clear instructions from the apostle as to the way the office of the prophets was to be conducted. They were the preachers of the word, and we have already noticed more than once that some at least were women members of the church, because Paul speaks of women “praying” (which seems to mean publicly praying) and “prophesying” (which certainly meant publicly preaching) “having her head uncovered”: “But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head” (1Cor 11:5).

Then we have the phrase “the evangelists” who appear to have been unattached missionaries proclaiming the Christian evangel or good news abroad in the earth. Philip the evangelist was one of these and, of course, Silas, and Paul himself, were evangelists. We might say these were the people who went outside the ecclesial organization preaching the word of God and taking the Gospel abroad to other parts.

And then we have the “teachers,” who are associated with “pastors,” the pastors and teachers instructing the flock: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;” (Eph 4:11). The idea of the pastor was of a shepherd, the church being the flock; the pastors were therefore the shepherds of the flock and also the teachers. This would appear to have been a more domestic office in the local church, as opposed to the evangelists who went out preaching the gospel. These teachers and pastors seem to have done their work more among the flock, building up the ecclesia in the knowledge and understanding of the word of God.
Now these were the preaching and teaching offices as we see them in the New Testament. They were not a race apart as the clergy later became, and the elders of the church often combined the work of leadership and general supervision of the church with the active preaching and teaching of the word. Paul and the apostles exercised their office as elders, and at the same time were, without doubt, evangelists and preachers along with it, rather as in our own organization where a man “doubles up” very often on two or three offices, so it seems clearly to have been in the New Testament. A brother in our own organization may be a speaking brother, a presiding brother, and an arranging brother at the same time, and this, I think, is very proper and very much in harmony with the pattern we see in the New Testament.

Writing to Timothy, Paul has something to say about the elders which illustrates this point: “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour,” he says, “especially they who labour in the word and doctrine” (1Tim 5:17). We shall return to this passage later on. For the present, all I want you to notice is that clearly there were some of the elders who labored in preaching and teaching the word and doctrine and others who did not. Paul is saying that those who labor in “preaching and teaching” are to be counted worthy of double honor, possibly meaning they were to receive a “double portion.”

**Preaching versus teaching**

I think it is worth noting in passing that there was a distinction between preaching and teaching. The preaching of the gospel, the taking out of the evangel, or good news to the world — was that which converted men to Christianity. They proclaimed the message of life in Jesus Christ, and went out with this message like the water of life to parched and thirsty land. And the “teachers” established those who had been converted, their function being, I suppose, the exposition of Scripture and the application of Christianity to daily living, which was never overlooked in the New Testament church. Central to it all was the manner of persons you should be, “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing” (Col 1:10). This is “doctrine” in the New Testament parlance, and the teachers’ job was to apply the doctrine of Christ so that the church having been converted by the preaching of the Gospel was built up and set on its right path by the teachers in their expositions of Christian doctrine.

I suppose it was not entirely unlike our own set-up today, as we suggested earlier, though we do not have any persons whom we call prophets (and I also do not think we have the exact counterpart of prophets in our organization) but the nearest we have, answering roughly to the function of the prophet, would be our Sunday speakers, our preachers, and exhorting brethren. Notice that there were no “lecturing brethren” in the New Testament Church, whilst on our part we do not have any “preachers.”

I wonder sometimes why we cannot just preach the Gospel instead of giving “Bible lectures” which has, at least, a rather frightening sound in the ears of many people. It is certainly true that some of our public addresses are really very much Bible lectures and not really anything like preaching the Gospel.
We have been, in the past, a little afraid of the word “preaching,” and have preferred to give lectures. I merely make a note in passing that our lecturing brethren have no place in the New Testament order but preachers certainly did. Presumably, the teachers would be answerable to our Bible Class speakers, Sunday school teachers and such like. Never let us ever underrate the importance of those who labor in preaching and teaching in the Sunday school and youth groups because this is very important in our own organization. I am convinced of this today. Fraternal gathering speakers also ought to be “teachers,” not just moralizers, or dribblers forth of platitudes, but shapers of thought, getting people to think carefully about the implication of our Christian calling. These are the teachers in all their various aspects.

**Evangelists?** Well we do not have any that we call evangelists, but we do have Bible campaigners and Bible mission workers, and I would think clearly that they are similar in the work they do to the evangelists in the New Testament times. The work is often carried on in a lonely capacity, going out with the Gospel to lands and places where hitherto it has not been taken. This was essentially the function of the evangelists, but we should never forget the personal witness of the rank and file members, who are the salt of the earth in our community, and were in the New Testament church in the very teaching of Jesus Christ himself.

We use the phrase rather glibly, but when Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth,” he really meant it, and he did not just mean those who are the front men of the organization, but every single member is a grain of salt, as it were, sent out to season society with the ideas of Jesus Christ. Christians are sent out to bring some kind of preservative element into society; sent out to make the world a better place, to make it more savory in the sight of God; to try to infiltrate the thoughts of Jesus Christ, and the message of Jesus Christ into the environment in which they live. “**You are the salt of the earth” — YOU!” Never mind about apostles, prophets and evangelists, pastors and teachers and arranging brethren, even lecturing brethren. You are the salt of the earth.

There is an interesting example of this: “And Saul was consenting unto Stephen’s death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles” (Acts 8:1). Now the apostles stayed in Jerusalem, but how they managed to do it, why they were allowed to do it, we are not told, but when the church suffered this persecution all the believers were scattered abroad except the apostles. “**Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word**” (Acts 8:4).

These were the grains of salt being scattered, as it were, from Jerusalem; scattered into society, into the world. It was not the apostles, for they were in Jerusalem. It means, clearly, the individual brothers and sisters, the nonentities, the nameless people of whom we know nothing except that they were members of the Christian church in Jerusalem, and were the people who went out and took the word of God with them. This is something we must all remember.
How did they do their preaching?

First of all we recognize the fact, which I have suggested before, that they were not a disjointed society without direction, with everybody doing everything haphazardly. It is patently clear that they were organized under the direction of the apostles, who we earlier suggested may have received their instructions on the progress of the work from the lips of Jesus Christ himself, when he “gave commandment unto his apostles” after his resurrection as to how the work of the church was to proceed under their general guidance. The work proceeded in an orderly and organized fashion. There are clear signs of this in the Acts of the Apostles.

There would not appear to have been anything quite equivalent to our own Christadelphian method, where we have speakers going out all over the place, with somebody driving up the Motorway, going north, passing somebody from the north coming down the other lane and passing somewhere about Birmingham! This is the way we do it today. It may, of course, serve a useful purpose in our case because we are organized more on an inter-ecclesial basis than they were in the first century, but it may also be less effective than a concentration on local preaching work such as generally appears to have been the method in the New Testament church.

The work seems to have been concentrated in areas, with towns or cities as a headquarters from which, in an orderly fashion, the evangelists and preachers went out taking the message and forming as it were light stands in the surrounding countryside. Dr. Blunt in his History of the Christian Church in the First Three Centuries makes a very good case for the organized establishment by the apostles of preaching headquarters in the strategic centers of the Roman world beginning at Jerusalem. As Jesus said, you notice, this word was to be “preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem,” so they were carrying out the instructions of Jesus Christ to the letter as to how the work was to proceed.

Then from Jerusalem, Blunt suggests we get the growth of the Antioch church as the springboard for the preaching to the Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas later made their headquarters at Antioch which seems to have become the mother church if you like, from which Paul and Barnabas were sent out on their preaching mission. Then we have Corinth, Ephesus, and finally Rome, and in each of these strategic centers churches were established, big churches, thriving churches, as a basis for operations in the particular province which they served so that other churches would grow up around them, gravitating as it were to the center church from which the Gospel had gone out to them.

It is interesting to notice that similar methods seem to be successful in Bible Mission work (for example in South Africa) where there seems to be the same idea of establishing a center, getting some workers there, building up an ecclesia, and then moving on to another center, leaving always a nucleus of people to carry on the work, in order that there shall be organized development from place to place rather than a sporadic effort going out in all directions like fireworks on bonfire night and fizzling out in space.
Now, having considered the preaching and teaching offices, what about the preachers themselves? I am thinking of the status and support of preachers in the New Testament, where we find statements which indicate that the work of preaching and ministering to the church was for some, I emphasize this, for some, a full time activity and that they were supported by contributions from the body of believers.

This may come as a shock, but I think it is demonstrably true. We have always proudly maintained what we like to think of as a lay ministry, and we boast very often of our unpaid workers, and sometimes tend to sneer at the “paid hirelings” (as we call them in some of our literature) of the established churches. I was brought up to really believe that to be a paid preacher of the Gospel was in itself a demonstration of the apostasy. The truth, however, is that support for preachers of the Gospel and for workers in the church is scriptural.

We may reasonably object to the bishops’ palaces and the rich living (as we allege) of some of them. We may object to them sitting in the House of Lords as the “Lords spiritual” of this country; but there are no scriptural grounds for objecting to the maintenance of full time ministers. And be it noted that the great majority of these full time ministers are on lower salaries than their congregations (or most of ours).

There is an interesting verse in Galatians. Here is a passage, which has been sometimes misunderstood: “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things” (Gal 6:6). This is often understood to mean that a man who understands Scripture is to communicate it to others. If you are taught the word it is your business to pass it on to other people, and instruct others also. I am absolutely sure that it does not mean that. It means that the man who has received instruction in the word of God is to be prepared to help the man who is giving him the message.

To “communicate” means to share with him in all the necessary things of life, and this is what Galatians is saying. “When anyone is under instruction in the faith he should give his teacher a share in all good things he has” is the NEB rendering. What Paul is saying is, “If you receive the spiritual blessing of being instructed in the word of God you should be prepared to help the person doing the instruction in the material things of life.” The Living New Testament paraphrases the verse as: “Those who are taught the word of God should help their teachers by paying them.”

Len Richardson

Notes:
1. See the Special Issue on Apostles, The Christadelphian Tidings August 2014.
3. And indeed it is true we have, in effect, paid missionaries.
The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Ready-to-Use Bible Word Puzzles

Word puzzles come in many varieties and are fun to do. A good word puzzle makes you think, and solving it gives a sense of satisfaction. Bible word puzzles make great follow-up activities for Sunday school lessons or they can be used as stand-alone activities. We keep several on hand for children to work on during midweek Bible class.

Creating your own word puzzles can be time consuming, and buying puzzle books can get pricy. Today there are all kinds of free puzzles on the internet, ready to print or do online. Finding the right one has never been easier. This article suggests a few sites to try if you are looking for ready-to-use Bible word puzzles. It goes without saying that anything you find on the internet should be carefully examined before being used.

And there is something else to think about before giving your kids a Bible word puzzle. The level of difficulty needs to be considered. This can vary widely from puzzle to puzzle. Puzzles that are too difficult are no fun at all. I have seen word puzzles given to children that are well beyond their ability to understand and solve. When this happens, the puzzle is discouraging to them. At the same time, puzzles that are too easy are not good either. A one-size-fits-all approach does not work with word puzzles.

Bible puzzles – http://biblepuzzles.com/

The Bible Puzzles site offers several kinds of Bible word puzzles and games: crosswords, word searches, Codewords, anagrams, Hangman, and Kriss Kross puzzles among others. Most are printable. Many can be done online. In fact, it is probably easier to do Bible Puzzles’ Hangman on a cell phone than any other way. The site is easy to navigate.

Codewords combine features of crossword puzzles and cryptograms. They’re good for anyone who likes a challenge.

Kriss Kross puzzles are also a variation on the crossword puzzle theme. Instead of having clues to work with, the answers are listed. It becomes a case of fitting the words into the correct places in the puzzle. The Codewords and Kriss Kross puzzles are thematic and a number of them relate to well-known Bible stories. Both kinds of puzzles are printable.

It is worth exploring all the puzzle and game pages on the Bible Puzzles site. There are a lot to choose from. The site also offers some craft ideas, Bible coloring pages, and a few downloadable activity booklets. The materials are free. Donations are not solicited. Bible Puzzles appears to generate its income from ads and the sale of other products.

Among a wide range of offerings, the Christian Bible Reference Site has menus of Bible quizzes, crossword puzzles, and word searches. They are easy to access from the home page.

Most of the Bible Quizzes consist of ten multiple choice questions. They are labeled as easy, medium, and difficult, and are designed to be done online. There is no direct way to print the quizzes, but it is possible to copy and paste them into your word processor for printing purposes. The site offers a fairly wide range of Bible quizzes to choose from, and a new one is added every week. Quizzes are clearly titled and the menu is easy to use.

The menu of Crossword Puzzles offers large and small puzzles that can be printed or done online. The large crosswords are newspaper-style puzzles. They have no titles and touch only occasionally on Bible subjects. The small crossword puzzles have titles and include several with specific Bible themes. The Word Search menu offers by far the largest number of Bible puzzles to choose from. They are clearly titled so it is easy to see what’s available. Word searches come in large (more than 50 words) and small (more than 15 words) varieties. The word searches can also be printed or done online.

Puzzles on the Christian Bible Reference Site are free, but there is a unique way to make a contribution. You can submit your own word search if you like. Under the Word Search tab, just click on “Contribute a puzzle to this page – it’s easy!” and follow the directions.
Living Water Bible Games –
http://www.livingwaterbiblegames.com/biblegames.html

The Living Water Bible Games site is easy to navigate. You can access puzzles by typing in a keyword (e.g., judges) or, even easier, you can scroll down and choose a puzzle from the alphabetized menu on the right side of the screen. Most of the puzzles are printable; several can be done online, and some let you to do both. If you want your kids to do one of the puzzles online, try it out first. Strategies vary and some puzzles are harder to do online than others. The majority of Living Water puzzles are word searches related to popular Old and New Testament stories. The site offers a few crossword puzzles as well.

In addition to word puzzles, Living Water offers several printable Bible Bingo games and a variety of other games that you might find interesting to use or adapt. Everything is free, but donations are invited.

Other sites

Here are three other sites you might like to explore for Bible word puzzles:


Christian Family Word – biblewordgames.com. The purpose of this site is to promote and sell puzzle books, but it has a lot of free samples to offer. In some cases you need to install an app in order to open the puzzle; others print directly. The sample puzzles have no titles, so it is impossible to know what they are about without opening them. In spite of these drawbacks, the site is worth exploring.

Suggesting websites like these as sources of ready-to-use Bible word puzzles is not an endorsement of the sites themselves. It bears repeating that any material found on the internet needs to be carefully examined for suitability before being used.

**Footnote.** I have a lot of homemade Bible word puzzles in PDF form: acrostics, anagrams, crossword puzzles, cryptograms, jigsaw quotes, word mazes, word searches, and more. The collection is fully indexed by Bible subject, age level, and puzzle type. Puzzles are easy to access from the index. Just print and use. Drop me an email and I will be glad to send the entire collection to you.

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Youth Speaks

The “Life Cycle” of Sin

It’s flu season again, and we are all trying our best to avoid being infected. Some of us are getting the flu shot, a vaccine to help the body’s fight against the flu if we do contract it. However, we are also fighting against another kind of “virus”: sin.

The lytic cycle is the most basic “life cycle”1 of a virus. There are approximately five basic steps which make up the lytic cycle: attachment, injection, synthesis, assembly, and release.2 This article is going to discuss those steps as an analogy to our battle with sin.

Attachment

In this step, a specific virus attaches to a specific cell. Certain proteins on the virus bind with the membrane of the cell like a lock and key. This is similar to how each and every one of us endures different trials and have inclinations toward different sins. If we give into temptation and allow sin to take hold of us, we have allowed the virus to latch on.

Injection

In this step, the virus injects its genetic code into the host cell. This is similar to sin integrating itself into our lives once we have given into our temptation and allowed it to influence our behavior. 2John 10-11 warns us of this: “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

This passage isn’t suggesting not letting those “outside the truth” into your home. We are encouraged to do that in Matt 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” We need to be open to others so that we can be spiritual lights in their lives. 2John 10-11 isn’t contradicting that sentiment. This passage is saying something more along the lines of “don’t let their evil spiritual deeds and attitudes into your heart”. Don’t let the virus inject its genetic information into your host cell.

Synthesis (creation/formation)

In this step, the virus has infiltrated its own genetic information into the host cell, causing the host cell to replicate the virus DNA. After replication, protein synthesis occurs where the host cell “unknowingly” makes the proteins needed to create new molecules beneficial for the virus (proteins, RNA, replicated DNA, etc.). Normally, the host cell is constantly making proteins needed for your body to function and survive. However, the virus has “hijacked” the cell and is using its machinery to make the proteins the invader needs.

When we allow sin into our lives once or twice, it is very easy to allow it in all the time. We allow it to be a part of our habitual routines and thus who we are and what defines us (aka our DNA). It begins managing us. Matt 6:24 warns
us that “no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Once viruses have taken over the cell machinery, the virus is in control. Your cell no longer does what you want it to do. It must do what the virus wants. Similarly, sin can control our lives, and we cannot be servants of both God and sin.

“Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Rom 7:20).

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof; neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin...For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom 6:24).

We must be instruments of righteousness and always be conducting ourselves appropriately, not allowing our sin and temptations to dwell inside of us and take control.

**Assembly**

In this step, the molecules made from viral DNA assemble to create new viruses. This is similar to the act of sinning becoming increasingly trivial. When we repeatedly do the small things, i.e. telling white lies, skipping the daily readings, or forgetting to pray before a meal, it can have a snowball effect and eventually, our sins aren’t so little anymore.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

We must be unspotted (as much as we can be), and if any part of our lives causes us to be led into temptation or sin, we should reevaluate it to avoid manifesting evil ways. We have a merciful Father, willing to forgive us for our sins, but we must repent, not only acknowledging that it was wrong but also acting in a completely different way. We can’t ask for forgiveness every Sunday for the things we’ve done wrong the previous week and then continue into the next week, doing the same things over again. We have to put a stop to the behavior before it can build up into a habit.

**Lysis (release)**

In this step, the newly formed viruses burst from the cell, destroying it in the process. This is analogous to sin leading to death. The way we live our lives can either give glory to God, ultimately in his glorious Kingdom, or not. If we allow sin to overcome us and “destroy” our spiritual lives, we condemn ourselves to an eternal death.

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:6-7).
James 1:14-15 is a perfect embodiment of the lytic cycle.

“But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

The temptation discussed in this verse, “but every man is tempted” is representative of attachment; “when lust hath conceived” reflects the injection and synthesis; “bringeth forth sin” is similar to assembly; and finally, “bringeth forth death” echoes lysis.

When the cell is lysed and the viruses are released, they go on to infect other cells. This relates to how we can live worldly lives and drag others into that way of life instead of shining as lights and being good examples. Our actions and behaviors don’t only affect ourselves but also those around us. Christ was an example for us. Likewise, as members of his body, we should be examples for those around us.

How do we fight against these viruses? Fight against sin?

**Vaccines**

Vaccines can be either attenuated or unattenuated, meaning they can be “alive,” but weakened or “dead” viruses. Vaccines work by injecting these viruses into the body and allowing the immune system to “learn” how to fight the infection, but on a small scale, a weakened scale, something it can handle without a full-fledged illness. That way, when the body is confronted by the real viral infection, it has already built up the ability to fight it off.

This is similar to our spiritual lives because we go through trials and are faced with temptations every day, but we must utilize our knowledge and understanding of God’s word to combat them and not give into sin.

1Cor 10:13 states, “there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will with the temptation also made a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” God doesn’t give us trials we cannot handle. He puts trials into our lives in order for us to learn and fight against sin.

“God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (Heb 12:10-11).

God puts us through trials so we might grow and live stronger, more spiritual lives. We face temptation so that we might learn to utilize his word and the gospel to fight against the “wiles of the devil”.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness
of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph 6:10-13).

We must put on the whole armor of God so that we can face the temptations of this world and not fall into a life of sin, so that we can be protected, just like vaccines help the body protect itself against invading viruses.

Our most important defense is our baptism in the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“What shall we say then? **Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.** How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:1-11).

Why is this important? What is the purpose of connecting sin to the life of a virus? Disease and death are very real to us. We see the immediate effects of them while we don’t see the immediate effects of sin and living a worldly life. That is seen ultimately at the judgement.

We do a lot to protect ourselves from disease because we know the effects and we know that it is unpleasant. We need to approach sin in the same way. Sin is a deadly virus, and if we allow it to infect us, then we commit ourselves to death and allow it to infect others, letting death win. However, if we utilize our immune system and vaccines of the truth, knowledge and understanding of the scriptures and our faith in the Lord, we can fight against sin and be saved, eventually, hopefully, gaining eternal life.

Sarah Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

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

Notes:
1. Viruses are not considered “alive” by the scientific community. However, for the sake of this article, the Lytic cycle will be considered a “life cycle”.
3. This splitting of the cell is called “lysing” the cell or cell “lysis” which is where the lytic cycle gets its name.
Reflection

Role Identity vs. Role Confusion: Social Media

Conflicts in teens

Over the summer, I had the pleasure of teaching, and learning from, a co-ed teen class of 13-19 year olds, at Bible School. The purpose of my class was to introduce the teens to Erik Erikson’s human development concept which proposes that each specifically defined age group has a psychosocial crisis between two conflicting forces that needs to be resolved. Teens need to resolve the conflict between a sense of identity or of role confusion. If they are successful in achieving a sense of identity they are rewarded with the virtue of ‘fidelity’. Fidelity is defined as both a commitment to oneself and the acceptance of others, even when there are ideological differences. It is the ability to live by society’s standards and expectations and still be true to oneself.

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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Trust vs. mistrust</td>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Infancy ( 0 to1½)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Autonomy vs. shame</td>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Early Childhood ( 1½ to3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Initiative vs. guilt</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Play Age ( 3 to 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Industry vs. inferiority</td>
<td>Competency</td>
<td>School Age ( 5 to 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ego identity vs. Role Confusion</td>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td>Adolescence (12 to 18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Intimacy vs. isolation</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Young Adult ( 18 to 40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Generativity vs. stagnation</td>
<td>Care</td>
<td>Adulthood (40 to 65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ego integrity vs. despair</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>Maturity ( 65+)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We started the week reading Psalm 139 with special emphasis on the following verses, and particularly the bolded phrase which struck a chord with many of the teens.

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (Psa 139:13-16 NIV).
God’s definition of *fidelity* could be reworded as ‘believing that we are all fearfully and wonderfully made, as each of us reflects the image of God in our unique way’.

**Social media**

Throughout the week we focused on specific societies or communities in which we live. One of the classes addressed social media and the role it plays in these young people’s lives, and we talked about their struggle to find their true identity amidst the pressures and expectations of Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc. By the way, Facebook, I learned from one of the teens, is “for older people” (emphasis on older!).

To be honest, I came to this conversation with the expectation that adults are generally out of the loop and believe myths about how social media negatively impacts our youth. For example, I recently read in NASW News (National Association of Social Workers, June 2016), “While technology like social media may help students who would otherwise be isolated stay in contact with friends outside of school, it can also isolate people.” The article concluded that teens perceive that they are interacting when in fact they are not. It is my understanding that this is a widely held view by many adults who did not grow up with technology and have not adapted as well to this new way of interacting. I went into this class discussion on social media with the expectation that this myth would be busted.

During the conversational class on social media with the teens — which ran through break and into the next session (thanks to the interest and understanding of the third period teacher) — I was both amazed and, quite frankly saddened, to realize that the isolation, peer pressure, anxiety, depression, sense of unworthiness, low self-esteem (their words), and identify confusion experienced by this group of young people was real and more serious than I had realized. And that they are fully aware of these issues. Intellectually, they knew how “insincere” and “false” social media can be, and at the same time are emotionally vulnerable and feel the pressure to compete and gain validation from their peers; who probably feel the same. Rather than busted, the myth seemed to have more depth than anticipated.

There is an expectation that high school students have a Facebook account in order to keep in touch with school activities. One teen shared about her drama class, and how one student who is not on Facebook misses out on after-school events that are solely posted on social media.

**The addiction of teens**

I learned that teens appear to be addicted to “being liked”. As one girl explained, she did not experience any social pressure from celebrities because she would never meet these people, and knew that their photos have been airbrushed. However, the pressure from pretty girls at school, whom she personally knows, who post almost perfect photos of themselves, which are instantly liked by many people, is intense. Again, intellectually, this group of teens knows that being liked is almost a scam. I learned that the best time to post on social media sites
is between 4pm and 5pm, and again from 10pm to midnight. These are the peak times, and the likelihood of being ‘liked’ is high. And, of course, if one doesn’t receive the required amount of likes, then the posting is immediately removed. This gives the impression that popular, good-looking people are always liked. So, even knowing that these are well-used tricks by those who post on social media, it does not stop the emotional fallout of feeling less-than in comparison.

The concept of echo chambers that reinforce negative opinions, views and perspectives was also explained to me. Echo chambers are places where extremely negative political, religious, racially disparaging views are not counteracted with either facts or positive opposites. As one teen explained, “People’s views are just echoed back at them” by others who share the opinions. Many of these teens are aware of this sub-group of social media sites where you can be validated and negatively encouraged with eating disorders, self-harm behaviors and suicidal ideation. For example, those suffering from bulimia are encouraged with “Way to go!” type of sentiments when they report new weight loss, rather than with support and resources for help to overcome this eating disorder.

One theme that was repeated throughout this discussion was “the waste of time” that these teens experience as a result of spending too much time on social media. This was true even for those who use social media to learn about what is going on in the world and to keep up with political issues. Reddit was the most commonly used source, and the few teens who use this site shared that they believe it is an unbiased news source, as posts will receive comments that either agree with the original viewpoint or comments that provide an alternative angle. (Reddit is, therefore, a great example of a site that is not an echo chamber.) Although this site is used for current events and generally more productive online time, they still acknowledged that time online seemed wasted. So, why are they still using it?

Addiction

We had already spent a class on addiction issues and, working with the abbreviated definition of addiction, “using more than intended, despite the negative consequences” we began to look at the use of social media through this lens. Towards the end of the class teens were expressing a curiosity about how life would be: if they didn’t use social media as a validation tool; if they had fewer but more authentic friendships; and whether this could be done on an individual basis or whether “we’d all have to get off at the same time”. One teen shared that she felt she had missed so much of her friend’s lives just while being at the bible school (this was on the 4th day), but at the same time realized that by next week when she was back at home, those friends’ lives would have moved on to something new and she would be back feeling connected. Going without social media for a week would not actually affect her friendships, rather it was the habit/addiction to using social media that was making her feel left out.

I challenged this group of teens to go one week without social media; only one accepted this challenge. However, I heard later on that day that another teen
had stopped checking her Instagram and Snapchat accounts because “it was a waste of time” and she “didn’t need to know what was going on.” A few weeks after the Bible School, I checked on the teen who had decided to go a week without Facebook and was informed that his account has now been closed and he feels that he “is much more productive” with his time.

Part of the discussion time was used to create a cost/benefit analysis on social media and the following is the result. These are the exact words used by the teens:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros of using social media</th>
<th>Cons of using social media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Store photos</td>
<td>Echo chambers reinforce negative views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay in touch with friends</td>
<td>Opinions are treated like facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Meet” new people</td>
<td>Warped sense of beauty, worldview, life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help to organize events</td>
<td>Lack of privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get jobs</td>
<td>Provides venue for infamy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find interest groups</td>
<td>Reinforces unauthentic life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a perception of validation</td>
<td>Desensitized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find old friends</td>
<td>Belief against your morals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand mind/view</td>
<td>Victimization — pity party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment value</td>
<td>Titillating stories/gossip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community news</td>
<td>Some sites are pro-eating disorders, self-harm, and suicidal ideation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over exaggerate problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Makes life impersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waste of time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cons of not using social media</th>
<th>Pros of not using social media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feel that they don’t know what’s going on in the world</td>
<td>Can cut ties with people you don’t really care about = be more authentic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel out of the loop</td>
<td>Seek validation from credible people, and people you respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss event announcements at school</td>
<td>Less dramatic/exaggerated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss unbiased sources of news/politics</td>
<td>Life is more truthful/sincere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss discussions about the news</td>
<td>Can’t talk to Canadian friends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What can we do about it?

A few weeks after the Bible School, I was telling a 21 year old about my class and the incredible discussions that had ensued. She shared her perspective on social media and shared that most of the younger people she knows in her ecclesia typically end their day on social media between 10pm and midnight, and the “negativity is huge”. Again, I felt saddened that teens are ending their day on sites that either provide a false sense of validation or reinforce a negative self-esteem. She offered advice to parents: “parents need to spend time complimenting their kids”, and “making them feel appreciated”, and “pointing out their good qualities and skills”.

These suggestions are not to be taken lightly or used whenever, but daily. Every day. According to Erikson, this age group looks to its peers for support and validation; this teen class demonstrated that social media exemplifies Erikson’s concept that the struggle between defining one’s identity and experiencing role confusion is real. The danger is that if social media is the only ‘mirror’ that teens use to see themselves, they will believe a warped sense of self and experience role confusion without knowing that this view is not reality.

Naturally, according to Erik Erikson, the main source of information and influence for this age group comes from their peers, and now exponentially via social media. This means that the rest of us - parents, older siblings, ecclesial ‘uncles’ and ‘aunts’ - have a great responsibility to shore up this vulnerable age group by providing validation, encouragement, positive recognition, and compliments because we are the “credible people” and the ones our teens “respect” (see pros on not using social media in the table). We, as adults, need to recognize that social media is not going away, and in fact offers many positive benefits in life. However, we all play an important role in helping these teens find their sense of identity which will help them feel valued, fearfully and wonderfully made, and with provide a sense of purpose in life as one of God’s children.

Rachel Launchbury, (Portland, OR)

Notes:
1. See Erik Erikson’s “Childhood and Society” and many other of his books.
Bible Mission

Bolivia — As a Father...

When we read the Apostle Paul’s epistle’s, the struggles of the first century ecclesias are open before us. The other aspect apparent is the Apostle’s own emotion, as a father for his children, he cared so much for his brethren. After many years of missionary presence, the La Paz Ecclesia’s members are striving to maintain regular meetings. Some of the original members baptized six to 10 years ago have moved to other countries (and are attending meetings there). Some have stopped attending due to various reasons. As of September 2016, a minimum of four members meet together to remember our Lord — two brothers and two sisters. The two brothers were baptized in November 2015, so the ecclesia is in need of our support.

Brother Shimon and Sister Joanna Spina were the last missionary couple in La Paz. Since returning to Australia, Bro. Shimon has been in frequent contact with members and contacts via email, text and skype. Brother Don Luff visited La Paz in May for their annual Bible Camp and social time. Brother Robert Alderson from New Zealand spent about a week with the ecclesia in July providing good guidance regarding a number of matters. Brother Don Luff followed-up during September for five days of activities with ecclesial meetings every day, as well as personal discussions. On two occasions there was candid study and conversation about cooperation in love as members of God’s family. We were encouraged one evening by a study of ‘God’s 7,000 Year Plan’ — the changes during the Millennium to a world-wide dominion governed by justice and righteousness, leading to a time when God will be all in all. During another study, we reviewed ‘Our Basic Duties toward God’ — and we found that there are many — day-after-day commitment being one of them. Another sobering and helpful session, especially in today’s evil world, was about ‘The Treatment of Women’ — the Scriptures have so much wholesome guidance for the male regarding proper behaviour towards and with women. The Sunday exhortation

The members of the Bolivia Ecclesia (from left to right)
Samuel, Francisco, Jacqueline and Eva.

The members of the Bolivia Ecclesia (from left to right) Samuel, Francisco, Jacqueline and Eva.
was about ‘Our Speech’ — are we like our Lord, for they “wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth” (Luke 4:22) and like Abigail — ‘in her tongue was the law of kindness’ in calming King David’s anger (Prov. 31:26).

Each country has its culture and customs that impact on our growth in the Truth. Bolivia is no different, with its indigenous traditions, church and family pressures, ‘el machismo’, money (or lack of), and the sheer challenge to ‘get along’ under these significant cultural and socioeconomic differences. Esteeming others better than oneself (Phil. 2:3), leads to oneness, and thus harmony. Every ecclesia is made of members with human nature and we should therefore help each other work together, being motivated by the love of our Father and of His son for us.

We appeal for your prayers that our brothers and sisters in Bolivia may continue to grow in the Lord.

Written by CBMA Bolivia linkman, Don Luff
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

Jamaica — Hurricane Matthew!

They called Matthew — ‘The Monster’ — however thankfully the category five Hurricane veered east of its projected route towards Jamaica, missing the Island completely. Nevertheless, since the storm path was so wide, most areas of Jamaica were overcast during Sunday, October 2 to Tuesday, October 4 and received various amounts of rainfall, but no flooding as in other countries. As was reported in the news, Matthew continued northward, causing terrible damage and sadly, loss of life on the Island of Haiti.

Some ecclesial representatives and visitors at October 1, 2016, CBMJ Meeting.
Upon arrival in Kingston, Brother Keith Kinlocke met me at the airport and we enjoyed our time together, as he drove me to Brother Leroy and Sister Lorraine Johnson’s home for overnight. Lorraine supplied a tasty meal and we had a great evening together around Bible readings and discussion with their two sons, Lorenzo and Okeimo. During our time in Jamaica (September 30 to October 7), we attended the CBMJ Annual Planning Meeting, Saturday October 1st at the May Pen Hall. Among many items on the agenda, the draft 2017 Calendar of Events was reviewed, with discussion centering around the April 2017 Easter Youth Camp and hopefully Truth Corps assistance mid-year. More short term and long term fieldworkers are being sought to help the Jamaican Brotherhood — for example, during the latter part of 2016, Brother Andre George from St. Lucia will be on the Island from October 14 to November 4. Also, Brother Nigel and Sister Devonna Small (from New Jersey) will also be visiting several ecclesias from October 15 to 21.

On Sunday, we enjoyed fellowship with the Spanish Town Ecclesia at the Remembrance Service. Due to the hurricane warnings, we spent most of Monday and Tuesday with Brother Keith Kinlocke (recording brother of Spanish Town) and his family — Keith and I reviewed many matters with respect to the CBMJ and the ecclesias. We then travelled to Port Maria, Tuesday afternoon, for two days with members there. On Thursday they took me to Port Antonio for a Remembrance Service with our 93 year old Sister Enid Hall. She went to an emergency shelter on Monday, October 3rd for the night, as a precaution, and returned the next day to an undamaged home. She lives in isolation with her son Winston and daughter-in-law Jakelyn on the northeast shore — thankfully, this coastal town was saved from the tremendous force of Hurricane Matthew! No property damage or personal injury took place on this eastern end of the Island, as was anticipated. Our last day was spent in the company of Brother Melvin and Sister Gerzel Gordon at their home in May Pen. It was a pleasure to share time around the daily Bible readings with them, as well as Sister Shaddae Bonnick, baptized on August 7th.
Jamaica — Sad News and Happy Times

We are saddened to report that Sister Cecelyn Salmon of the Mount Pleasant Ecclesia fell asleep in the Lord on February 13th. She was almost 90 years old — born on April 29, 1927. She was a long-time visitor at the ecclesia, since its first campaign in 2001. After responding to the gospel message, Cecelyn was baptized on December 8, 2013. She was a kind and caring person, and known to be a principled lady. Her presence is indeed missed. Unfortunately, due to dwindling membership, the Mount Pleasant Ecclesia no longer holds regular services. The few members receive occasional visits from members of the Round Hill Ecclesia and other overseas visitors, and at the same time have opportunity to attend the numerous annual CBMJ sponsored events.

We also sorry at the loss of another one of our elder sisters in Jamaica, who fell asleep in the Lord. She was a long-time member of the Argyle Mountain Ecclesia, which has been decreasing in size for a number of years. Sister Icyline Grant was baptized September 8, 1991, and passed away on August 4, 2016 at the age 81 — born May 19, 1935. Her husband Brother Levi Grant fell asleep some years ago — he was recording brother of the Argyle Ecclesia for a period of time. This leaves three active sisters in this meeting — Vera Gordon, Janetta Campbell and Maxine Thompson — who regularly attend CBMJ sponsored events. These sisters appreciate pastoral ministrations, and visitors are welcomed at the well-maintained and clean ecclesial hall.

At the same time, we are thrilled about the baptism of a 19 year young woman and neighborhood Sunday School scholar at the May Pen Ecclesia on Sunday August 7, 2016, Shaddae Bonnich. She attended SS since about 14 and now through the waters of baptism has begun a new life in Christ and has hope of eternal life at his return! We earnestly pray for the second coming of our Lord to this troubled world, when all his faithful ones — those who are ‘asleep’ in Christ and those who are still on their sojourn — will share the glories of the Millennium and the ages.

We thank overseas brothers and sisters for their prayers and helpful on-island support, in these last days. Special gratitude is extended to the Christadelphian Save the Children Fund (CSTCF) in Ontario, Canada, for the annual shipment of barrels full of Sunday School supplies ready for September study season start-up. This year more items to help with practical daily living needs were included — which are much appreciated. May we all be found occupied in dedicated service and thus worthy when our Lord returns!

Reported by Don Luff, CBMC Jamaica Linkman
Submitted by Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity
Book Review

**CAIN — His Life and Legacy**

*CAIN — His Life and Legacy* examines the man Cain, what he did, what he said, and what is said about him. There may be more to it than you think. The book presses us to ask, “if all scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” what exactly are the profitable issues raised in the life of Cain and how are they relevant today? The issues raised in the lean and powerful Bible text spotlight human character, thinking and behavior. From the misty antediluvian age to the present, the Bible gives one coherent message, and the message has an unsettling ring of truth.

This book is carefully reasoned, its case well-constructed. With careful attention to the Genesis account, the dichotomy of human thinking emerges: rebellion or faith, fratricide or brotherly love, revenge or forgiveness. These alarming contrasts are present in the lives of the first ten generations of humankind, ravaging recklessly or passing peacefully down through the ages to our own day.

To say this book reads like a murder mystery would detract from the gravity of its subject. But the pull to read on is strong. The author directs our attention to how masterfully Scripture is crafted. We are invited to circle around, to look again as our spiritual senses come into focus. Circling around a question, we gain a fuller view; the author leads us skillfully. For instance, on page 88, “Returning to the original question: Why was Cain so significant to the early Christian ecclesia? To understand why he is mentioned throughout the New Testament, consider why Old Testament authors did not refer to him.” *CAIN—His Life and Legacy* is a sterling example of how to meditate on the Word and how to develop sound habits of Bible study.

In this book we come face to face with the challenge of all time. In seventy-seven generations, the fulcrum of human history in God’s estimation comes fully into view. Cain, not capable of self-reflection, hating the goodness in his brother, justifies murder and seeks self-preservation. Tragically, his lack of self-reflection leads to lack of self-control. He and his descendants act out evil on what is good, feel no remorse, and no need of forgiveness. Over time, their evil deeds even come to be viewed as good.

Belief that “all scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” compels us to pay attention. What is the trajectory of our life, individually and collectively? Is it careful faith or reckless rebellion, brotherly love or fratricide, forgiveness or revenge, the way of Cain or the way of Christ’s brethren? I heartily recommend *CAIN — His Life and Legacy.*

*Carol Link (Baltimore, MD)*
Books from The Christadelphian Tidings

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 was he was so significant to the early ecclesia.

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

On the Way: Bible Studies, Exhortations, Meditations and Musings,
by George Booker
Insights, reflections, practical issues, difficult passages, personal observations and more to uplift and encourage all those “on the Way”. $9.00 US (309 pages).

Observations along the Way, A Bible Journal,
by George Booker
A sequel to “on the Way”. An album of a spiritual journey, offering encouragement and food for thought to fellow travelers along the Way to the Kingdom. $9.00 US (305 pages).

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

Bible Guidelines for a Happy Marriage, by John C. Bilello
Sound, proactive, Biblical advice on how to build and maintain a happy marriage. $6.00 US (soft cover, 127 pages).

The Creation Text: Studies in Early Genesis, by David Levin
Forty-nine studies offer fresh insights into early Genesis by examining the text and structure of the first five chapters. $12.00 US (364 pages).

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

The Whole Armor of God, by Ryan Mutter
This story takes place nearly 3,000 years ago, but the spiritual challenges are familiar to today’s young people. $6.00 US (110 pages).

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· Telephone – Karen Guist, 440-227-0212
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Shipping and handling extra. Make checks payable to The Christadelphian Tidings.
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.

BALTIMORE, MD

The Baltimore ecclesia announces with great joy the following baptisms. SETH THOMAS was baptized on August 29, 2015. Seth grew up in the Sunday school and CYC and is the son of Sis. Shawn Thomas, of our ecclesia. ALFRED (BUD) STALTER was baptized on October 11, 2015. Bro. Bud had spent much of his life searching for the truth about God. In his later years, when in need of care, he met Sis. Audrey Small in her capacity as a nurse. It was through her that he heard the gospel of salvation.

On July 1, 2016, we had the joy of witnessing the baptism of NANCY HERNANDEZ, daughter of Bro. Bob and Sis. Inez Schneider. The occasion was so memorable. She was baptized by her father. It is wonderful to have Sis. Nancy as a member of the household of faith. MATTHEW, MARY AND ELIZA NASH were baptized on September 4, 2016. Their baptisms remind us that God is calling out of the nations a people for His name. We first learned about the Nash family from Bro. Mike Kaufman (Schooley’s Mt., NJ). He told us about a family in Maryland who had a keen interest in Bible truth. Years went by and then in the spring of 2016 we were contacted again, this time by a sister in Australia who noticed a request on a Christadelphian forum website. It was from Mary Nash. She was asking for information about the Baltimore Ecclesia. Bro. Mike had supplied them with so many books, like Christendom Astray, Elpis Israel, Christadelphians: What they Believe and Teach, Ways of Providence. They had read them all and wanted to be baptized. It was our honor and privilege to immerse them into the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In August of 2015, Bro. Ebengo Pelele, his wife, Safarani, and their six children joined our ecclesia. Bro. Ebengo learned the truth and was baptized at the Kempton Park, South Africa Ecclesia in 2012. We are thankful to God for bringing them safely to us after many years of danger and turmoil, firstly in the war ravaged Congo and then in UN camps.

Our Spring 2016 Study Day was led by Bro. Steve Cheetham of the Moorsetown, NJ Ecclesia on the topic of, “Lessons for Us from the Kings” with a timely lecture entitled, “A King for Israel”.

For the Fall Frisbee Challenge, Bro. Jim Harper of Meriden, CT led classes entitled, “Things Eternal” and young people joined us from near and far!

Twice a year we enjoy a special gathering of both the Baltimore and Washington Ecclesias. For this year’s fall gathering on October 30, 2016, Bro. Benjamin Link gave the exhortation and special address on the topic of, “The Prophecy of Isaiah.”

This summer we were privileged to host the Truth Corps. Thanks to the 2016 members: Brethren Alex Cervantes, Jesse Andrews, Matthew Tuckson, and Sis.’ Shoshanna Bowen, Janet Link and Cilla Pitcher for their preaching efforts in
Baltimore! Thanks also to the leaders, Bro. David and Sis. Cassie Giordano, Bro. Dana Kohlman and Bro. Gideon Hewitson. In addition to leafleting and supporting our Vacation Bible School, the team helped advertise our fall seminar series by going door to door in the neighborhood. This was an enthusiastic team whose fellowship we greatly enjoyed!

On a sad note, we lost our Bro. John Handy who fell asleep at age sixty-nine, on December 14, 2016. We extend our sympathies to Bro. John’s immediate family, including his sister, Helen Handy; his brother, Michael Handy; and his niece, Marshall Handy. Those who knew Bro. John best were well-aware of his kind heart and caring spirit. He first learned about the Christadelphian community from his next-door neighbors, Bro. Bill and Sis. Carol Link. Later he was instructed in the faith by Bro. Bill Link, Sr. and was baptized in 1994. Over the years Bro. John served the ecclesia in a variety of roles including as Finance Brother. The Baltimore Ecclesia would not own its current ecclesial hall if not for Bro. John’s quiet generosity. Although our ecclesia grieves his loss, we take comfort in knowing that, “The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all His works.” (Psalm 145:8-9)

Andy Bilello

WORCESTER, MA

As we prepare for a new year, we would like to thank God for our blessings over the past few months. We have witnessed the birth of baby Isaac MacAdams to Bro. Aaron and Sis. Kelly MacAdams and the baptism of KAYLYN PACIFIC. May we and God be with them until Christ returns.

Also, we wish to thank Bre. Jay Mayock Jr., Richard Dineen and Kevin Mayock for visiting and exhorting us. We thank God for a successful outreach effort and we continue to meet with two interested parties.

Mark Fulmer

Worcester

Shortly after my return from Halifax, I visited Worcester, Mass., where I remained about a week lecturing in Warren Hall. I had the pleasure of immersing three, upon whom rests the responsibility of contending for the faith, and defending it against the traditions of men. (John Thomas, Herald of the Kingdom, 1853 p. 276)

Of the gospel of the kingdom, and of this principle, I am not ashamed, though in this Worcester, Massachusetts, there are but two others with me in the matter (W Gerelds, Herald of the Kingdom, 1855 p. 278)

For two years they had been urging me to meet them in Worcester, Mass, We stayed with the Christadelphians there several days, I think they number about sixteen (John Thomas, The Christadelphian, 1866 p. 206)
Was Judas the “Friend” of Jesus?


The NET Bible is very similar to the above, as are the ASV and the RSV. On the other hand, the KJV translates Jesus’ words as a question, which is certainly possible: “Friend, wherefore art thou come?”.

In either case, whether statement or question in the text, the question which is asked in the title remains the same: Was Judas the “friend” of Jesus? Or, to amplify the question: Did Jesus consider Judas to be his “friend” even at the moment Judas actually betrayed him into the hands of his enemies?

There are other Greek words which are translated “friend”; by far the most common is “philos” (one who is loved like a brother), but the word here is very different. The Greek word for “friend” here in Matthew 26 means literally “one who is linked to another”. It may be translated as comrade, companion, or friend. In practice, the word can refer to a variety of relationships: a fellow student or a fellow soldier, a workmate, a neighbor, or even a close personal friend.

Matthew is the only one of the four Gospels to tell us that Jesus called Judas his friend at this moment: In Mark 14:43, the Gospel writer does not report what Jesus says to Judas at this point, although Judas does greet Jesus as “Rabbi” (v 45). In Luke 22:48, this writer reports that Jesus asks, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” And in John 18:4-5 and its context, that writer mentions that “Judas was standing there”, but does not report that Jesus addressed Judas at all, only that Jesus spoke to the soldiers, the priests’ officials, and the Pharisees.

Of course, these small differences in the four Gospels are to be expected, and should not be used to suggest that the Bible contains contradictions. Very reasonably, every Gospel writer reports the part of the story which best suits his narrative. However, we can get a more complete picture of almost every such incident by looking at all the relevant accounts alongside one another.

So, considering that none of the other three Gospels mention this point, we might ask why Matthew tells us this. Perhaps the answer begins with this: Of the four Gospels, Matthew more often — much more often, in fact — quotes or cites Old Testament passages as being fulfilled by Jesus or others. By one count: Matthew contains 98 Old Testament citations, while Mark contains 34, Luke contains 58, and John contains 40.

Are there any possible Old Testament passages which Jesus might be thinking of here in Matthew 26:50? In fact, two passages in Psalms stand out, in which David speaks of his good friend Ahithophel, who betrayed him during Absalom’s rebellion (2 Samuel 15):
“Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me” (Psa 41:9).

“If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God” (Psa 55:12-14).

In the New Testament, Psa 41:9 is applied to Judas Iscariot in John 13:18, stressing that this man has shared bread with Jesus only a few hours before betraying him to the authorities. The “close friend” of the NIV and NET, and the “familiar friend” of the KJV, are translations of the Hebrew “ish shalom”, which means man of peace.

The language of Psa 55:13 does not appear to be quoted directly in the New Testament, but the verse is so similar to Psa 41:9 that it might easily be seen in the same context. The “companion… close friend” (NIV), or “close friend… in whom I confided” (NET), is a combination of two Hebrew words: “alluf” (partner, ally, companion) and “yada” (one who is well known). Together, these two words surely suggest much of what we might think of as a friend.

The answer?
The quick answer to our question could be this: Jesus refers to Judas as his “friend” in order to emphasize:

- Their long relationship as close companions who shared in so many experiences, along with the other disciples; and also
- The fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy about one of his disciples.

There may also be another meaning. The scholar D.A. Carson writes this in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology:

The Greek word translated “friend” [“hetairos”] is found only three times in the New Testament, all three occurrences being in Matthew... (20:13; 22:12; 26:50). In each case, the person speaking is addressing an inferior who has insulted him in some way, but the words are without malice. Moreover, the speaker and the person addressed are bound in some sort of relationship, and it is that binding relationship which has suffered a [selfish] disregard of what it means.

In other words, the would-be “friend” has acted in a distinctly non-friendly manner. Nevertheless, the person speaking to him still addresses him as “friend”, as if to remind him once more of the treatment which one friend should expect from another.

This assessment seems to be borne out by the passages themselves. In the first use of “hetairos” (Matt 20:13), a landowner hires neighbors to work in his vineyard. Those who start work early agree to a day’s work in exchange for a denarius. But then other workers start work much later in the day. When the time comes to settle up the wages, all the laborers receive the same day’s pay, one denarius.
When those who worked a long day see their fellow-workers receiving the same pay for only a few hours work, they begin to grumble against the landowner (vv 9-12). But the landowner answers one of them (probably the ringleader):

“Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go” (vv 13-14).

This passage has another connection to the betrayal by Judas: “Take your pay and go”. Judas had been promised 30 pieces of silver for his treacherous work. So when he prepared to earn his pay, he also left the upper room, the company and fellowship of his other friends, and any association with the gospel which he had once believed. And then he took his leave of life itself.

In the second use of “hetairos” (Matt 22:12), a king has invited everyone to his wedding banquet. At the banquet, he notices a man who is not suitably attired, one who cared so little about the invitation that he failed to prepare properly or adequately for the great occasion. The king asks him: “Friend... how did you get in here without wedding clothes?” The man had no answer, and no defense. And so he was thrown outside, into the darkness (v 13).

Again, there is an echo of Judas’ betrayal. At the special meal presided over by his Lord, Judas excuses himself early under some false premise, and then proceeds to take the last steps in the preplanned betrayal. As he did so, he left the Upper Room of light, and was engulfed in darkness: “He went out. And it was night” (John 13:30).

Several hours later, after assembling the band of men intent on arresting Jesus, Judas leads them to the Garden of Gethsemane late at night. Again, in the dark and shadows of that garden, he betrayed his friend with a kiss, but not before the kind, but warning, words of Jesus: “Friend, do what you came for.”

Jesus’ use of the word “friend” at this time reminded his listeners of Old Testament passages about friendship and betrayal, and served as a real and final warning to the traitor. It reminds us that men have turned on their former friends far too many times in the past. Finally, it reminds all of us that the worst abuse of real friendship would be to turn our backs on our Lord and our friend, who has shown us greater love than any other person has ever shown by laying down his life for his friends (John 15:13).

George Booker

**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

**FEBRUARY, 2017**

MARCH, 2017

10-12 Austin Leander, TX Youth Gathering at T4C, near Freestone, TX. Speaker is Bro. Nat Bell (Seattle, WA) on “The Love Letter” lessons from 1 John. Ages 13 and up. To register contact Sis. Andrea Banta at abanta1992@yahoo.com.

18-19 Baltimore, MD Spring study weekend. Speaker: Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). Bro. Ted’s topic is: “The King’s Highway”, an in depth study of themes and lessons from Jesus’ sermon on the mount. Classes resume on Sunday at 9:30 am, and Memorial service at 11:00 am. Lunch to follow. Afternoon public lecture TBD. For information: Sis. Carol Link at linkgang87@gmail.com.

APRIL, 2017


14-16 Wichita Falls, TX Spring Gathering at the T4C camp, Freestone, TX. We are pleased to announce Bro. Paul Billington (Brantford, ON) will be our class leader and his theme for the weekend is “The Restitution of All Things”. We hope many are able to join us at the T4C camp as we consider the things concerning our Lord’s return. For registration contact Bro. Larry Beutel, at Lbeutel@alsco.com

22-23 Baltimore/Washington Gathering and Study Day at the Washington Ecclesia, 9240 Riggs Road, Adelphi, MD 20783. The theme for the weekend will be “As Fitting Saints” and the speaker will be Bro. David Fertig (Northern Virginia, VA). Begins Saturday at 1pm, Sunday at 9:30am. For further information contact Bro. Roberto Lara 301-9637512 or roblara81@gmail.com or check our website http://hopeofthekingdom.com/.

29-30 Sussex, NB Spring Gathering Speaker is Bro. Dale Crawford on “The Prayers of Jesus”.

MAY, 2017

19-21 Southern California Men’s Weekend, Cachuma Lake Camp Ground. Come join us for a camping weekend around God’s Word. Studies will be lead by Bro. Dev Ramcharan on “David — Model Man of God”. All meals provided, donations accepted at the weekend. Levi Gelineau leviandjessica@gmail.com or Gordon Hensley simi.rosa.hens@gmail.com.

20 Moorestown, NJ Study day at Moorestown ecclesial hall, 1:00PM. The speaker will be Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto Church Street, ON) on “He whom thy brethren shall praise” — A Life of Judah. Contact: Bro. David Cheetham, 856-273-3654, dnacheetham@gmail.com.

21 Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Fraternal Gathering, at Westin Hotel, Mt. Laurel, NJ. 10:30am. Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto Church Street, ON). Contact: Bro. David Cheetham, 856-273-3654, dnacheetham@gmail.com

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.

1-9 Mid-Atlantic Bible School (MACBS) at Shippensburg University in Shippensburg, PA. The theme this year is “The Word of God is quick and powerful” (Heb 4:12). The youth program theme will be “Old Testament Types of Christ”. Our speakers will be Bro. Neville Clark (Tea Tree Gully, South Australia) on “Zechariah — Prophecies for the Last Days” to the adults and “Moses the Man of God” to the teens; Bro. Ted Hodge, Jr. (Hamilton Book Road, ON) on “Walk in the Light: Epistles of John” to both the adults and the teens; and Bro. Stephen Whitehouse (Birmingham Hall Green, UK) on “Come to Macedonia and
Help Us” to the adults and “Appreciating God’s Prophetic Word” to the teens. Online registration: www.midatlanticbibleschool.org, email: (Information only) macbs@live.com. Rates increase after May 15th.

9-15 Southwest Bible School (SWCBS) at Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. Our speakers are Bro. Bryan Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI) on “Peter’s Conversion” adults and teens; Bro. Joe Miles (Birmingham Hall Green, UK) on “The Children of God” adults and “Accept, and Be Accepted” teens; and Bro. Stephen Whitehouse (Birmingham Hall Green, UK) on “Daniel — Faith Under Fire” adults and “Conquering the Giants” teens. For information contact, Bro. Josh Hefner 512-297-6058 or randaljhefner@yahoo.com; registration forms available at www.swcbs.com.

15-23 Midwest Bible School will be held at Trine University, Angola, IN. Our speakers are: Bro. Ron Cowie (AUS) on “Jesus The Master Teacher”, Bro. Roger Lewis (NZ) on “Who Was The Nameless Man Of God?” and Bro. Jay Mayock (CA) on “All in All (Psalm 8).” For registration information, contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 44943 Yorkshire Drive, Novi, MI 48375, 248.462.5740, E-mail: mike.live@gmail.com or visit www.midwestbibleschool.com.


30-Aug 5 Rogue River Bible School Speakers: Bro. Manny Rodriguez (Reseda, CA) on “Ezra — The Good Hand of God was Upon Us” a character study on Ezra; Bro. Stephen Palmer (Mumbles, UK) on “The Word of Truth” verbal inspiration and its implications for understanding Scripture; and Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto Church St., ON) on “That ye may be the children of your father - Christ’s teaching on the mount”. For registration information, contact Sis. Pat Posey at pat1posey@gmail.com.

OCTOBER, 2017

7-8 Sussex, NB Thanksgiving Gathering. Our speaker will be Bro. Bill Lawrence on “1 Peter”.

“GO ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Such was the command of the Lord Jesus Christ to his disciples just before his ascension to the Father, and as a result every true disciple from that day to this has felt the urge to tell his fellow-men the Glad Tidings of the Kingdom of God. In consequence of the comparatively small number of people who come to a knowledge of the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a strong tendency to look upon every man who embraces the Truth as an embryo public preacher of the Gospel, and probably in most cases there is in the mind of the new brother of Christ an ambition to proclaim the good news in public. Was this exclusively what Christ had in mind? One of the effects of the practice referred to is that brethren are now in a general way being referred to as “speaking brethren” and “non-speaking brethren.” It is very easy to condemn and sometimes unwise to do so, but the writer must frankly express a fear that this has had the effect of lulling brethren and sisters to sleep as regards their individual responsibility to “Preach the Gospel.” How often does a brother or sister personally proclaim the Glad Tidings to his neighbor privately? (The Christadelphian, 1931 p 411)
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