

THE CRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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Nest in the Gale

It has been said that we cannot control the wind, and the recent devastating hurricanes have proved this. We can, however, nest in the gale.

We cannot control the wind but we are in control of our response to it. Those who heeded the early warning signs of the coming storms were better prepared to ride them out than those who refused to believe they were coming when the sun was shining and all appeared to be fine. The storms were coming. People could either prepare for them or ignore them. They were coming just the same.

Those who evacuated, those who stored water, those who went into the shelters to nest in the gale survived and lived to see the sun shine another day.

There is a powerful spiritual lesson for us to learn from the devastating hurricanes that have swept across Florida and Louisiana.

*The Lord is coming. We may not believe it. We may not live like we believe it, but **he** is coming. We need to prepare before **his** wind blows, before the earth shakes, before the Lord comes. So many people ignore the warnings and live like there is no tomorrow. Perhaps for them, it is true. What about us? Are we seeking first the Kingdom of God?*

Robert J. Lloyd

Editorial

Redeemed and Redeeming

We “are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

In the Old Testament, God “redeemed” His people Israel out of Egypt. The literal meaning of the words used — both in Old Testament and New Testament — is that He “bought”, or “ransomed”, them from their previous owner (Pharaoh) — so that they would **belong** exclusively to Him (Exod. 6:6; 15:13,16; Deut. 15:15; 1 Pet. 1:18,19; Eph. 1:7; 1 Cor. 6:20; Rev. 5:9). Most especially, the “price” God paid was the blood of the Passover lamb (1 Pet. 1:18,19; 1 Cor. 5:7; John 1:29,36; Rev. 5:6-9).

The “problem” of redemption

Here, however, is the problem — a problem with which we as Christadelphians must wrestle: When we consider “redemption”, we must think in terms of a commercial transaction. The Bible tells us that we have been “bought” with Christ’s blood. Such a concept suggests certain questions:

- (a) Does this mean we are mere items of merchandise, having no say in what happens to us? Of course not.
- (b) Does this mean Christ has “paid the price”, all by himself, and we need never do anything ourselves? No.
- (c) Does it mean that the actual blood of Christ (as 1 Pet. 1 implies) is, literally, the price paid for us? No again.

Whereas it is the “price” (or process) of redemption that we tend to think of and analyze, perhaps we would do well to concentrate instead on the “property” (or results) concept. This, it would appear, is what God would have us ponder: not so much the aspect of “How does it work?” — but rather the aspect of “What does it accomplish?” Not so much the “mechanical” means by which redemption was achieved, but instead what “redemption” means, morally and spiritually; ***what it means to us, every day, to belong to God.***

“You were ***bought*** at a price. ***Therefore*** honor God with your body” (1 Cor. 6:20).

“You were ***bought*** at a price; ***[therefore]*** do not become slaves of men” (1 Cor. 7:23).

“[Christ] gave himself for us to ***redeem*** us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, ***eager to do what is good***” (Tit. 2:14).

Money in the New Testament

The New Testament, particularly in the teachings of Jesus, has so much to do with

“money”! Doesn’t this seem extraordinary, since the Bible tells us “we are **NOT** redeemed with perishable things such as silver or gold... but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Pet. 1:18,19)?

It is true that “money” and monetary concepts permeate the gospels:

- the parable of the “pounds”;
- the parable of the “talents”;
- the workers in the vineyard, arguing about their wages;
- the unjust steward, pilfering his master’s resources;
- the unmerciful servant, forgiven a huge debt, who then refuses to forgive the small debt of another man;
- the question: whether or not to pay tribute to Caesar;
- the widow with two small coins, who gives to God “all her living”;
- “You cannot serve God and Mammon [Money]!”;
- Jesus overturning of the tables of the moneychangers;
- Judas stealing from the common treasury of the disciples;
- Judas betraying Jesus for money;
- “Do not store up for yourselves treasures upon earth”;
- the rich young ruler, who cannot part with his riches;
- the treasure hidden in the field;
- the pearl of great price;
- the prodigal son, who wastes his father’s money;
- the man who begs Jesus to help him get his share of the family property from his brother;
- the woman who has ten coins, loses one, and then searches for it desperately, and so forth.

If our salvation has nothing to do with money, then why are there so very many teachings of Jesus about money?

I think it is because... how we think of money, how we use money, and how we invest it plays so large a part in our lives. After all, many of us spend a significant percentage of our waking hours working at some paying job. Religion can become a very artificial matter if we somehow divorce it from money... if we act as if the way we spend a good part of five days out of every seven is of no consequence in the sight of God.

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 in 1836 and then worked to bring Texas into the United States in 1845. 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 the fish downstream when the huge numbers of sins reached them! ***Thereafter, and for the last years of his life, he resolutely devoted a large portion of his income to charity. His old friends were stunned by the change in Sam Houston, but he told them that, when he was***

baptized, his wallet had been baptized also!

When we were baptized, were our wallets and bank accounts baptized too?

When we were baptized — buried in the likeness of our Lord's death, burial, and resurrection... ***did we "baptize" our Saturday nights as well as our Sunday mornings? Did we "baptize" our recreation times as well as our Bible class times? Did we "baptize" our marriages, and our family lives too?***

Or did we imagine, when we were preparing to be baptized, that we were somehow "making a deal" with God, agreeing to pay "one hour's worship each week, more or less" (***IF*** I feel rested and perfectly well, and up to it, and ***IF*** nothing more important comes along) in exchange for "endless years of eternal joy in God's Kingdom"? ("What a bargain!")

Paul writes, "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8,9).

This is absolutely true; there is nothing we can ***do***, and there is nothing we can ***offer*** to God that will ***pay*** for our salvation. Our salvation has been "bought" already, if you will, by Jesus Christ, in his life and death and resurrection.

But it is also true, as Paul says in the very next verse: "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus ***to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do***" (Eph. 2:10).

We are indeed saved by the grace of God, through faith. But the result of such salvation is not just the same old creature with a new name. Instead, it is God's "workmanship... created... to do good works." Hence the strong connection and interaction between faith and grace, on one hand, and works on the other — whilst not implying that we are in any degree saved by our works!

Notice the order in Paul's words: ***we do not do good works so that we may be saved — rather, we are saved so that we may do good works!***

Buying and selling

All this has to do with "redemption", and "buying and selling". Perhaps this helps explain the many references to money in the gospels. As we have been "bought" by Christ, so we should "buy" Christ!

"IF you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and ***IF*** you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, ***THEN*** you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God" (Prov. 2:3-5).

"Wisdom is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is ***more precious*** than rubies; nothing can compare with her" (Prov. 3:14,15).

To seek knowledge is to seek God, who is the source of all knowledge (Mal. 3:16; James 1:5,6), and to seek Christ Jesus, "who has become for us wisdom from God... and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

These verses help us to recognize that the "wisdom" of the Bible is not neces-

sarily found lying around on the ground — rather, finding understanding, and knowledge, and wisdom requires “digging”. The “hiding” of wisdom might at first glance seem counterproductive from God’s point of view, but it serves an important purpose: it puts a “price tag” on it! That which requires some effort to obtain is valued more. The nut is tastier if we have to crack the hard shell and extract it ourselves. The precious stones that are hidden in the earth are all the more valued if we have to find them.

Jesus tells us that God’s kingdom is life’s great priority (Matt. 6:33), and he illustrates this point by telling the parable of men selling all they had to buy a field or a great pearl (Matt. 13:44-46). What have we “sold” in order to “buy” God’s Kingdom? God will not give His riches for sporadic and slight effort; but He will reward diligent seekers (Jer. 29:13). Our Lord Jesus Christ sought his Father all night upon a mountain (Luke 6:12). And while others slept in Gethsemane, he searched for the treasure of God’s favor with tears and bloody sweat (Luke 22:39-46).

One writer has said, “Obtaining spiritual wisdom isn’t a once-a-week hobby, it is the daily discipline of a lifetime. But in this age of microwave ovens, fast foods, readers’ digests, and numerous ‘made easy’ books, many people are out of the habit of daily investing time and energy in digging deep into Scripture and learning wisdom from the Lord” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Skillful: Proverbs*).

What is the cost of “buying” wisdom?

“Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme; therefore *get* (‘qanah’ = buy) wisdom. *Though it cost all you have*, get understanding” (Prov. 4:5-7).

The KJV has “With all thy getting...”, but the NIV is much, much better: “Though it cost all you have...” No price is too much to pay for wisdom — we must give everything for it. Jesus turned this proverb into two little parables: the treasure hidden in the field (Matt. 13:44), and the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:45,46). And he also said, “In the same way, any of you who does not give up *everything* he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33).

We acquire “Wisdom”, not just as so much theoretical knowledge, but as a state of mind, a focus of our lives, that keeps us in touch with our Heavenly Father and with His Son: “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23).

How do we “buy” this sort of Wisdom? Not with dollars and cents, but with time and effort! *As Jesus “redeemed” us, so we “redeem” him!* Jesus “bought”, or “redeemed”, us with his precious blood — his life, his dedication, his devotion, and his love. If we value being his property, and the corresponding status and privilege, then we must work to “buy” him, to prove the value of Jesus in our lives! We can never pay the “price” that he paid — a perfect and sinless life. But we *can* — and *must* — “pay” the best we have! We “buy the truth” (which *is* Christ: John 14:6), whatever the cost, whatever the sacrifice! And we refuse to “sell [him]” at

any price (Prov. 23:23)!

“**Redeem** the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16). “Redeem” is “exagorazo” — to buy out of the market. How do we buy back our time in the marketplace of life? The NIV paraphrases, loosely but accurately: “Make the most of every opportunity.” And that is how we “buy the Truth”... how we “buy” Christ who is our “wisdom” and “truth” as well as our “redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). We take our lives — and our hearts, and our possessions, and our opportunities, all wrapped up in one — and we understand that **we** belong to Christ, that every part of us (Saturday night, Sunday morning... work time, leisure time, and meeting time) belongs to the One who has “bought” us out of slavery to “King Sin”.

Or do we use the “talents” we have been given... to satisfy our own desires? Or do we — even — hide them in the ground?

Judas sold his entire future for 30 pieces of silver. How unutterably sad it was — when compared to the glories of God’s Kingdom!

This thought compels us to ask: is there a little “Judas” in all of us? For what paltry price might **we** “sell” the hope of eternal life?

What is Christ worth?

But perhaps we tell ourselves — and firmly mean it — ‘I would **never** sell **my** “birthright”!’ (like Esau did: Heb. 12:16). Even so, as we journey along the way, do we, secretly in our minds, “bargain” with God? Do we try to talk down the “price” (cf. Prov. 20:14)? Do we try to give Him as little as we think we can get away with — thus treating His wondrous grace as though it were a “cheap” thing?

To this the writer to Hebrews had the devastating reply: “Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, **who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him**, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Heb. 10:28,29).

The grace of God, lavished upon us through the life and death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ — the shed blood of His precious Son! — costs us nothing, but it is worth more than all the wealth of a thousand Saudi princes. It is God’s free gift to us, without money and without price (Isa. 55:1).

But the ultimate question is... *What do we think it’s worth?*

As Bro. Islip Collyer said in his fine hymn: “We make the answer now!”

*“In a world where the holding of individuals for ransom, whether prisoners of war, kidnapped travelers, or slaves, was commonplace, the Biblical notion of ‘redemption’ — buying another’s freedom by the payment of a ransom — was a metaphor ready to hand. It well describes God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt into the freedom of Canaan, and Christ’s deliverance of sinners whose life and freedom were justly forfeit” (R.E.O. White, **Interpreting the Bible Today**, p. 46).*

Exhortation

Distraction

We are all familiar with the opening scene of Job, where the Lord authorizes “Satan” to test that good man. Moving that scenario up to our day, what strategy would an adversary use to test our dedication to the things of the Truth? Perhaps it would be the subtle method of distraction.

The conversation between our tempter and his peers might go something like this: “Go out, keep them busy with hundreds of details of daily living. Tempt them to overspend so that they will need to borrow heavily. Convince them that they need to work six or seven days a week, ten to twelve hours a day, to ensure that they can finance bigger and better homes, faster cars and designer clothes.

“Fill father’s work schedule to prevent quality time with children. Encourage mothers to rush around to sports activities, music lessons and such like. With their schedules full of activity, their homes will become frantic, instead of a calm escape from the pressures of work and school.

“Over-stimulate their minds so they cannot hear the still small voice of God. Prevent quiet time by bombarding them with noise from the radio and television. Make sure that they become addicted to television shows, sports, or crafts. Enhance their social life so that they are constantly entertaining the sort of people that need to be impressed. Fill their minds with magazines and newspapers and the sordid news of a sick world.

“Send them to amusement parks, sporting events, concerts and movies; they will become so exhausted from having ‘fun’ that contemplation of the wonders of God’s creation will elude them. Finally, involve them in gossip and small talk so that they have no chance to really get to know their brothers and sisters.”

Returning to the reality of our everyday lives, no better plan could be devised. It is guaranteed to shift our focus from the ways of the Lord to the ways of the world. The fact is, these things can so easily fill our minds and take up all of our time. Let us be honest now and search our hearts. Are we so caught up and worried about the things of life that we forget to meditate and pray? Are we working so hard to pay the bills that we don’t spend quality time with our families? It is needful for health to take time out from business or ongoing education, but do we neglect that also? Are we so busy with a multitude of activities and having fun with our friends, that we forget to devote some time to helping others?

Once we have recognized that we have problems in this area, the big question is ‘How do we change for the better?’

Developing self-control

How do we take control over the thousand distractions that assail us on a daily basis? The key word is control; if we do not make an effort to rectify the situation,

the things of the world will take over and become more important to us than God. In order to take control of one's life, one must first of all control oneself. It is interesting to note that self-control is one of the attributes of the fruit of the spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:22-24, NIV). In effect, the apostle Paul is saying that without the attribute of self-control we cannot crucify the flesh. His letter to Timothy goes even further in this respect, for Paul states that those who have no self-control are amongst those who are without God in their lives: "For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:2-4).

Self-control is a vital element in how we respond to testing. In any given situation we can do God's will or our own; God has given us the freedom to choose.

Just three problems

It can be overwhelming to consider the complexities of the twenty-first century, with its advances in technology and its ever-increasing pace of life. How can we learn to cope with the multitude of distractions, and the temptations and expectations of modern-day society? The first step in finding a solution is to define the problems.

The apostle John helps by informing us that all our temptations fall into just three categories: "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father..." (1 John 2:16). If instead of a myriad of little problems we have only three major ones, then we have reason for great hope. Christ was tempted in each of these areas, yet he overcame the temptation — thereby showing us the methods to control *ourselves*, too.

After fasting forty days and nights in the wilderness, Jesus was desperately hungry: "The devil said to him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread" (Luke 4:3). The Lord exercised the self-control needed to overcome "the lust of the flesh".

The second temptation concerned "the lust of the eyes": "The devil taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee... if thou wilt worship me" (vv. 4:5-8). Again, Jesus had to muster great self-control.

Next came the temptation of pride: "If you are the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence" (v. 9). Jesus could have given in to the pride of being the Son of God, but by refusing to put this elevated position to the test, he again used supreme self-control.

Blocking our view of salvation

The Master was aware that temptations arise from everyday events that seem so harmless; he told his disciples: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the

coming of the Son of Man... People were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark... until the flood came and took them away" (Matt. 24:37-39, NIV). These people were conducting their daily activities in full view of the ark that Noah was building, but they ignored the warning, pushing it to the back of their minds.

The lesson from Christ is to beware that activities, however benign, do not block our view of salvation. We are blessed to have a mediator who was tested in all points as we are, yet overcame, thus becoming an example of self-control.

We need to simplify our struggle to follow him. In our daily determination to overcome distractions it will greatly help if we can stay focused on our walk towards the kingdom. This goal can only be achieved if we are able to hear his message over the clutter and noise of the world.

Only one adversary

Ours is not a single adversary; our "Satan" is composed of a thousand small things that we take into our daily routines, none of which are problems in themselves. It is their incremental nature, one thing added to another, that renders the situation spiritually dangerous. We all go through times when we feel we are being tried and tested almost to the limit of endurance. This is when we need to look to our Lord and take comfort in the knowledge that he was victorious and has shown us the way. When he was overwhelmed by the demands of others, and the pressing crowds, he drew aside for peace and quiet so that he could pray and meditate. This should be our method of release from tension and pressure; in fact, the only way is to make a deliberate effort to create a quiet space in our busy lives. Over the frantic cries of modern society, we must be able to hear "the still small voice" of God speaking to us (1 Kings 19:12).

In conclusion, let us consider how to avoid negative distractions. First of all, pare down nonessentials; in so doing, we will have fewer things to worry about [*see Editor's note*]. With lowered anxiety levels we can concentrate on family relationships and building a happy home. There will be more time to devote to Bible reading and the extended 'family' in the ecclesia. Our homes should be a refuge from the pressures of work, and the ecclesia should also be a source of strength and encouragement.

Secondly, and most importantly, consider Jesus; when the clamor of the crowds and the demands of the disciples pressed heavily upon him, he prayed to his heavenly Father. Likewise, let us pray for help and the wisdom to control life's distractions.

Michael Atkin (Toronto East)

Editor's Note:

This statement is tremendously important. But it is probably beyond the scope of this or any exhortation to get into the specifics. Nevertheless, here is a place where we may usefully pause and ask ourselves, individually at least: 'What can I do — what can we do, as a family — to "avoid negative distractions" and "pare down

nonessentials”?’

*Each one’s answer to this question may well be different. But the question ought to be asked, and answered, and acted upon! We should remember that (1) one believer’s nonessential distraction may be another’s more-or-less essential recreational need; (2) what may work for one person or family may not work for another, and (3) this is no place for “judging” others (Rom. 14:10). With these disclaimers in mind, it might be useful to hear from brothers and sisters: ‘What have **you** or **your family** done to avoid negative distractions and pare down nonessentials?’ Responses are invited.*

*“A horse that resists the reins, a car without brakes, and a person with no self-control are all equally headed for disaster”
(Sathya Sai Baba).*

*“Being forced to work, and forced to do your best, will breed in you temperance and self-control, diligence and strength of will, cheerfulness and content, and a hundred virtues which the idle will never know”
(Charles Kingsley).*

Special Invitation

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

*You, your family and friends are invited to the
32nd annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 23-29, 2007.*

*The main speakers this year will be as follows:
The Brothers Ross: “Five Brothers / Five Sisters”
Timothy Whittaker: “Good King Hezekiah”
Tony Isaacs: “The Spirit in Us”*

*Contact Brad Rek 330-609-6957, lisarek8@cs.com
Information is available at www.cgaf.org*

Apologetics

The Hard Questions:

(26) Which God? The Exclusivity Issue:

(10) Pluralism and Concluding Thoughts

The pluralist perspective

Many people adopt the pluralist position as their solution to the exclusivity problem. The pluralist position accepts all, or at least a great many, religious persuasions as equally valid. This position is incompatible with our worldview, but probably has many subscribers among those who have left our body. Religious pluralism has a stronghold in our democratic culture, in which tolerance and pluralism in many aspects of life are the norm. We are indeed thankful that we do not live in a fascist or totalitarian state. As a society, we greatly enjoy freedom of religion, without which we might not even exist as a denomination of Christendom. It seems awkward to bite the hand that gives us freedom, but the two issues must be teased apart for our purposes here.

To argue exclusivity in a social context of pluralism, we must first distinguish between religious pluralism and religious freedom. Freedom of religion is a sociological and political issue, not a theological issue. We are thankful that we have religious freedom, and we will not discuss that issue further. We do, however, want to discuss religious pluralism.

The first step in understanding religious pluralism is to identify the underlying thinking that leads to the conclusion that the world contains many equally valid religions. A person can adopt the pluralist position based on any number of core assumptions or beliefs about God. These beliefs could include:

1. God probably doesn't even exist, so whatever god(s) a culture or group espouses is (are) as good as anyone else's.
2. God might exist, but only as a vague, impersonal power. God has provided no specific revelation because there is nothing to reveal; we only sense the might of God in nature, and any form of worship is fine because it's only a human enterprise.
3. God has provided no revelation; therefore, whatever any culture perceives about God is just as valid as any other.
4. God has made no revelation, or no specific revelation, but each religion's traditions and practices do reveal some truth or aspect about God. No one has all of it, but everyone has some of it.
5. God is unknowable, there is no specific revelation, and it is utter folly and conceit for any person, organization, or culture to claim that they possess the sole repository of knowledge about God.

6. God has made many revelations, and each of humanity's many religions is only answerable to the revelation accepted by its own culture.
7. God is honored by sincerity of belief and love for humanity; whatever else people add to religion amounts to bigotry.
8. God has made one specific revelation, the Bible, but it is impossible for any one person or group to interpret it correctly. Anyone's take on it is as good as anyone else's.

All of the above positions disdain the idea that a single truth about God exists or can be known. Therefore, no religious body can make the claim that they know "the truth." All of these viewpoints assume that religion is a subjective venture, and that there is no such thing as "error" because there is no absolute standard that measures any religion's beliefs and practices. Everyone is entitled to his or her belief system, and every religion has its own validity — except, of course, those religions held in esteem by your enemies.

Ironically, each of the propositions above is in the form of an objective universal judgment. Each statement purports to have some factual knowledge of God, even if that factual knowledge is that we don't have any factual knowledge. It's not so clear how any statement about God can be considered purely subjective, for to claim that religion is subjective is an absolutist position. Let's not worry about that detail now, however. We do need to determine if any of the positions on the list is in fact valid, or if it is possible that an objective religious position exists that would preclude subjectivity, and therefore pluralism.

When we first begin to examine the question of exclusivity, as those living in a religiously pluralistic society, we must first examine the issue of revelation and religious objectivity. Before we ask, "Are Christadelphians the only organization with a good handle on what God is all about?" we need to ask a more general question first: "Is it reasonable that a specific and absolute (not relative or culture-based) knowledge of God is available, so that *any* group could make the claim that their belief is solely accurate among the religions of the world?" We need first to investigate the likelihood that any such position is available before we can go about demonstrating our claim to hold that position.

This consideration leads to yet further upstream questions, so we must back up all the way to the existence-of-God question that we addressed much earlier in this series. We concluded that belief in a "god" of any kind is quite warranted from what we do know about the universe. That's our starting point. This step eliminates religious subjectivity that emanates from atheism (proposition 1 on the above list).

The next step is to demonstrate that the Creator God is also a personal God. This I also covered in an earlier section of this series. After presenting the case for a personal God, the next step, which is just a little one, takes us to the likelihood that a personal God would also be a God of revelation, that is, One who would reveal to the people He has created whatsoever they need to engage God in a personal relationship. By definition, a "personal" God is one who communicates with

“persons”. Again, at this point we are not talking about *which* revelation, or *how* God might reveal Himself, only the fact that a specific revelation is reasonable and consistent with what we can know about God outside of such revelation (Rom. 1:20-22). These two steps — a personal God and a God of revelation — eliminate any subjectivity that arises from a deist position (that God exists only as a creative force and has no interaction with creation). We’ve still more work to do, however, until we can feel comfortable with our stance.

Finally, we come to the point I covered in recent articles: that the specific revelation of God is in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1,2). The perception that God revealed himself to humanity in the form of a human life is paramount to our argument. Secondary to that argument is that the Bible is the written record of the essential revelation, which is the life, death, resurrection, and return of Jesus Christ. The revelation of God to humanity has come in the form of historical events: the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. As I have emphasized, and will always continue to emphasize, the resurrection, being a historical event, falls first into the category of objective truth, and from that we derive theological tenets. Further, we can add the history of Israel and the seed of Abraham as further objective evidence for the specific revelation of God we know as the Bible. The facts about Jesus are inextricably embedded in this national history.

A further use of the resurrection

I want to emphasize here another important aspect of the resurrection. In order to transcend subjectivity, relativism, and pluralism (related but not synonymous concepts), a successful apologetic for exclusivity must establish some universal objective basis for its claim. For a religious idea to hold true for all persons at all times, it must have its basis in some real event, not in an abstract idea or set of moral teachings. This is not to argue that any event will do, nor is it to say that various religions haven’t come up with useful moral and social ideas. It is only to say that if a religion is going to claim universal validity, it must have as its basis some criterion that applies universally.

Christianity claims to have its basis in the resurrection of Jesus. The nature of this event concerns life and death. By appealing to resurrection, Christianity can claim a universal application; that is, it applies to everyone who ever lived, because all people are subject to death. A human, as long as he or she is alive, has a unique place in the universe — an autonomous moral agent capable of fellowship with God. When dead, however, a human is nothing. Everything we have or aspire to in life is subsumed under the larger heading of “being alive,” and it is this very most fundamental aspect of a human being that the resurrection addresses.

Now we have two facets of the resurrection that transcend relativism. It is not only a historical event, but it is also a historical event that resides in the most fundamental category of human existence. Setting aside for a moment the evidence for the historicity of a literal resurrection (covered a few articles ago), consider just the bare claim: a dead person now alive; death annulled.

The scope and nature of this claim in and of itself places Christianity in a unique category among the world's religions. It alone tackles the most fundamental human problem, death — not by ignoring it, or by investing in any mythological solution, but by solving it in a historically verifiable and theologically sensible manner.

Let's take one more pass across this idea to make sure that we can fully appreciate the apologetic value of the resurrection. Christianity centers on the literal resurrection of Jesus. The evidence for this is copious, and it is the most natural reading of the gospel accounts. I do not want to go over this material again. I do want to highlight a broader concept about the resurrection, which is its nature and scope.

Rather than having a religion centered on some document or alleged miracle or enlightenment of its founder, Christianity has a basis of an entirely different nature. It is not about some aspect of life or morality — it *is* life. Life itself becomes the defining feature, and this is the aspect that nullifies pluralism, at least for anyone subject to death — that is, regular mortal people, such as are found in 100% of the population worldwide. The position of Biblical Christianity transcends any cultural relativism (numbers 5 and 6 on the list) by establishing a single universal criterion, life from death.

Issues downstream from revelation

Thus far, we have claimed the likelihood of the existence of a personal God who has revealed Himself to humanity. He did this in many ways, but the primary revelation is the resurrection of Jesus (Heb. 1:1,2). In our day it is the record that we call revelation, that is, the Bible. At the time of the resurrection, there was no debate as to what resurrection meant: Jesus was dead, but is now alive. Within about 100 years the meaning of resurrection had shifted, and within 300 years it was essentially lost. People still used the word, but the concept was gone. For them, the atonement was no longer the atonement, and people didn't really die. *Away* went orthodoxy on its errant course.

We know that people draw radically different meanings from the same Bible. We know that Christian teachings, in the world of orthodoxy, are shifting sands. Are these shifts due to God's further revelations that changed original concepts, or is it more likely that these changes came from human origins?

It's hard to argue that God would be inconsistent, and it's also hard to argue that at one time people didn't have immortal souls, but now they do. On the other hand, it's very easy to argue that people can change teachings to suit their perceived needs. According to the pluralist position, these people aren't wrong; they just have a different faith system. But why should it be that people, who are so capable of being so wrong in so many ways, cannot be wrong about religious beliefs also? What is it about religion that it somehow allows everyone to be "right"?

We do know that the belief in an immortal soul drives much of pluralism, because people, in general, are loathe to condemn so many souls to eternal punishment. In order to relieve their consciences, they make the bounds of religion very broad indeed, and pluralism helps out quite a bit. Pluralism is "politically correct", but

it's a high price to pay for social comfort, because its intellectual bankruptcy is transparent.

An acceptable aspect of pluralism

People respond to God in many ways. We have a great diversity in modes of worship, ways we run our personal lives, and ways we express our works of faith. We are far from an intolerant body, even if we do sometimes have trouble being as flexible as we could be. However, all this goes on within the body, and the body has one head, Jesus. Within our body we ought to have a great pluralism of how people relate to God, because each person is different. There is one personal God, and the resurrection of Jesus provides a single reference point for religious truth. Because that one faith entails one body, inclusive of all believers in all times and cultures, there will be a multitude of ways in which these believers will worship and live out their shared faith.

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This series on “The Hard Questions” will recess for the present. Future articles are planned at intervals, in which we will discuss various aspects of living the faith.

“Two other”

“Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias... Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together” (John 21:1,2).

“**Two other.**’ The suggestiveness of these words is arresting. This was a wonderful occasion on which the Lord was specially manifesting himself to a group of disciples. Every phase of the doings of that morning is full of light and glory. The risen Redeemer and Ruler was showing men his interest and power in the commonplaces of their lives, and in the greatest responsibilities thereof. He touched their daily doings with light and glory [in the midst of] fishing and preparing breakfast. He gave them the grandest conception of their fellowship with himself in his work of gathering together, in one, the sheep that were scattered abroad.

“Who were these men? They were Simon Peter, and Thomas, and Nathanael, and James and John — all outstanding figures. But there were ‘two other’ and they are unnamed. They represent the anonymous and hidden multitudes of faithful souls, whose names are never published in human documents, and whose deeds are never recorded in human reports. To these he manifested himself, as surely as to the others.

“Those ‘two other’ represented the majority of the saints. Let all such remember that of his fullness they also receive. Manifestations are needed for fidelity in obscure places of service, and they are granted.

“To all his own, he ever comes with unveilings of his glory, with ministrations of his grace and truth” (G. Campbell Morgan).

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:

(5) God's all-embracing purpose in the Lord Jesus

At the end of our previous study, our final reflection in considering Ephesians 1:6 was to dwell upon the embodiment of God's grace in His beloved Son. In moving on now to the study of verses 7-10, we shall see how the glory of divine grace is expressed in the Lord's sacrificial death and was a necessary preliminary to the ultimate consummation of God's purpose with mankind.

In Ephesians 1:7-10 we can find an epitome of God's saving work in the Lord Jesus. We recall Peter's words when, in the earliest days of the proclamation of the Gospel, he had declared: "And in none other is there salvation; for neither is there any name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). We must never forget that for Paul an understanding of the principles of redemption had been a painful process. Responsible for the death of others, he had blood on his hands, directly or indirectly (see Acts 22:4,20). Yet all this dreadful record had been the consequence of a failure to understand, for he had acted "ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:13), a passage which we must inevitably remember in connection with the circumstances of the Apostle's conversion. If his sins were great, he had no doubt about the total nature of the forgiveness he had received. When he had recovered from his blindness on the Damascus road, he unhesitatingly obeyed the words of Ananias: "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16).

The word "blood" is a simple one, but in the NT and in the OT it is a term of enormous significance. We cannot now consider all the relevant passages, but we need always to be reminded that we were redeemed, not "with corruptible things, with silver and gold", but "with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:18,19). Now we need to go over some of the ground already covered. First, we think again of the significance of the expression "the foundation of the world", which we interpreted as that divine constitution which came into being with Adam and Eve. God's provision of skins to provide a covering to hide human sin foreshadowed the one identified by the Baptist as "the lamb of God" (see John 1:29,36), "foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world" (see, once more, 1 Pet. 1:18-20). It is he who by his sacrificial death provided a covering for sins (cf. Ps. 32:1,2).

For our understanding of the significance of blood, we can turn to the history of the deliverance of the Israelites. In bondage, oppressed by a cruel and arrogant king, they longed for freedom from the Egyptian yoke. God's response was to send Moses. The king's stubborn unwillingness to release the Israelites was eventually broken by the slaying of the firstborn of Egypt. When the angel of death passed over the land, the children of Israel were instructed to slay a lamb or goat without

blemish, and to sprinkle its blood upon the lintel and doorposts of their dwellings. When the instructions were duly carried out, the Israelites were spared. Their obedience and faith were essential elements in God's work of deliverance, and this was achieved through faith in the efficacy of the blood of the slain creatures. God thus became their redeemer, purchasing them to Himself (see *Psa.* 74:2).

Moreover, there is a powerful parallel between details in the institution of the first covenant with Israel and the inauguration of the new covenant. In *Exodus* 20-23 (a sequence of passages mentioned earlier in these studies), the LORD God lays down the ordinances to be observed by His people. These were incorporated in what is called the Book of the Covenant and they were duly read twice to the nation at Sinai (*Exod.* 24:3,7). The people responded on both occasions, pledging themselves to observe all the conditions in the book (*vv.* 3,7). The covenant was ratified by the shedding of the blood of oxen, slain by young men (*v.* 5). Half of the blood thus produced was sprinkled on the altar (*v.* 6) and the remainder on the people. At the conclusion of the ritual, Moses declared: "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words" (*v.* 8). There was thus established in the true sense a covenant between the LORD God and His people. We take special note of the expression, "the blood of the covenant".

It is impossible to miss the echoes of all this in the NT. In the upper room, before his death on the cross, knowing full well that his blood was to be shed, Jesus declared to his apostles after he had taken the cup and given thanks: "Drink ye all of it. For this is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto the remission of sins" (*Matt.* 26:27,8; cf. *Mark* 14:24). Luke adds "new" before "covenant" (22:20). Thus was fulfilled the great prophecy of Jeremiah who was contemporary with the violation of the covenant made at Sinai but who also spoke of the establishment of a new covenant (*Jer.* 31:31). That the blessings of the new covenant far outweigh those of the old is a theme developed at length in the Letter to the Hebrews, for our Lord was indeed, as compared with Moses, "the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted ('founded', NIV) upon better promises" (8:6).

There is one all-important difference between the Passover arrangements and the institution of the covenant at Sinai when compared with the new covenant: on both occasions the Israelites did not partake of the blood; indeed, in the Law they were expressly forbidden so to do, for, they were told, the life was in the blood (*Lev.* 17:10-12). "The life was in the blood"; while it is true that the liquid in our veins and arteries is our lifeblood and we can consult the haematologist to learn much about ourselves, we look for a deeper Biblical significance. With this in mind, we read the words of our Lord after he had taken the cup, containing the wine which he appointed as the symbol of his blood: "Drink ye all of it" (*Matt.* 26:27), and then we recall the statement which so shocked the Jews and tested the allegiance even of the apostles: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves" (*John* 6: 53). As often as we eat the bread and drink the wine in memory of our Lord's death, the immense privilege we enjoy should be in our minds and hearts,

for his indeed is the blood of the everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20).

As for the term “redemption” in Ephesians 1:7, we must recognize there is a great difference between ransom and redemption in the context of what the Lord achieved by his death; the meaning there is rather release, deliverance. The notion of ransom carries with it the idea of one party who holds another and will not grant release until the necessary terms have been met. When we reflect upon the circumstances of the Israelites leaving Egypt, we realize that no ransom price was given to their masters; the latter, in fact, paid a far greater price than did the Israelites. The second part of verse 7 states the redemption brought by the Lord, through his blood, results in the forgiveness of our sins. The price paid by our Lord with his death on the cross was no requirement necessary to placate an angry God: the forgiveness is freely granted by God Himself (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18,19).

The Apostle goes on to say (in Eph. 1:7) that this forgiveness is an expression of the “riches of his grace”; and in so doing Paul is striving to bring home to his readers the wonder of divine grace. There are certain terms which recur in the letter. They are woven into the very fabric of the epistle and they must be regarded as of the utmost importance; there is none more significant than “grace”. We encountered it in the opening salutation, and it occurs a total of 12 times in Ephesians and some 22 times in Romans, a much longer epistle. In common with other letters, in Romans 1:7 there is a mention of grace in the opening salutation and at the end of the letter (16:20). Likewise, in Ephesians 6:24, Paul prays grace will be with all who “love the Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love” (NIV; see also for example, 1 Cor. 1:3 and 16:23). In our present passage we have already noted above how Paul speaks of the “riches” of divine grace. Here again we encounter a recurrent word; “riches” will come to our attention in five passages. When we reflect upon man’s preoccupation with riches and the efforts he exerts to obtain them, we see the contrast, so often tragic, between human endeavour and what is freely available in the Lord Jesus. It is the Lord himself who refers to “the deceitfulness of riches” (see Matt. 13:22, and also 1 Tim. 6:10).

In verse 8 (of Eph. 1) Paul reinforces the concept of divine grace by affirming that God has made it abound towards us in “all wisdom and prudence”. Here the Apostle reminds us of what is available if we allow God’s grace truly to enter into us, allowing it to influence us in the depths of our being. We then develop wisdom and prudence. The latter (prudence) has a practical connotation and denotes the exercise of wisdom. The two words are, however, closely allied: in Luke 1:17 the angel’s use of “phronesis”, normally rendered by “prudence”, is there exceptionally translated “wisdom”, both in the RV and NIV. In the familiar passage in 1 Corinthians 1 the Apostle at some length demonstrates the contrast between the wisdom of this world and that which is accessible to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul had travelled in the world; at the time he wrote to the Corinthians he had visited Athens. There he had found many altars and had been “greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols” (Acts 17:16, NIV). Turning our backs on a world filled with such “wisdom” as that found in Athens, we need look no further than our Lord for the supreme manifestation of God’s wisdom (see 1 Cor. 1:30).

Which of us does not at times feel keenly a lack of wisdom in what we say and do? Let us not forget what James, so often very practical, says on this subject: "But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). In the companion letter to Ephesians, Paul exhorts the disciples: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..." (Col. 3:16), an exhortation that we should take to heart. It reminds us that in the teaching of our Lord, if it is accepted and practiced, we can find an inexhaustible source of wisdom.

Paul had become by God's grace a champion and an exponent of the gospel. In that gospel God revealed the mystery of His purpose with Jew and Gentile. As the term "mystery" occurs a total of six times in Ephesians and four times in Colossians, it is important to understand its precise connotation. The word has OT associations: it is found in the LXX version of Daniel 2:18,19 and apparently in the apocryphal Book of Enoch. The wise men of Babylon could not even reveal to Nebuchadnezzar the contents of his dream; Daniel in due course was able, with God's aid, to unravel the mystery and reveal its meaning. In the NT there is no better guide to the understanding of the word "mystery" than the Lord himself: in Matthew 13 and Mark 4, together with Luke 8, we have parables relating to various aspects of the kingdom of God. To the disciples he declared, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven..." (Matt. 13:11; cf. Mark 4:11, Luke 8:10). Clearly the Lord is explaining aspects of the kingdom. Although the apostles were convinced Jesus was the Messiah, much concerning his mission was hidden from them. However, after the resurrection, he explained to the faithful eleven that what had befallen him had been foretold in Scripture and then "he opened their mind, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:44,45). This throws a flood of light upon the meaning of the term "secrets" and shows they can be disclosed to minds open in humility to receive instruction. The Lord himself is supremely the great opener, providing the key to the understanding of the divine purpose. This purpose is brought out in Colossians 1:26,27; there the Apostle speaks of the mystery which has been hidden but is now revealed to the disciples. There is therefore a consistency in the two letters, impressive indeed in so many respects.

The term we must particularly get hold of is "purpose" (v. 9). This (see v. 10) is a "dispensation" (RV), "plan" (RSV); the corresponding Greek word normally means "stewardship", and Robinson comments: the term "is here used in its wider sense, not of household management, which is its primary meaning, but of carrying into effect a design".¹ Accordingly, our Lord is here seen as the agent used by his Father in the execution of His purpose. The comprehensive nature of this purpose can be seen; it embraces "all things" in him (the Christ), "the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him" (RV). The effect of this will be "to sum up" (RV), or "unite" (RSV, RV) all things, and this will be achieved in the fulness of time. This shows, and in this knowledge we must rejoice, that our troubled world history is but a stage in the fulfilment of the divine purpose. There is doubtless an anticipation of the uniting of the things in the heavens and those upon the earth in the prayer the Lord taught his disciples: "Thy kingdom

come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth” (Matt. 6:10), a consummation anticipated in Revelation 11:15. Hebrews 2 with its citation of Psalm 8 reminds us of the divine purpose in Christ with which we have been so much concerned. It prophesies that “all things” will eventually be subject to him, Christ, and adds: “But now we see not yet all things subjected to him” (v. 8); this thought is developed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:25-28. As we hope in due course to see, the thoughts embodied in Ephesians 1:10 will come up for further consideration when we come to 3:9.

We shall see in our study of verse 11 and the following verses the place graciously granted to the Lord's disciples in God's grand design.

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Note:

“The Biblical notion of ‘redemption’ [is that of] buying another's freedom by a payment... The meaning is clear, the metaphor vivid, and the truth moves the heart to gratitude like that of the liberated slaves. The whole idea gained added weight from the practice of showing public benevolence, or gratitude to a pagan god, by buying a slave into freedom in the name of the god, to whom henceforth the slave would ‘belong.’ Paul makes great use of this idea of belonging to the Christ who bought us at a price of his life, to set us free.

“The prosaic minds of literalist theologians, however, refuse to treat the New Testament language as an inspired attempt to express the inexpressible in a figure of speech. They reduce the glowing metaphor to a precise definition, and argue about the amount of the ransom, to whom it was paid, and whether, since Jesus rose again, it was ever paid in the end! So with the other great attempts to say what Jesus' death meant for the apostolic believers — acquittal after being found guilty (a legal metaphor, ‘justification’); removal of causes of ill-will and restoration of peace (a political metaphor, ‘reconciliation’); forgiveness of debt (a commercial metaphor); the domestic figure of a Servant of the Lord doing for men what they could not do for themselves; the defeat of the Prince of this world, and triumph over the powers of evil (a military metaphor)...

*“These are the great traditional terms to express the meaning of Christ's death, so far unsurpassed. But the radiant images fade and die in literalist minds which argue doctrines out of poetry and [turn] adoring love [into theology]... If we would use imaginative language more imaginatively, we would read more carefully, and feel much more deeply, the glorious Biblical truths that the scriptural pictures vividly represent for us, but which we pedestrian westerners only argue about” (R.E.O. White, **Interpreting the Bible Today**, pp. 46,47).*

Bible Study

Rightly Dividing the Word: (4) Definitions and Context

The Bible can easily be misunderstood, if we don't read with careful attention to what is actually said, and with minds really wanting to know what God means by what He says. We all read the Bible with minds preconditioned by what we have heard from parents, from teachers in a church, or on television or radio, from educators, from friends, from books and magazines, and our society's influences. This preconditioning affects what we hear and understand as we read.

We can choose to read the Bible — relying for understanding only on the teaching and writings of people we believe we have good reason to trust. Churches such as the Roman Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others strongly advocate such reliance on their teachers for Bible understanding. However, all teachers, writers and churches, including beloved Christadelphian brothers and sisters, have human limitations in understanding. Their understanding is shaped by their life experiences, their human teachers and traditions, their reading of history, and Bible expositions of other people.

While respecting those we trust, it is wrong to treat their teaching as equal in authority to the word of God or as always being perfect and complete. The authoritative and sometimes dogmatic tones (and the appearance of great knowledge) of human teachers whom we like to hear must not cause us to listen uncritically. We must not abandon or neglect our personal responsibility to our Lord to think through what God is actually saying to us and what His words mean. As the Apostle Paul urged new disciples, "Prove (test) all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thes. 5:19-21). This is particularly important when we are reading familiar portions of the Bible.

Matthew 5, 6, and 7 is very familiar to us. Those who first heard these words were "astonished at Jesus' doctrine (or teaching), for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28,29).

The scribes took pride in expounding legal interpretations of the Law of Moses and of the multitude of extra laws added in their traditions. Those expositions always cited complex rulings of rabbis. In contrast, the Lord Jesus spoke with a personal authority, asserting again and again, "I say unto you..." He taught about life, about attitudes and actions, and the hope and faith that are their basis.

One lesson that we can learn from our Lord is that in his teaching he makes no artificial distinction between "doctrine" and moral instruction. The beliefs that we like to call "doctrine" are interwoven into all his moral instruction here. The beatitudes with which he appropriately begins (for attitudes govern our actions) are all inseparable parts of one lovely life which we see in him. Yet these attitudes

are all related to our hopes of inheriting the earth, receiving mercy, seeing God, being comforted, being filled with righteousness, and experiencing joy that the Kingdom of God is ours.

In Jesus' instruction on prayer (Matt. 6), we learn that the kingdom is coming, that it will be on earth, and that God's will shall then be done on earth. In Matthew 7 there are sobering truths about the narrowness of the gate and the difficulty of the way that leads to life; and reminders that our life depends on hearing and doing what the Lord Jesus says. This well-rounded "teaching" is an important example to us of how to teach the "good news" in order to "make disciples" who will do as the Lord commanded (Matt. 28:19,20).

In Matthew 5:17,18, Jesus says of his teaching that he had not come to destroy the law or the prophets but "to fulfill", and "one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Different Greek words are translated here as "fulfill" and "fulfilled".

The verb translated "fulfill" means to "fill" or to "fill full". The Lord Jesus is saying that he came to "fill full" the law and the prophets in the sense of teaching and living their full intent. In the five examples that follow in this chapter, Jesus teaches that the intent of God's law goes beyond an outward conformity to the law as commonly understood by the Jews. He teaches us how we must "fill full" the intent of the law and prophets in our heart and mind and in our actions.

The word translated "fulfilled" in verse 18 is frequently translated in the KJV as "come to pass", and in the RV as "be finished". Jesus expresses here his faith that the law would "come to pass", or "be finished". "The righteous requirement" of the law was summed up by the Lord: to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:29-31). How would this intent of the law actually come to pass in the lives of faithful disciples?

The Apostle Paul tells us the answer in Romans 8:3,4: "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God (did) by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, (in order) that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit." By thus acting in love through His Son, God has introduced to our hearts and minds the spirit power of their grace and truth to break in us the power of sin. God did this so "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" (cf. Tit. 2:11-14).

All this is implied in Jesus' words about the law being "filled full" and "fulfilled". How important it is for us to learn the full intent of God's law is shown by his next words in Matthew 5:19,20.

Being called "least" or "great" in the kingdom of heaven (v. 19) depends on our doing and teaching God's commandments. The religion or righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was only an outward show. In contrast, Christ's disciples must have a righteousness that surpasses that outward appearance of righteousness (v. 20). This doesn't mean following even stricter rules than those of the scribes and Pharisees. It means having an inner righteousness of heart and mind that

profoundly affects who we are and what we do, as the Lord shows us in the five examples that follow.

The sixth commandment of the ten, delivered by the LORD from Mount Sinai to Israel, was: “You shall not kill.” In Matthew 5:21-26, Jesus teaches us that the real intent of the law was more than just not killing. This true intent of the law could not be administered by the judges of Israel, for they could not judge a person’s heart. However, it is the standard by which the Lord Jesus will judge us.

Jesus says, “But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment” (v. 22). The KJV adds the words “without a cause” after “his brother”. However, most modern translations note that this phrase is in only some later manuscripts. It appears to have been added, and its omission restores Jesus’ words to their real meaning. It is very human to like this addition, for men and women always justify their anger and wars by various excuses. Its omission fits with the progression in Jesus’ words from anger to insult, and from insult to gross insult (or fighting words). Omitting “without a cause” brings these words of Jesus into harmony with his words in Matthew 5:38-48.

Matthew 6:22,23 provides another example of how attention to the words and their meaning and the flow of thought is essential to understanding even familiar passages. What is a “single” or a “good” or a “healthy eye” (translations vary)? And, what does having an “evil eye” or a “bad eye” mean?

Those familiar with the Old Testament will at once recognize that an “evil eye” is a begrudging and unsympathetic attitude towards those in need (Deut. 15:7-10).

A “single eye” is probably, therefore, the opposite of such a “narrow” or “closed” mind. “Single” is the adjective form of a Greek noun meaning bountifulness or liberality, and is used in that sense in 2 Corinthians 8:2. There, Paul speaks of the generosity (singleness) of the Macedonian ecclesias in giving to the offering he was gathering from Gentile ecclesias for the poor saints in Judea. In 2 Corinthians 9:11, Paul says that the Corinthians, too, will be enriched in everything by their bountifulness or liberality (singleness) in so helping the poor, which will produce thanksgiving to God.

These words are almost an echo of Jesus’ words that, if your eye is single, then your whole body will be full of light. The context confirms that in these words the Lord is contrasting a generous spirit towards those in need with a grudging, reluctant-to-help spirit. In verses 19-21 Jesus says not to lay up treasures on earth, but to lay up treasures in heaven (by doing God’s will). In verses 22,23 he contrasts the generous eye and the evil eye. Then, in verse 24, he says, “You cannot serve God and mammon (money).” The verses that follow urge disciples not to be anxious about their needs, for God will provide. Thus, understanding the “single eye” as a generous attitude to those in need — and the “evil eye” as a selfish, grudging attitude — fits with the context, i.e., our attitude to money and our daily personal needs.

“Eye” is a metaphor for our attitudes toward others and their needs, and “the whole body” is a metaphor for our mind and heart, our inner being. If our atti-

tude toward others is generous — not only in terms of money, but in our positive feelings and actions toward them — then our whole being will be full of light. If our attitude toward others is grudging, expressing our lack of love for them or our distrust of them, then our whole being will be full of darkness.

Even in the most familiar chapters in the Bible, there is so much more that we can discover, if we read with an inquiring mind. In the foregoing illustrations, the meanings of particular words are important. And, the flow of thought in the immediate context will always help us to determine the meaning of the words and their lessons for us.

Lord willing, we shall look next at how the Lord Jesus and his apostles reveal the meaning of Old Testament scriptures.

“The ‘New’ is in the ‘Old’ concealed.
The ‘Old’ is in the ‘New’ revealed”
(Yorkshire proverb used by Bro. John Carter).

Bob Green (Brantford, ON)

“In the Old Testament all the lines of its teaching converge upon him who is to come. In the New all the lines of living light radiate from him who has come. In the Old he is prepared for. In the New he is proclaimed. In the Old he is infolded. In the New he is unfolded. In the Old he is latent. In the New he is patent. In the Old he is declared. In the New he is demonstrated”
(Stuart Holden).

God’s Placement of the Jews

“How could such a people be better framed than by... settlement on a land both near to, and aloof from, the main streams of human life, where they could be at once spectators of history and yet not its victims, where they could enjoy personal communion with God and yet have some idea also of His providence of the whole world; where they could gather up the experience of the ancient world, and break with this into the modern?”

*“There is no land which is at once so much a sanctuary and an observatory as Palestine: no land which, till its office was fulfilled, was so swept by the great forces of history; and was yet so capable of preserving one tribe in national continuity and growth: one tribe learning and suffering ... till upon the opportunity afforded by the last of [these forces (the Romans)] she launched with her results upon the world. It is the privilege of the students of the historical geography of Palestine to follow all this process of development in detail” (George Smith, **The Historical Geography of the Holy Land**, pp. 109, 110).*

Bible Study

Paul in Arabia

Only once, in Galatians 1:17, does the Bible mention that Paul went to Arabia. What is the significance of this seemingly obscure reference?

When did the apostle go to Arabia? What was the purpose of the trip? Little explanation is given, yet the experience was clearly one of Paul's first steps after he was called to be an apostle.

Paul seldom wrote of his experiences in Arabia, but this was no ordinary trip. It was a life-altering journey that shaped Paul's character and beliefs, and molded him into a mature apostle, ready for service.

At Sinai with Christ

Acts 9 describes Paul's dramatic change of heart upon seeing the risen Lord. However, it does not explain how he, as a new convert, immediately came to a deep and detailed understanding of the Gospel message.

In Galatians 1:12, Paul states he was taught by revelation of Jesus Christ and not by man. Immediately after his conversion, he says, he "conferred not with flesh and blood," nor did he go to Jerusalem to be instructed by the apostles (v. 16). When was Paul taught by Christ? With his excellent knowledge of Scripture, did he just fit all the pieces together after his encounter on the road to Damascus?

Even the disciples who had been with the Lord for more than three years needed 40 days of teaching by the risen Christ to prepare them for their ministry. In contrast, Paul apparently spent only a few days with believers in Damascus (Acts 9:19). Then, "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues that he is the son of God, and all that heard him were amazed." More than that, he "confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ." How did he suddenly acquire a deep enough understanding to overwhelm the most learned students of Scripture? The answer has to do with his trip to Arabia.

The land of Arabia is mentioned only twice in the entire New Testament, both times in Galatians. According to Galatians 4:25, Mount Sinai is in Arabia. Paul's visit to Arabia most likely took him to Sinai to be taught personally by the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Mount Sinai is where Yahweh chose to reveal Himself to Moses, and then later to Elijah. There, Moses and the elders saw the God of Israel, and Moses received the Law and saw the pattern for the tabernacle. On Mount Horeb (another name for Sinai) Moses had seen the burning bush. Years later, Elijah heard the "still, small voice" that spoke of God's purpose on that same mount.

The Acts account says nothing about a trip to Arabia. It mentions that Paul ate and was strengthened. Perhaps, as with Elijah (1 Kings 19:8), the meat and drink

enabled him to go to Mount Sinai. The trip may have taken place in the middle of Acts 9:19, before he met with the disciples in Damascus.

At Sinai, Paul would have seen even more than Moses did, that is, he would have seen beyond the patterns and shadows to their true source. Christ himself would have explained to him the Law and the Prophets. Yahweh allowed Moses to see His “back parts” (Exod. 33:23),¹ the shadow of good things to come. Paul was blessed to see their “very image” (Heb. 10:1).

Evidence in Paul’s writings

As a highly educated Pharisee, Paul would want to know in detail how the Jewish scriptures were fulfilled in Christ — the priesthood and sacrifices, the types and figures, the prophecies of Messiah.

Imagine communing with Christ before the awesome throne of God. Imagine seeing in vivid detail the Truth of which the familiar rituals and furnishings of Mosaic worship were mere reflections. Imagine looking behind the lives of the faithful (and unfaithful) of old. How thrilling it must have been to receive a taste of what God has in store for His people! Afterwards, the apostle must have wondered whether the experience was a dream or a real event.

In 2 Corinthians 12:1-4, Paul speaks of visions and revelations of the Lord and of being caught up to the third heaven, “whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell.” The apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3:5-13 refers to three heavens (specifically, “heavens and earth”): first, the world destroyed in the Flood; second, the current order which will pass away when Christ returns; and third, the new heavens and earth “wherein dwelleth righteousness” for which we all yearn. Paul was privileged to experience this third heaven, the paradise of God, at Sinai.

In 1 Corinthians 2:9, Paul wrote, “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. But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit.” It was at Sinai that God showed Paul the marvelous things He has in store for the faithful.

Due to his past record of persecuting Christians, the apostle was *persona non grata* among the Jewish believers. Moreover, his former Jewish allies were trying to kill him. Knowing how Joseph’s brethren rejected him after he spoke of his dreams, Paul would hesitate to share his vision. Nonetheless he probably wrote it down and kept his notes like a precious treasure, perhaps adding to them from his discussions with the Jews.

As time went on, controversy about the role of the Law grew, creating the need for a detailed, authoritative explanation for Hebrew believers. Only then did Paul finally publish a treatise based on his amazing revelation in Arabia — the book of Hebrews, by the self-proclaimed Hebrew of the Hebrews.

Galatians and Hebrews

Early New Testament manuscripts place the book of Hebrews in various locations. In the Vatican Codex, which dates from the first half of the fourth century,

it follows Galatians. Indeed, some have suggested that Hebrews was appended to Galatians. This would make sense if the trip to Arabia, which is mentioned only in Galatians, formed the basis for Hebrews.

While the question of who wrote Hebrews has been debated, Paul is traditionally thought to be its author. More an exposition than a letter, its message is passionate, vivid and incisive. Unique among Paul's epistles, it has no salutation; but none would be needed if it were appended to another epistle.²

Whether or not these two books were originally together, they both draw upon Paul's Sinai experience. They have the same basic theme: the covenant of grace in Christ supersedes the Law of Moses. Galatians responds to the challenge posed by Judaizers. Hebrews explains how Christ fulfilled the Law and the implications for believers — in other words, how “the law was our schoolmaster³ to bring us unto Christ” (Gal. 3:24).

A source of strength

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai he demonstrated exceptional spiritual strength in his response to the worship of the golden calf and then his prayer for the people. The “still small voice” of Yahweh gave Elijah reassurance and new direction.

Paul's time at Sinai with Christ (was it 40 days and 40 nights?) gave the apostle vision, understanding and courage to fulfill the high purpose to which the Lord had called him. The revelation transformed his heart and mind. Forced by circumstance not to reveal this experience, he was driven by it for the rest of his life.

Ethel Archard (Ottawa, ON)

Editor's Footnotes:

1. The Hebrew is “ahoray”. This word may indicate the “afterglow” which the Almighty left behind Himself — something like the fading of the light after the sun has set. Evidently, this alone was enough to suggest what the full brilliance of Yahweh's presence must have been.
2. In earlier times, the Pauline authorship of Hebrews was more commonly accepted than it is today — for many reasons. Nevertheless, it is a question on which there may be more than one opinion.
3. “Schoolmaster” is the Greek “paidagogos” — a “child-custodian” or “child-attendant.” “The pedagogue was a slave employed by wealthy Greeks or Romans to have responsibility for one of the children of the family. He had charge of the child from about the years six to sixteen and was responsible for watching over his behavior wherever he went and for conducting him to and from school” (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*).

Commenting on Elijah fleeing to the cave on Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19), Bro. C.A. Ladson writes: “When men stand in the mouth of their caverns and declare that they alone are fighting the battle of right, and distress the hearts and weaken the hands of their fellow-warriors by their self-centered declamations based upon ignorance of the true state of affairs, not seeing the faithful attitude of the 7,000, then surely is needed the earthquake, the fire, and the still small voice to purge them of their discouraging fantasies.”

Music in Worship

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“They’ll hang the trumpet in the hall and study war no more!”

The title of this article is from the last two lines of verse 4 of Hymn 288: “Behold, the mountain of the Lord”. It expresses a wonderful and hopeful outlook for the people of God when preparations for war will no longer be needed.

Today the trumpet and cornet are brass instruments used in brass bands, in some dance and jazz bands and in symphony orchestras. Other instruments of the same class include the trombone, french horn and tuba. The trumpet consists of a metal tube of constant bore for most of its length but widening into a bell. It has a cup-shaped mouthpiece. The modern trumpet has valves so that the length of the tube can be altered at the flick of a finger. This produces a greater variety of notes than was possible with early instruments that had no valves. Its sound is loud and penetrating and, because it is easy to carry, the trumpet has not only been used as an instrument of music but also to issue signals for both military and religious uses. Unlike other instruments, such as pipe and harp, in the Old Testament the trumpet is never described as being used for secular music-making.

In Hebrew there are two words for trumpet, one meaning a metal trumpet (“chat-sotserah”) and the other a ram’s horn (“shophar”). In the Old Testament their uses overlap. Often they were used for the same purposes; thus, when the Jews translated their Bible into Greek (the Septuagint) they used one Greek word to represent both Hebrew words. In later times the Jews made a distinction between them, and the “shophar” came to occupy a prominent place in their worship.

In Numbers the silver trumpet — “Make thee two trumpets of silver” (Num. 10:2) — is specified for use at the monthly annual festivals. “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: I am the Lord your God” (Num. 10:10).

The shophar is mentioned for use at the same occasions as the silver trumpet. “Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation” (Lev. 23:24) And in Psalm 81:3: “Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.”

The silver trumpet was used regularly for leading praise in the temple. "Also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets: It came even to pass as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever; that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord" (2 Chron. 5:12,13).

The shophar was also used for leading praise in the temple (Psa. 150:3). When David brought the Ark to Zion, both the trumpet and the shophar were used. Both Solomon and Jehu were proclaimed king by the sound of the shophar, but when Joash became king the silver trumpet was blown.

If there is a difference between uses of the shophar and the silver trumpet, it is that the shophar is often used in calling man to worship and praise whereas the silver trumpet calls to God. For example, in warfare the shophar was a human signal; a call to arms: "But the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him" (Judg. 6:34). Gideon's three hundred men were equipped with shophars as well as torches and pitchers. The city watchman used a shophar to alert the people to danger. "For the builders, everyone had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me" (Neh. 4:18; cf. Ezek. 33:3,4 and Amos 3:6).

"And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work; it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you" (Num. 29:1). The shophar was blown on that day, calling the people to sacrifice. The plaintive, pleading and challenging sound of the shophar helped to prepare the minds of the worshippers for the Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month. After the exile in Babylon, that day came to be understood both as a call to repentance and as a start of a New Year, and was named "Rosh Hashanah". On this day the shophar was blown according to a well-defined series of notes. These were interspersed with scriptural verses celebrating God's kingship, His remembrance of the covenant, and His guidance of the historical process from the revelation at Mount Sinai to the future day when the great shophar of universal redemption will sound: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem" (Isa. 27:13).

We too wait for the day of the great trumpet, not only for Israel's redemption but also for the gathering of God's elect and the resurrection of the dead: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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" (1 Cor. 15:51,52; see also Matt. 24:31).

By contrast, sounding the silver trumpet had a religious significance. It issued a cry to God to remember His people in danger and was thus equivalent to prayer: “And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies” (Num. 10:9; cf. 2 Chron. 13:12-14).

Bob Burr (Barnt Green, Birmingham, UK)

“The whole assembly bowed in worship, while the singers sang and the trumpeters played. All this continued until the sacrifice of the burnt offering was completed” (2 Chron. 29:28).

*“We make mistakes if we suppose that worship is a mere cloud, a foam of sentiment; it is work of all kinds, door-opening and lamp-lighting and floor-sweeping, cleansing, preparing... cry of thunderous eloquence, and hymn, sweet, gentle, tender; and prayer that beats against heaven like artillery — all these things and many more are included in the complex idea of worship. Let each man, therefore, do what he can in this matter, knowing that no one man works the whole ministry of worship, but that it is an act of cooperation and combination, one part playing with another part, and each part interrelating itself with each other, so as to constitute a sum total significant of unity, adaptation, music, and homage” (John Parker, **Biblical Illustrator**).*

“Lone Mary comes at early morn”

Sis. Catherine Alexandra Morgan wrote the words for Hymn 251[*new book*].

Catherine Morgan was born in 1900, the youngest of three sisters. She had two younger brothers. It was her youngest brother, Andrew, who first became interested in Christadelphian teaching. Andrew was baptized in 1927, followed by his sister Margaret. Catherine took another year to be convinced and was baptized in 1928.

She was trained as a teacher and that led to the post of headmistress at a church school. Her conversion forced her resignation from this position, and she took up a teacher's post in a local council school.

Within a few years of Catherine's baptism she began teaching in the Isolation League Sunday School. Later her talents were also used in her ecclesial Sunday school. Bro. L.G. Sargent, another poet, described her as “a writer of graceful verse which always reflected the love of nature”. She produced stories, articles and verses illustrated with her own pen-and-ink drawings for *The Christadelphian Children's Magazine* and later for *The Path* and youth magazines right up to her final fatal

illness. From her pen flowed a number of articles published in *The Christadelphian Magazine* on a variety of topics that illustrated the spiritual qualities of her mind. Bro. Melva Purkis wrote, “Catherine had for all of us a message of light and loved to convey it in story, poem and prose which captivated us both by the simple beauty of her words and the graceful line of her sketches... She brought into any company a radiance which glowed from eyes which had beheld the vision of God and a life that had been lived in heavenly places in Christ.”

Her book *Beside The Brook* was a story of someone who found the truth. It was published in 1947 and became a favorite with children in the Christadelphian community. It was based in the countryside around her home.

Catherine Morgan wrote the words for three hymns in our current hymnbook:

The text for Hymn 185, “The Lord a gift of love foretold”, is based on the Lord’s words to his disciples about the coming comforter from the Gospel of John and the present comfort available from God.

Hymn 188 — “Angels o’er the sleeping earth” — is placed under the general category of Christ: His Birth in the hymnbook. This hymn presents scenes from Christ’s birth, his youth in Nazareth, his preaching, his death as the Lamb of God, and his future as Israel’s king.

Hymn 251 — “Lone Mary comes at early morn” — is under the category Christ: His Resurrection. This hymn presents scenes from the resurrection of Jesus — the visits by Mary and the disciples to the tomb, Jesus’ manifestation to two disciples (Luke 21), and the empowering outcome of the risen Lord’s visits to his followers.

[Quotes and information extracted from the pamphlet by the late Bro. Stuart Cowlishaw, *Some Past Christadelphian Hymn Writers and Composers*, 1991, page 17.]

Use of Instruments in Worship

Bro. Mike LeDuke was recently asked on the www.thisisyourbible.com website if it is appropriate and Biblical to use instruments to accompany singing in our worship. Here is Brother Mike’s reply.

I have only ever heard the Church of Christ say that musical instruments are forbidden in worship. However, I’ve been told the Old Order Amish and Mennonites, Plymouth Brethren, and some very conservative Baptist groups don’t use instruments. However, the Church of Christ makes it a point of doctrine, and one fellow from the Church of Christ with whom I spoke consigned all churches which used such instruments to the fires of hell.

Of course it is an argument from silence, as nowhere in the New Testament are musical instruments forbidden — while there is frequent mention of them in the Old Testament in relation to praise and worship. Indeed, in Psalm 33:2,3, for ex-

ample, the use of instruments is positively commanded. The whole of Psalm 150 is a hymn of joy in praise of God on a variety of instruments including cymbals!

The Church of Christ has, from what I have been told, some wonderful four-part harmony a cappella singing in its services, but the New Testament is equally silent about that form of worship too. They also use a tuning fork or pitch pipe to start their singing. It could be argued that a tuning fork or pitch pipe is a form of musical instrument. This all seems somewhat inconsistent. The fact that the New Testament is silent about whether or not to use instruments in worship is not a compelling argument against their use. God was clearly pleased with musical worship involving instruments in the Old Testament.

Although there is no explicit approval of musical instruments in the New Testament (just as there is no explicit approval of four-part harmony or tuning forks), there is implicit approval. It is found in one of the key verses usually cited to support the case for a “no instruments” policy. Colossians 3:16 refers to “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

The word “psalm” (Greek “psalmos”) in Colossians 3:16 means, according to Young, “a song of praise (on an instrument)”. Bullinger, in his critical lexicon and concordance, defines it: “a touching, twang, e.g. of a bowstring; of stringed instruments, a playing, music; in later usage, a song as accompanied by stringed instruments...” The very meaning of the word “psalm” in Colossians 3:16 is a complete refutation of the “no musical instrument” position.

“Psalmos” is also used in 1 Corinthians 14:26 and Ephesians 5:19. The psalms to which Paul refers in these two quotations are from the Hebrew Old Testament book of Psalms. The meaning of the Hebrew word for psalm, like its New Testament counterpart is, according to *Strong’s Dictionary of Old Testament Words*, “properly, instrumental music; by implication a poem set to notes.”

If a group doesn’t want to use instruments in their worship, that’s their choice and it isn’t wrong. If on the other hand they do wish to use instruments in their worship and praise, that is also a valid choice and, indeed, the choice with more solid scriptural precedent behind it.

2006 Manitoulin Youth Conference Cantata on CD

This cantata was presented at the Manitoulin Youth Conference in 2006. Its title is *“In Him Was Life” — The Eight Signs of John*.

The cost is \$6 in Canada, and \$5 in US per CD (plus postage if necessary). To obtain a copy of this or other Christadelphian cantatas, please contact:

Tim Styles
14774 Berwick
Livonia, MI 48154 USA
Email: timstyles@juno.com

Reflections

“Dear Sprout”

Dear Sprout,

Today your birth is less than two months away. With each passing day, I think of you more often and in greater detail. In my mind's eye, I try to see you in different stages of your life, wondering what you will be like as a little baby, as a young child, and as a young adult. I imagine what it will be like to hear you say to me that you want to be baptized. I contemplate the day you get married. I wonder what it will be like to experience the birth of your first child.

I hope to witness many of these things through immortal eyes. It is my prayer that you are blessed to grow up with the Lord Jesus Christ in God's Kingdom on this earth. I hope you get to learn the story of David and Goliath from David himself (and to see him demonstrate his old skill with the sling and stone!). Perhaps Jonah will tell you how it was to be in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights, and then will explain what his experience represented. I hope your great-grandfather reads to you. I pray you can reach out and be touched by the Lord Jesus.

I look forward to you turning me into a father, and making Julia into a mother. It will be such a delight to see her eyes filled with love for you, and to see her wisdom and kindness find new expression in caring for you. I look forward to you learning the meaning of self-sacrifice by watching her, and showing your appreciation by emulating her example. I want to see your mother in you.

I want to see your Heavenly Father in you as well. God has said that He formed the earth to be inhabited: *“For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else”* (Isa. 45:18).

You will soon be part of that plan. God has said that He will fill the earth with His glory. And He has explained that His glory is shown forth in His Name and in the goodness of His character: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy”* (Exod. 33:17-19). It will be your duty to bear that Name and to manifest that character.

Having you in our lives will help me better understand our Heavenly Father. By being your father, I hope to experience a measure of what God feels for us, His children: *“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him”* (Psa. 103:13). In loving you, I hope to know better how much God loves us,

how pleased He is with our obedience, how disappointed He is when we do wrong, and how ready He is to forgive us and to overlook our past mistakes.

I pray that loving you will help me to appreciate the love that God showed to us in giving us His Son.

I hope you make me a better person. Jesus said that parents and other adults can learn from the example of a child: *“At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me”* (Matt. 18:1-5).

It is because young people are such a blessing that Zechariah encouraged the followers of God in his day with a vision of children playing in the streets of Jerusalem: *“The city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof”* (Zech. 8:5).

The Christadelphian community of believers (of which you will be a part) is in great need of young people who will love God and serve Him in spirit and in truth. You will not fully understand until you are older just how valuable young people are to the body of believers. If you are filled with excitement and enthusiasm for the things of God, you will be a great encouragement to people. Timothy, a faithful young person, was such an encouragement to Paul that the Apostle’s last recorded words were written to him: *“Do thy diligence to come before winter... The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen”* (2 Tim. 4:21,22).

Your life will be full of joy and meaning if you dedicate it to God. But to dedicate your life to Him, you must first know what His will is. You can learn that by reading God’s Word. Your mother and I will try to give you a home where the Bible is read and talked about on a daily basis. You will also be taught by your grandparents, who have already bought books about the Bible that they want to read to you. What’s more, there are many aunts and uncles in the Christadelphian community who will spend countless hours of their time preparing lessons for you and instructing you.

You will have many opportunities to hear the Word. But you must do more than just hear the Word; you must live it as well. Your mother and I will try to set a good example for you. We will prayerfully strive to show you the Word of God in the way that we conduct our lives. There will also be many good role models for you in the ecclesia. Notice them, and follow their example: *“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample”* (Phil. 3:17).

Of course, the people around you, even those who are Christadelphians, are not going to be perfect. Your mother and I will not be perfect either. (There will come a time when you will enjoy reminding us of this fact.) One of the things you will learn by being our child is the need to forgive. You are going to need to forgive

your mother and me at times because we will make mistakes.

You will make mistakes too. Pray about it. But do not worry or become discouraged. God has provided His Son to give you the hope of salvation.

God has written what a blessing it is for me and your mother to have you: *“Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate” (Psa. 127:3-5).*

You are part of the heritage of the LORD. I cannot wait to meet you.

*Love,
Dad (Ryan Mutter, Baltimore, MD)*

“We’re All Babies in God’s Eyes”

My three-year old son was often teased by his two older brothers, who were the ripe old ages of four and five, about being the baby of the family. Normally his reaction was immediate, loud, and defensive. One day, though, I heard him quietly and solemnly reply to their taunt by saying, “We’re all babies in God’s eyes.”

Well, I thought that was pretty insightful, as well as a total change in reaction. Since I knew I had not given him that “ammunition”, I asked him who told him to say that.

“The babysitter?” “No.”

“Mama Dell?” “No.”

“Well, then, who told you to say that?” “Nobody — I just know it.”

I never did find out where he got his insight. But I did think of that passage, “From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise.”

Truly we are all babies in God’s eyes. Even the wisest of us see through a glass darkly, as Paul said, and cannot fathom the ways of God or the depth of His love and His mercy.

Those of us who are new or even “old” in the faith should not feel intimidated or inadequate in the presence of brothers and sisters who have more knowledge than we do. We should be respectful, yes, and grateful for the opportunity to learn from them, as well as encouraged to study more faithfully and consistently ourselves. But we must temper these feelings with an understanding that even the most mature and wise believer is surely still considered young and foolish in God’s eyes.

Let’s encourage and support each other, and do all we can to assist one another as we strive to do what pleases God. Have faith that He will forgive us our shortcomings as long as we call out to Him and strive to take hold of Him.

We are, every one of us, truly “babies in God’s eyes”.

Compassion

I can still picture the little girl in my mind: the shabby pink coat, the thin cotton jersey, and the impish smile. She might have been eight or nine years old.

It was almost winter, 1966, and I was living at the YMCA on the south side of Chicago. It was a bitterly cold day. For some reason, perhaps to mail a letter, I left my room to go outside for a minute. I ran down the street; the less time in the biting cold the better.

And there she was, coming up the street in the opposite direction. She saw me coming, too. She got smack in my way, planted her feet, and spread out her arms. Her mischievous smile said, “See if you can get by me!” Her coat flopped open.

I ran up to my little girl, dropped in front of her, and grabbed the open ends of her coat. I pulled it tight around her and said something like, “Sweetheart, it’s much too cold...” And then I realized why her coat was open. It had no buttons; only a few wisps of thread where buttons used to be.

My heart melted. Poor child!

She wouldn’t dare do the same thing today. An ugly world has robbed its children of their innocence and their right to be innocent. But that was a different era, and the strange man she stopped on the street was no threat to her.

But he was no help, either. I don’t remember looking around to see if there was a store nearby. Besides, I was a graduate student, and most graduate students in those days didn’t have much money. I certainly didn’t own a credit card. Could I have persuaded a store owner to do something for her? I don’t know. I never tried. I had something else to do. I never found any buttons for the little girl’s coat.

She skipped on by, up the street, and disappeared in time and space. As far as I know I’ve never seen her again. But I’ll never forget her.

In our western way of thinking, shaped so much by our English language, it is fair to say that I felt a tremendous compassion for this little child. But I’m no longer sure that it *was* “compassion” in the eyes of God.

Only years later did I learn from my Bible studies that “compassion” is a *verb* in God’s language; it’s not a noun. Look it up for yourself. There are something like three Hebrew words that are translated “compassion” in the Old Testament and five more Greek words in the New Testament. *They’re all verbs!*

Compassion is something you do. It is not an abstract concept; it’s not an intangible thing. It is not something you can take down from a shelf, turn over in your hand, admire and put back on the shelf again. You either *do* compassion, or you don’t *have* it.

We surround ourselves with comfort zones. They become so ‘second nature’ to us that we hardly realize we have them. They allow us to hold the world at arm’s length and turn a blind eye to its needs. They diminish us as human beings, let alone as disciples of Christ. They cripple our faith.

The Samaritan had compassion on a wounded man (Luke 10:33). He allowed himself no comfort zone. Whatever his plans had been for the day, they were scrapped. His time became someone else's time. Whatever he had planned to do with his oil and wine, he spent them on the spot. His money went to care for a man he didn't even know. And he was willing to do more if he had to. The Samaritan "compassioned" the wounded man in the lovely Biblical sense of the word.

The prodigal's father had compassion on his son (Luke 15:20). He could have felt betrayed, but evidently he didn't. He cut his losses without a complaint. He showed no signs of lingering disappointment. He held no grudge. When his son came home again, that's all that mattered. The father rejoiced and embraced him.

Comfort zones erect barriers. They keep us from doing the things we should do and from nurturing the relationships that need our attention. There were no barriers here. The father "compassioned" his son.

So we go forward. People come into our lives with all kinds of needs and, yes, they may go out again, too. Our paths may not cross for long. God, please help us find buttons for a little girl's coat.

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)

A Greek philosopher who observed second-century believers was profoundly impressed by their "pure religion", especially their compassion and concern for the needy. He wrote, "They love one another. They do not overlook the widow, and they save the orphan. When they see strangers, they take them under their own roof... they do not call themselves brothers according to the flesh but according to the spirit. And whenever one of their poor has died, each of them according to his ability contributes ungrudgingly, and they bury him. And if they hear that some are condemned or imprisoned on account of the name of their Lord, they contribute... and send to them what they need, and if it is possible, they redeem them. And if there is any that is a slave or a poor man, they fast two or three days, and what they were going to set before themselves they send to them."

An old Cherokee was teaching his grandson about life: "A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy. "It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil — he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego. The other is good — he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith. This same fight is going on inside you — and inside every other person too."

The grandson thought about this for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

The old Indian simply replied, "The one you feed."

Letters

“This generation”

Dear Bro. George,

In the March-April *Tidings*, page 130, Sis. Jodee Webb asked about the 40-year generation and suggested the possibility of the 100-plus years of Genesis 15:13-16. Looking at some of the uses of “generation” in Scripture, it does many times refer to a time period. However, there are times when it may not be a time period, but rather a group of people, or a community, i.e., of the righteous or wicked. I suggest that Luke 21:32 is one of those times. See the following:

“Generation” is the Hebrew “dowr”:

- Psa. 14:5: “There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous.”
- Psa. 22:30 (AV): “A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.”
- Psa. 24:6: “This [is] the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O [God of] Jacob.”
- Psa. 73:15: “If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.”
- Psa. 112:2: “His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed.”
- Prov. 30:11-14: “There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.”
- Isa. 53:8: “He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.”

“Generation” is the Greek “genea”, “genos”, or “gennema”:

- Matt. 3:7: “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation [‘gennema’] of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”
- Matt. 11:16: “But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows.”
- Matt. 12:34: “O generation [‘gennema’] of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”
- Matt. 12:39: “But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the

sign of the prophet Jonas.”

- Matt. 24:34: “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.” (cp. Mark 13:30)
- Luke 16:8: “And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.”
- 1 Pet. 2:9: “But ye are a chosen generation [‘genos’], a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.”

Some of the above may not be convincing proof, but I lean toward this understanding especially since Jesus said, “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1:7).

Perhaps this approach might be of interest to some in understanding Jesus’ words: “I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened” (Luke 21:32).

May the Lord bless and keep you.

*Love in our Lord,
Bob Jennings (Hamilton Greenaway, ON)*

Book reviews for the newly baptised

Your recent overview of books in the Christadelphian library was useful. It reminded me of a valuable little service of a brother and sister we know who invite newly baptised individuals to their home shortly after they begin their new life in Christ. During the visit, they show them a selection of books in their library and provide a short overview of 10 to 12 Christadelphian books that may be of particular interest to the individual. In this way newly baptised members are not only encouraged to read Bible-related books, but they are also given information about the content of books to help them know what is available for current or future study needs.

Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON)

*He ate and drank the precious words,
His spirit grew robust;
He knew no more that he was poor,
Nor that his frame was dust.
He danced along the dingy days,
And this bequest of wings
Was but a book. What liberty
A loosened spirit brings!
(Emily Dickinson)*

*“A book is a garden carried in one’s pocket.”
(Chinese proverb)*

Current Events

Bruce Metzger

Bruce Metzger (1914-2007) was a professor emeritus at Princeton Theological Seminary (New Jersey) and a Bible editor who served on the board of the American Bible Society. He was a scholar of Greek, New Testament and Old Testament Bible, and wrote extensively on these subjects. He also served as president of the International Society of Biblical Literature.

Metzger edited and provided commentary for many Bible translations and wrote dozens of books. He was general editor of the New Revised Standard Version. He was also one of the editors of the United Bible Societies' standard Greek New Testament, the starting point for nearly all translations of the New Testament in recent decades. His book, *A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament* (1994), is the standard work on the subject.

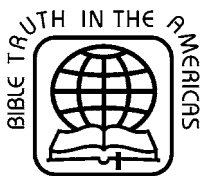
Metzger was involved, front and center, and often as a leading figure, in many of the major Biblical projects of the 20th century. Much of what we now know, from extra-Biblical sources, about the text of the Bible, have been studied, organized, and presented by Dr. Metzger. His is the sort of scholarly work to which we owe much today, although — for the most part — we scarcely recognize his name.

In 1997, Metzger published his autobiography, *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian*, in which he told, often in amusing fashion, but also with great insights, behind-the-scenes stories and anecdotes of his work on various translation committees.

While we recognize that there will be areas of scholarship in which his conclusions will most likely differ from ours, there are good reasons to pause for a moment and give thanks for the labors of such men — who have given us better tools for understanding the Word of God.

George Booker (Austin South, TX)

*I dreamed that Jesus came, last night;
The Kingdom doors flew wide.
An apostle, dressed in shining white,
Escorted me inside.
And there, to my astonishment,
Were folks I'd always labeled
As quite unfit, of little worth,
And spiritually disabled!
Indignant words rose to my lips,
But never were set free:
For every face bore stunned surprise —
No one expected ME!
(Author unknown; adapted)*



Bible Mission News

Guadalajara, Mexico

During our visit with the ecclesia in Guadalajara from March 27 to April 1, we had the privilege of being involved in three baptismal interviews. Two men were baptized on March 31 as previously reported, but the third man wanted to prepare himself further for his commitment to the Lord. We are happy to report that Teodoro Horta Rodriguez was baptized on Sunday, April 15, in the presence of his wife and family. He has hopes that his baptism will lead the way for them also to take hold of the Truth as fervently as he has. He had looked for the Truth of the Bible for a number of years and was disenchanted with the false doctrines and traditions of the churches, as compared to what he read for himself. There are 11 Mexican members in the ecclesia now — nine brothers and two sisters. We pray that they will continue to grow in the Truth.

Don Luff

CBMA linkman for Guadalajara

Preaching through the Bible

Preaching verse by verse through books of the Bible is the most reasonable way to teach the whole counsel of God. If I am obligated to teach the whole new covenant message and all of the mystery unfolded, the only systematic way that I know to teach it all is to take it the way it comes, one book at a time from beginning to end. If I were to approach the goal of teaching the whole New Testament in random fashion, it would be a hopeless maze to lead people through. On the other hand, if I am committed to teaching the Word of God systematically so that all of the revelation of God is brought before His people, the only way of doing that is to go through it one book at a time.

Also, the only effective way of seeing the significance of a passage is in its context. Going through an entire book sets the passage in its context on its widest, deepest, and richest level... Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament was written as a collection of verses to be thrown into the air and allowed to fall back wherever they might. Rather, each book has a reasonable, logical, inspired flow of thought... Each was designed... so that you have the Holy Spirit communicating something powerfully and clearly in the whole book: you dare not miss a single part! (John MacArthur)

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

for tax ID numbers please contact the editor

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and the Americas, Spanish Truth Corps, Domestic Truth Corps, etc. c/o Charles Brinkerhoff, 15925 La Ronda Cir., Hacienda Heights, CA 91745-4244.

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) welcomes donations for Bible Mission activity, the *Tidings*, and bequests for similar causes. Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7.

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas. For details see: www.christadelphianchildren.com.

Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to: CICH c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457-5012.

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 86, Deland, IL 61839-0086.

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.

Christadelphian Heritage College donations may be sent to; Christadelphian Heritage College, c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1.

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing, Inc. publishes this magazine and other works on the truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696.

Christadelphian Tape Library records and distributes audio/video/DVD's and CD's of various Bible schools and study sessions. Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923. Phone: 732-381-4590. Fax: 732-499-8415. christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net.

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

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

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.

Christadelphian Care-Line provides a service for those who need fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039.

Alcohol Help Line provides a service for those who need fully confidential help overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039.

News & Notices

BOZEMAN, MT

With joy we announce the baptism of MATT BITTINGER, son of Bro. Mark and Sis. Teri Bittinger, on May 7, 2006. We pray our Heavenly Father will guide his walk to the Kingdom.

We have been blessed to have had our first fall gathering in October 2006, and welcomed our speaker Bro. David and Sis. Nicole Wisnewski and children (Toronto, ON); Bro. John and Sis. Christina Bittinger (San Diego, CA); and Sis. Beth Gibson (Portland, OR). God willing, our second fall gathering will be held on September 28–30, 2007, with Bro. Dennis Paggi (Verdugo Hills, CA) speaking on “The Potter and the Clay”.

Our year-end CYC gathering was enthusiastically attended by young people from the northwest and California, with our speaker, Bro. Peter Jones (Seattle, WA). We have received by transfer, Sis. Beth Gibson from Portland, OR. We have also recently enjoyed a visit on March 25, 2007, from Bro. Jay Phillips and Bro. Brad Phillips (Portland, OR). We thank Bro. Jay for his wonderful words of exhortation.

We warmly invite all who will be visiting Montana’s wonderful scenery of Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks, to meet with the Bozeman Ecclesia. Breaking of bread and Wednesday class are held in homes, so please contact Mark Bittinger at 406-388-7735 for location.

Mark Bittinger

BRAMPTON, ON

Once again, it is with great joy that we announce two baptisms on April 15, 2007, during our Memorial service. WOLFGANG and SIMONE TROJE took on the saving name of our beloved Saviour, having declared their faith in the Lord’s word, and confessing the need for baptism and repentance for their sins. Wolfgang and Simone first came to us through the “Learn to Read the Bible” seminars. They subsequently began to attend our weekly “Be Ready” classes, Bible classes, Sunday school, and personal study sessions.

These, through God’s grace, all led to a realization of the need for commitment to the service of our Heavenly Father. Their enthusiasm in declaring the desire to become part of God’s family has been manifested by their actions in support of, and involvement in, our ecclesial activities. We pray for our Heavenly Father’s blessing to be upon our new brother and sister as they join us in our walk and service in His name. It is a pleasure to note that Simone’s sister and husband were introduced to our meeting as they attended in support of the baptisms.

We are also pleased to welcome as the newest members to our ecclesial family, by way of transfer, Bro. Chris and Sis. Bibi Mahedeo. Their children, Rebecca and Michael, are welcome additions to our Sunday school.

Congratulations are extended to Bro. Norman and Sis. Juana Smith, who were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Anna, on October 16, 2006. As they share in the joy of this precious gift from God, Norman and Juana manifest their commitment to

our Heavenly Father in raising their children in the loving environment of God's family.

Dave McKay

CALGARY, AB

We have received by way of transfer Bro. Claude and Sis. Debbie along with their two daughters Sis. Tikvah and Sis. Eusebia Mindorff of the Niagara, ON Ecclesia. We warmly welcome the Mindorff family to Alberta, and we pray for God's blessing as they continue in their walk toward His kingdom.

With sadness we announce the falling asleep of Sis. Leila Hampton; Sis. Pamela Gaught on November 12, 2006; and Sis. Doreen Handsaeme on April 15, 2007. We eagerly look forward to the day we reunite with our dear sisters at our Lord's return.

Paul Aback

DETROIT ROYAL OAK, MI

Since our last report we are pleased to announce the marriage of Bro. Peter Styles to Sis. Karly Pillion in July 2006, as well as the marriage of Sis. Leah Muniz to Bro. Tim Billington of the Brantford, ON Ecclesia in September.

We thank Bro. Dave Wisniewski (Brantford, ON) for his study weekend in March on Amos; this provided sobering encouragement in these last days.

The following brothers and sisters have transferred their membership to the Livonia ecclesia and we commend them in love to their new ecclesial home: Nick and Jackie Giroux, Bryan and Keleigh Styles, Karen Muniz, Judy Muniz, and Roy and Betty Styles.

Sadly, we must report that Bro. Andrew Muniz is no longer in fellowship; we are hopeful our brother will be restored to us.

A new Learn to Read the Bible seminar series was begun in May; we look forward to the prospects it offers. We thank the many visitors who have met with us around the memorial table. We especially thank Bre. Bob Pillion (Tyler-Longview, TX); Troy Haltom (Grand Rapids, MI); Randy Vaughn (Qatar); Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD); Paul Cooper (Manitoulin Island, ON), Ben Mielke (Houston Wilshire, TX), Jonathan Betteley (Detroit Milford Road, MI), Arthur Armstrong, Jeff Adams, Mike Livermore, Terry Bell, and Lindbergh VanReuter (Livonia, MI) for their exhortations on our behalf.

Ken Styles

LARGO, FL

On Sunday, January 7, 2007, after a good confession of faith, GABRIELLE LEWIS, the very first Sunday school scholar born into the Largo Ecclesia, was baptized and offered the right hand of fellowship. Gabrielle is the daughter of Bro. Stephen and Sis. Betty Lou Lewis. We pray her walk in the truth will be fruitful and thank our gracious Lord for guiding her to this beginning.

We welcomed the following visitors since our last report: Bro. Gerald and Sis. Fay Gauntlett, Bro. Mark and Coe Gauntlett; and Sara and Eloise Gauntlett (Ashby-de-la-Zouch, UK); Bro. Ray and Sis. Dorothy Livermore and Bro. Harry and Sis. Margaret Birney (Detroit Milford Road, MI); Bro. Dennis and Bro. Bryan Adams (Atwood, OH); Bro. David and Sis. Shawn Bell and their children (Detroit Livonia, MI); Sis.

Betty Pokol, and Bro. Lou Pokol (Williamsville, NY); Bro. Aron Cherry (Houston West, TX); Sis. Shirley Robinson (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON); George and Sis. Lynne Spozarsky (Treasure Coast, FL); Bro. Jeff and Sis. Chris Ashcroft (UK); Bro. George and Sis. Joy Butler (The Villages, FL); Sis. Marjorie Vyse (Aylesbury, UK); Sis. Ruth Robinson, and Bro. John and Sis. Becky Gore and their children (Ann Arbor, MI); Sis. Christina Dillingham, Bro. David Deakin, and Bro. James and Sis. Mindy Wilkinson (Sarasota, FL). We also thank Bre. Gauntlett, Pokol and Wilkinson for their uplifting words of exhortation.

Our annual ecclesial picnic was held March 31, 2007. Members and visitors alike enjoyed a great time with good food and loving fellowship. We did the daily readings prior to eating and then played games.

The annual Florida Christadelphian Bible School was held the week of April 7, 2007. We had approximately 94 registered attendees and many day-trippers from the nearby ecclesias. The Committee wishes to thank Bro. Tec Morgan, Bro. John Pople, and Bro. Jeff Gelineau for providing words of instruction; we look forward to having them again in the future. We also thank the young people's teachers and all the other volunteers who provided invaluable services to the school. Although the weather turned a bit cool and rainy for a few days, the remainder of the week saw the sunshine and warm temperatures return so that our outdoor activities provided a time of peace and relaxation. We are looking forward, with the Lord's good grace, to seeing everyone again next year.

Remember to bring your new green hymnal when visiting. Inquiries may be forwarded to Rec. Bro. Walt Dodrill at waltdodrill@msn.com, or you may call at 727-528-1197 or leave a message at 727-410-0896.

Walt Dodrill

NEW WESTMINSTER, BC

We welcome, by transfer from Vancouver, BC, Sis. Freda Tarling. We look forward to her fellowship and service among us. We have enjoyed the fellowship of Sis. Becky Brown, and now commend her to the fellowship and care of the ecclesia in Victoria, BC.

Art Bull

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CA

We rejoice in the baptism of KELLEY VAUGHN and pray God's richest blessings on our new sister as we walk together toward the kingdom. Sis. Kelley spent many years in CYC and we are happy that she has chosen to dedicate her life in service to Christ.

We wish to thank Bro. Jonathan Bowen for his work at our 2007 study day. He brought us a stirring presentation entitled "The Vision Tarrieth Not", focusing our thoughts on the soon return of our Lord. In addition, we thank Bro. Jonathan for his words of exhortation.

We welcome by transfer Bro. Joseph and Sis. Maria Palmer, from the San Francisco Ecclesia. We are grateful to have them back in our midst and look forward to walking together with them toward the Kingdom of God.

We are pleased to announce the marriage of Bro. Phillip Tunnell and Sis. Rebecca Korbela on Saturday April 7, 2007, at our ecclesial hall. We pray for the guidance of our Heavenly father on this new union in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our thanks go out to the many brethren who have provided us with encouraging words of exhortation over the past year. We truly appreciate the opportunity to hear others speak, and we enjoy the fellowship with the brethren and their families.

Kent Ellis

WICHITA FALLS, TX

Since last reporting our ecclesial news we have welcomed the following brethren and sisters around the table of our absent Lord: Sis. Michelle Massip, and Bro. Antonio and Sis. Marcia Howell (Dallas, TX); Sis. Sandra Maggard (Glendale, AZ); Bro. Antonio Howell, Jr. (Troy, IL); Sis. Jeanna McLaughlin (Abilene, TX); Sis. Erin Rakich (Simi Hills, CA); Bro. Gary and Sis. Donna Abel (Florida South, FL); Sis. Judy Muniz (Detroit Livonia, MI). We thank Bre. A. Howell, Sr. and A. Howell, Jr. for their words of comfort and exhortation.

In April we held our annual spring gathering at the T4C Camp in Freestone, TX. The speaker was Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA). Bro. David's topic was "In the Circle of the King — Men and Women of Great Influence on David". We received very practical exhortation to apply to our daily walk in Christ and service to his body in our respective ecclesias. We thank Bro. David for his efforts on our behalf. We were also happy that Sis. Mary Kay was able to attend this study weekend.

Unfortunately we have received letters of resignation from fellowship from Sis. Jeni Adler and Bro. Derek Davis. We pray our Heavenly Father will restore them to the fold soon.

John A. Clubb

Johannesburg/Cape Town, South Africa Bible Tour

Bible Tour includes some sightseeing, one Bible school with option of a second, and visits to smaller ecclesias in isolation. Tour cost includes accommodation, meals and transport during specified dates. See website www.africanbibletour.com. Email: blclaw@iafrica.com

Used Books for CBMA Publicity and Overseas Book Service

Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School has been asked to be a collection point for used Christadelphian books and Bible study aids by the CBMA Publicity and Overseas Book Service. These books are sent all over the world to new brothers and sisters and small ecclesias that can't otherwise afford to buy them. So please take a minute or two to clean out any unused books or those duplicates you don't need and bring them to Shippensburg. They will then be sent to CBMA for distribution. The types of books we are looking for: used Christadelphian works, as well as concordances, most versions of the Bible, dictionaries, atlases, other reference books, copies of the 1964 hymnbook, and children's Bible story books.

"Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in a lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love" (Reinhold Niebuhr).

Minute Meditation

An Apple a Day

Jim Rohn said, “Some things you have to do every day. Eating seven apples on Saturday night instead of one a day just isn’t going to get the job done.” Anthony Robbins adds, “It’s not what we do once in a while that shapes our lives but what we do consistently.”

The difference between the righteous and the wicked is consistency. We need to do what is right on a daily basis. Although bad people sometimes do nice things and a righteous man sometimes does something that is wrong, it is the consistency of our actions that determines which group we are in. We are thankful for forgiveness because otherwise no one could be saved. Do we make a habit of putting God first in our lives, or do we try to atone for a week of misdeeds on Sunday? Seven apples all at once could make a person sick, yet one a day is supposed to keep the doctor away, which is a really good thing for everyone except the doctor.

There are many things we should do on a daily basis besides perhaps eating an apple. Certainly the daily Bible readings should be right at the top of everyone’s list of things to do each day. The thought from the Psalms — “Oh how love I thy law; it is my study all the day; it makes me wiser than my foes and keeps me in thy way” — should be how we feel. God tells the children of Israel to memorize His law, to talk about it all the time, and to teach it to their children during all the activities of daily life, such as when walking, eating, going to bed or getting up in the morning.

Why is this constant exposure important? As the psalm says, not only does it help to keep us going in the right way serving our God, but also the study of the Word gives us wisdom — it makes us more prudent than others. Joshua was told to meditate on the law day and night, and then he would be prosperous and successful.

What do we think about when we can think about anything we want to think about? The answer to this question will help us determine just how spiritually minded we really are. A godly mind develops by thinking often upon godly things. If our mind is filled with the worldly things around us, then the meditation on God’s law and God’s love gets pushed aside. We need to be tuned in to God and His ways and laws every day. If we make the effort to realign our thinking to God’s standards and train our minds to meditate on the right things on a daily basis, or better yet on an hourly basis or even a minute-by-minute basis, then, as the psalm says, it will keep us, better than any apple could, on the road towards godly health.

Prayer is an important part of meditating on God’s ways. Paul tells us to pray without ceasing. The Bible is full of examples of faithful men who prayed on a

daily basis. Daniel prayed three times a day no matter what the king had decreed. “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.” David declared in the Psalms, “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.”

We need to read the Word of God, which is God speaking to us, and we need to pray to Him often in order to be conversant with God. The disciples noticed how often Jesus prayed, and they asked him to teach them how to pray. When Jesus taught them to pray, he included asking God to give us this day our daily bread. We need physical bread, but we also need our spiritual bread, the bread of life, which is the Word of God, each day. Prayer and the Bible readings should be the most important things we do every day. Just as we cannot get the full benefit of a week’s worth of apples by eating seven apples at one time, so we certainly need our spiritual food on a daily basis as well.

When God decided to destroy the human race from off the earth, he found only Noah who was different. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”

What was so bad about Noah’s times? Jesus described the wicked conditions that existed then: “Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.”

Eating and drinking, and getting married? What is so bad about that? That was *all* they did. They had no time for God. Today our world has no time for God. They are too busy living their everyday lives. We have to be different. Every single day we need to make time to read His word and pray, or else we are just too busy.

Let us take to heart the words of the psalmist: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates

“If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause and say, here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well”

(Martin Luther King, Jr.).

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

JUNE

9 Simi Hills, CA Study day. Bro. Brian Luke (AU): "The Friends of Jeremiah". Contact Bro. Gordon Hensley 805-955-0140 hensleymail@sbcglobal.net

16,17 New York Fraternal South Ozone Park Hall. Bro. Jeff Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA): "A Journey with Purpose". Contact Bro. Gideon Drepaul yerubbaal@yahoo.com

24-30 Rocky Mountain Bible School Glenwood Springs, CO. Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC): "The Exodus"; Bro. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA): "Forgiveness"; Bro. Mark O'Grady (Wellington Tawa, NZ): "Phanerosis". Registration forms at www.denverchristadelphians.org

30-July 5 Terra Nova Bible School, Terra Nova Park, NF. Bro. Jeff Johnson (Australia): "Be Ye Transformed"; Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT): "Meditations on the Ministry of Our Lord". Information and registration at terranovabibleschool.com. Contact Bro. Gary Hynes, 32 First Street, Mount Pearl, NF, Canada A1N 1X8 phone 709-747-2750 info@terranovabibleschool.com

30-July 8 Mid-Atlantic Bible School, Shippensburg, PA. Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC): "Exodus — Escape from Bondage" (adults), and "Preparing to Preach" (teens); Bro. Mark O'Grady (Wellington Tawa, NZ): "All the Tithe is Holy" (adults), and "Genesis 1" (teens); Bro. Nigel Patterson (Newquay, UK): "The Letter to the Christadelphians (Studies in Colossians)" (adults), and "Daring to be Different" (teens). Contact Bro. Jeff Livermore, PO Box 135, Novi, MI 48376. Forms at www.christadelphians.net/MACBS. Information from MACBSRegistrar@hotmail.com

JULY

8-14 Southwest Bible School, Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. Bro. Tec Morgan (Birmingham, UK): "Romans: The Gospel of Salvation" (adults), and "Prophets After the Exile" (teens); Bro. Nigel Patterson (Newquay, UK): "David: From Sheepfold to Palace" (adults), and "Daring to be Different" (teens); Bro. David Styles (Shelburne, ON): "The Ecclesia of the Living God: The Pillar and Ground of the Truth" (adults), and "Does It Really Matter What We Believe?" (teens). Contact Bro. Joe Hill, 11110 South Bay Lane, Austin, TX 78739-1580; joehill@io.com. Forms at www.planofgod.org

14-20 The NEW Manitoulin Family Bible Camp Manitoulin Island, ON. Bro. Ted Hodge, Jr. (Orangeville, ON): "Challenges of the Lord"; Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD): "Job — The Spirit of a Just Man Made Perfect". Contact Bro. Mike Moore 519-756-0175 michael.l.moore@rogers.com

14-22 Eastern Bible School, Ascutey Mountain Resort, Brownsville, VT. Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "Wonders of the Kingdom"; Bro. Richard Morgan (Saanich Peninsula, BC): "The Two Sauls"; Bro. Michael Hughes (Hamilton, NZ): "The Message of the Miracles". Contact Bro. Peter Dixon peter@tecbs.org

22-28 Pacific Coast Bible School, Idyllwild, CA. Bro. Matthew Blewett (Durban, South Africa): "Finding Faith"; Bro. Kitson Reid (Birmingham, UK): "The Hand of God in our Lives"; and Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco, CA): "That I Might Know Him". Contact

Bro. Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065 mail@gelineau.org or Bro. Gary Patterson garympatterson@hotmail.com or visit our website at www.californiabibleschool.org

21-29 Midwest Bible School. Hanover College, IN. Bro. Peter Forbes (UK): "Romans: The Gospel in a Nutshell"; Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): "Titus"; Bro. Roger Lewis (NZ): "The Sign of the Prophet Jonah". Contact Bro. Lee Livermore, 7323D Chapel Villas Lane, Indianapolis, IN 46214, 317-271-1568, e-mail llivermore@hotmail.com

28-August 4 Manitoulin Bible Camp Theme: "I am the Light of the World". Bro. Jeff Johnson (Glenlock, Australia): "We are all one in Christ Jesus"; Bro. Martin Webster (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON): "Discourses in the Gospel of John". Contact Bro. Alex Browning jabrowning@rogers.com 416-284-0290

29-August 4 Western Bible School Menucha Conference Center, Corbett, OR. Bro. Simon Dean (Bishop's Stortford, UK): "Power in Weakness (2 Corinthians)"; Bro. Duncan Kenzie (North Saanich, BC): "Forgiveness and Reconciliation"; Bro. Kyle Tucker (Midlothian, VA): "Fasting". Contact Sis. Jane Szabo szabojj@peak.org

AUGUST

11-17 Niagara Falls Bible School St. Catherines, ON. Bre. John Roberts (UK), Mick Roberts (UK), Mike LeDuke (Ontario). For information please contact Bro. David Brierley 416-236-5295 David.Brierley@sympatico.ca

12-18 Ojai, CA Kids Camp, Camp Arnaz for Christadelphian children ages 9-16. Bre. Jim Cowie (Australia) and David Wisniewski (Ontario, Canada). kidscampcalifornia.com or Bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com

25-31 Vancouver Island Bible Camp Camp Pringle, Shawnigan Lake, Vancouver Island, BC. Bro. Peter King (Worcester, UK): "Studies in John's Gospel"; Bro. John Launchbury (Portland, OR): "Principles of Salvation"; Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "In the Beginning"; Bro. Peter Niven: "Singing and Praise". Contact Sis. Wendy Johnsen 250-724-0501 wendyjohnsen@yahoo.ca

SEPTEMBER

1,2 Victoria (BC) Fraternal gathering. Bro. Peter King (Worcester, UK): "Isaiah — Prince of Prophets". Contact Sis. Pat Williamson 250-721-4938 pwilliamson@telus.net

8 Hamilton (Greenaway) Fraternal gathering, Wildwood, Georgetown, ON. Bro. Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON): "The Challenge of Holiness — What Does God Require?" Starting at 2 pm; bring your own picnic meal for supper at 4:30 pm.

9-14 Adult Study Week. The Bible school with a difference! Wildwood Manor, Ballinafad, ON. Topic: Zechariah 1-7. For information about the workbook or to register please contact Bro. Bob and Sis. Joy Jennings bobnjoy@vif.com 519-754-0902 or Bro. Martin and Sis. Lois Webster mjwebster@vif.com 519-442-0544

12-16 London (West), ON Fraternal gathering week. Bro. Nigel Patterson (Newquay, UK): "Ecclesiastes — Wisdom for Today". Programs will follow. For further information contact Bro. Dave Birchall 519-668-7081 dalefinancial@rogers.com

15,16 Washington, DC Study weekend. Bro. Steve Petrou (Toronto West, ON): "It's All Greek to Me — Lessons from Biblical Greek". 9240 Riggs Road, Adelphi, MD. Saturday 1 pm, Sunday 9:30 am.

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28-30 Bozeman, MT Study weekend. Bro. Dennis Paggi (Verdugo Hills, CA): "The Potter and the Clay: God's Hand in the Lives of Believers". Contact Bro. Steve Faver 406-388-3314 sfaver@unitedagencies.com

OCTOBER

6 Brantford, ON Thanksgiving Fraternal Gathering, Copetown Community Centre. Bro. Brian Luke (Brighton, Australia): "The Last Days of the Apostle Paul". 12:30 to 5 pm, three talks and dinner. Contact Bro. Mike Moore 519-756-0175 michael.l.moore@rogers.com

12-14 Ventura, CA Sisters' retreat. Sis. Wendy Johnsen (Nanaimo, BC). Contact Sis. Bonnie Sommerville kenandbonnie@simihills.org 19111 Kinzie St., Northridge, CA 91324. Registration deposit for \$50 non-refundable

20 Bedford, NS Study day on prophecy. Bro. Brian Luke (Adelaide Brighton, AU). Grand Lake, Oakfield Community Hall, NS 1:30-7:00 pm (supper included)

NOVEMBER

13-18 Galilee Bible School Kibbutz Ma'agan, Israel. Bre. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA) and Don Pearce (Rugby, UK): "Walking in the Footsteps of the Master". Contact Sis. Betty Lou Lewis Liat727@aol.com 727-744-1872

23-25 Camp Hashawha Westminster, MD. Family Bible study weekend. Bro. Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ). Subject TBD. Contact Bro. Bob Kling rkling@computer.org 301-498-5245