

THE CRISTADELPHIAN
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of the Kingdom of God

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

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“The day is yours, and yours also the night” (Psalm 74:16)

“The night of affliction is as much under the arrangement and control of the LORD of Love as the bright summer days when all is bliss... His love wraps the night about itself as a mantle, but to the eye of faith the dark robe is scarcely a disguise. From the first watch of the night even unto the break of day the eternal Watcher observes His saints, and overrules the shades and dews of midnight for His people’s highest good. We believe in no rival deities of good and evil contending for the mastery, but we hear the voice of Yahweh saying, ‘I create light and I create darkness; I, the LORD, do all these things’ [Isa. 45:7].

“Gloomy seasons of religious indifference and social sin are not exempted from the divine purpose. When the altars of truth are defiled, and the ways of God forsaken, the LORD’s servants weep with bitter sorrow, but they may not despair, for the darkest eras are governed by the LORD, and shall come to their end at His bidding. What may seem defeat to us may be victory to Him” (C.H. Spurgeon).

Editorial

What is real?

“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed... We know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence... Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Cor. 4:8,9,14,16-18).

The apostle Paul and his companions spent years trudging up and down the roads of the Roman Empire — always seeking opportunity to bring the good news of Jesus Christ and his Kingdom to their fellowmen. It was not easy work. The demands on the spirit as well as the body were almost overwhelming. There were dangers on every side, at every turn in the road. Foul weather, hunger, thirst, disease, shipwreck. And the constant threat of physical harm — or even death — at the hands of Jewish partisans or Roman authorities (2 Cor. 11:25-28).

Paul never minimized the physical and emotional trials of such work. He knew too well the limitations of mortal man, even though “born again”, forgiven, spiritually regenerated, and Holy Spirit-infused. The life he had pursued was grindingly hard. Sometimes, he despaired even of life itself. He wrote: “We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered... We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death” (2 Cor. 1:8,9a). Still he continued: “But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us” (vv. 9b,10).

So why did Paul go on? Because he placed his trust and hope in God who raises the dead. Because there had come to him, in that dark room in Damascus years earlier, the absolute knowledge that Jesus was alive — raised from the dead, never to die again! Nothing else was so real as that simple but earth-shaking fact. ***Jesus was alive!***

Jesus is alive! And those who believe in him, who trust in him, who commit their lives to him, will live with him (1 Cor. 15:20-23; 1 Thes. 4:14-16)!

This is real. This superlative fact will never change. No matter what sufferings a believer must endure, whether for days or weeks or months or years, this reality of a living Lord will never change. In the truly big picture, framed by God and the universe and eternity, the resurrection of Jesus and the offer of everlasting

life to his followers are irrefutable fact and unshakable promise. For the believer, these are reality.

Thus, when Paul said, “my troubles are light and momentary and temporary”, this was much more than a few brave words. In the context of divine reality, his words — “the glory that awaits me is weighty and eternal” — made absolute sense. Nothing else counted. Not the pain. Not the illness. Not the privation. Not the heat nor the cold nor the damp nor the blazing sun. And not even the cruelty of other men who should have known better. The sum of all these seemingly terrible things counted for nothing compared with the new life found in Christ.

Listen how Paul explained “what really counts” to the Philippians:

“If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Phil. 3:4-11).

The vanity of life

By Jewish reckoning, Paul’s pre-Christian life was outstandingly admirable and righteous. But even the “best” of men are only actors on a stage of God’s devising. They play their parts, and all too soon they make their final exits, like the “great” men of a hundred generations before them (Ezek. 31; 32:18-32). All too soon, they go to the eternal grave of dust and ashes — unless they have a hope in God (Eccl. 3:18-20; 9:1-10; Psa. 49:5-20; Luke 13:1-5; Isa. 26:13,14,19-21).

Any “achievements” of those same “great” men — wealth, power, fame, etcetera — are short-lived and rarely survive the next generation (Eccl. 2:1-23). “All of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.”

Shakespeare puts the following into the mouth of the benighted Macbeth:

*“To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life’s but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.”*

In this scene, Macbeth is on the castle walls, under siege by his enemies. A cry is heard from within the castle, and Macbeth learns that his wife has killed herself. There was a time when such a message would have chilled his heart, but at this point he is surprisingly stoic and accepting, resigned to the barren futility of life. He goes on to give one of the most famous Shakespearean speeches. Macbeth has found his own “way to dusty death” through greed and superstition, and will soon pay the ultimate price.

The fearfully sad words of Macbeth provide a fitting commentary, of sorts, on parts of the book of Ecclesiastes. Such is the fate of the man who has lost sight of God, or who never knew Him. For such a man, life truly signifies nothing; it is altogether “vain” — empty, futile, useless, frustrating, and ultimately tragic.

What to strive for

But, in distinct contrast to “great men” like Macbeth — and other kings and lords and rich and powerful — Paul knew what to strive for. Continuing on in that same letter to the Philippians, he wrote:

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me... Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you” (Phil. 3:12-14,16,17).

Reality

So what is real? What really counts? What will turn to dust and ashes? And what will last forever? In 2 Corinthians 5 and 6, Paul says those who find a new life in Christ (being reconciled with God) will fearlessly pursue a lifestyle inspired and controlled by the love of Christ, persuading other men and women that this life, lived with its eyes glued on the future kingdom, is the full, true life — not the shadowy existence. Read his indomitable Spirit-inspired words for yourself:

“As servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything. We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you” (2 Cor. 6:4-11).

Bible believers will see each day’s measure of evil and trial for the trivial thing it is in the light of eternity. They will turn the other cheek. They will walk the extra mile. They will not lose heart.

For they know *what* is coming.

They know *who* is coming!

And they *know* why!

“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.’ And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: ‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great’ ” (Rev. 11:15-18).

George Booker

Sis. Pat Bartle’s retirement

After many years of editing the exhortation section of The Tidings, Sis. Patricia Bartle finds it necessary to retire from this aspect of her work in the Lord. We greatly appreciate the many hours and days of faithful work performed by our sister.

Before Sis. Pat took on this activity, it regularly took Bro. Don Styles, the recently retired editor, a full day to work up this section of the magazine. Given the objective of having exhortations from all over, it meant working with other people’s exhortations that had been submitted in a wide variety of conditions — notes, extended written texts, and even audio material on tapes and CDs. It didn’t take Don long to realize he had bitten off more than he had expected.

There is first of all the challenge of condensing a 30-minute talk into three or four magazine pages. In addition, what sounds good from the platform does not always read so well as an article, and some brethren give excellent addresses from rather sketchy notes which means fleshing out the other person’s ideas without changing the sense. It was therefore with a great sense of relief that he accepted Sis. Pat’s offer to help.

Bro. Derek Bartle, Sis. Pat’s husband, was also vital to the activity — acting as sounding board and computer expert when there were occasional problems in transmitting the finished piece.

From time to time, readers would comment on the exhortations and remind us they were being used intact or as the basis for talks at ecclesias small and large throughout many countries.

We are thus speaking for many brothers and sisters when we convey a hearty thanks to the Bartles for a very good work performed over many years.

Don Styles

Exhortation

Dedicated to Serving

This morning we are come together to remember a man and the life he lived — that perfect man who, though he was the Son of God, humbly ministered to those he had been sent to save. It is in obedience to the direct command of our Savior that we assemble together to remember his sacrifice on our behalf. By thinking of Jesus and all that he accomplished, we can reflect on our individual lives and consider the ways in which we ought to change.

Not only has God provided us with the perfect template, but also His Scriptures abound with examples of people from whom we can learn. Of course none of them were without fault; some were downright wicked, while others started out badly then finished well. Like us, they were weak and prone to fail. Living a godly life is not easy; in fact, it is a constant struggle. Nevertheless, there were many faithful servants who put their trust in God. Amongst those was Phebe (Phoebe in the NIV) who received this lovely commendation from Paul: “I commend unto you Phebe our sister, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also” (Rom. 16:1,2).

The servant

It is the word “servant” that we wish to focus upon. In the context of Phebe the Greek word for servant is “diakonos”, the word from which we derive deacon; it means a minister, waiter or attendant. We see then that our sister Phebe had dedicated her life to serving her brethren and sisters in the ecclesia in whatever way she could. Here indeed is an example to emulate. Whether male or female, we have an obligation to serve the family of God, ministering with our various skills.

Another word for servant is “doulos”, meaning a slave. Having being born free, it is difficult to imagine the life of enslavement. The slave was the property of the owner, having no rights, possessions or choices; he or she was expected to respond to any command from the master with total obedience.

In many ways, this is similar to our relationship with God. We were purchased with the blood of the Lamb that He provided. At baptism we died to ourselves, and now we belong totally to God. Paul, John, James, Jude and Peter all start their letters stating that they were slaves in the service of God. But there is one big difference between our circumstance and that of the poor wretches who suffered under enforced enslavement in the first century. The life of slavery upon which we embarked was not entered into under duress but willingly. We chose to become slaves/servants of our Master in heaven, and we are at liberty to turn away

from him if we foolishly choose to do so. Nevertheless, there are similarities, as is demonstrated in one of the parables of Jesus: “But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say to him by and by, when he is come in from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink. Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him?... So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do” (Luke 17:7-10).

The Greek word for “servant” here is “doulos”. Luke is saying that, having chosen to become servants/slaves of the Lord God, we recognize that we must regulate our behavior in accordance to our master’s will. People usually appreciate recognition for services rendered, but the slave could expect none. This is the message that the Lord Jesus was trying to impress upon his listeners. However hard one works for the heavenly Master, his servants/slaves are only doing what is expected and required. Therefore we should not expect accolades for doing our duty.

Today we are constantly bombarded with the philosophy of personal rights and freedoms. To counteract this danger, it is necessary to remind ourselves that we have been bought with a price and our lives are not our own. Let us strive to cultivate a state of mind that accepts that ‘I cannot do as I please because I belong to somebody else who desires my service.’

Alert and watching

A servant was required to be on constant alert, watching for his master’s return. This is exactly our situation: “And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return... that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately” (Luke 12:36).

As previously mentioned, a slave had no personal possessions, so it is interesting to note that Jesus urged his followers to rid themselves of treasures that would be an impediment to their walk towards his kingdom: “Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:33,34). We do well to consider where our treasure is!

Desiring high status

For many people, high status is to be desired. Human nature has not changed; this was the very thing that the disciples had been discussing when the Lord intervened: “But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you but whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister (‘diakonos’). And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant (‘doulos’) of all” (Mark 10:44). There is a powerful lesson here: even those who obtain the highest of

positions — if they profess to follow the Lord as God’s “slaves” — must minister to fellow believers.

Our eternal spiritual welfare depends upon whether or not we have ministered to others. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, the king shall “say unto them on his right hand, Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom... For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Matt. 25: 34-36). Interestingly, the sheep had no concept of doing these things for the king; when they enquired, he told them, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40).

Is this our attitude to service? Has it become so natural to be of help to brethren and sisters that we don’t give it a second thought? Our lives need to be an exercise in service but it takes time and effort — although, like most things, the more we practice, the easier it becomes. The ideal is when love and compassion for others takes precedence over concern for oneself.

As always, this ideal is demonstrated in the life of the Savior. Jesus was both physically and mentally drained (he had just been informed of the death of John the Baptist) and said to his disciples: “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while...” (Mark 6:31). Unfortunately, the pressing crowds prevented this period of respite. Putting their needs before his own, Jesus taught and fed more than five thousand people.

The Lord Jesus Christ was the willing slave of God, giving his Father great pleasure: “Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him...” (Isa. 42:1).

Exalted as he is now, sitting on the right hand of God, we must remember that Jesus came as a servant to serve and minister to others. Immediately prior to the dreadful events of his trial and crucifixion, this man who was the Son of God took a towel and washed the feet of his friends.

In this poignant act, there is the supreme example of service. The Lord was demonstrating that “even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Now, as redeemed servants, let us remember him!

Jonathan Lawrence (Victoria, BC)

“Help the old and sick as much as you possibly can: especially those whom you think deserve it least, for they are likely to be the ones everyone neglects. Christ’s command to do it is not because of their merit, but because it is the will of our Lord and a test of our love and obedience to him... We shall be asked about this matter at the judgment seat. It may be rather a sticky question, and it would pay to have a good answer ready. Better yet: to have a good record ready” (G.V. Growcott).

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (7) The resurrection and exaltation of Jesus

In this section of Ephesians 1, Paul demonstrates the power of the Father in the exaltation of His Son, and proceeds to work out the theme of fullness.

We saw in our previous study how the Apostle was striving to bring home to his readers the greatness of the power which could work in them, if only they opened their hearts. Now (in 1:20,21) he proceeds to demonstrate one of the greatest exercises of divine power, in the resurrection and exaltation of the Son of His love.

The rising from the dead is the great historic truth which explains the rise and development of the early church. As Peter, who was in the forefront in the preaching of salvation, states so simply but eloquently: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). The truth of the resurrection of our Lord is the rock on which faith is built. The once runaway apostle, who thrice denied his Lord, stood firm in the presence of a menacing Sanhedrin, and said: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20; see also 1 John 1:3).

Exalted to the Father's right hand (Psalm 110)

After raising our Lord, the Father bestowed on him a unique privilege: He exalted His Son to His own right hand, there to sit, whereas even Gabriel *stands* in the presence of God (see Luke 1:19). There have been some differences of opinion concerning the interpretation of the word "joy" in Hebrews 12:2 — this was the joy set before Jesus as he faced the cross. But surely, it is Psalm 110:1 which provides the key: "The LORD saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." What else could this be but a promise of elevation to heaven, to a position second only to the LORD God Himself? There is convincing evidence that the Lord was familiar with Psalm 110, whereas it is clear even the apostles had no insight during the ministry into the relevance of this great psalm to their Lord.

We look again at a revealing passage in the final exchanges between the Lord and the eleven: "Some of his disciples therefore said one to another, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye behold me not; and again a little while and ye shall see me; and, Because I go to the Father?" (John 16:17; see also v. 18). Yet the Lord had spoken about his leaving them on more than one occasion; we take note especially of some words in the upper room: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say unto you" (John 13:33). Jesus was sustained by the

knowledge that his death would be followed not only by his resurrection to eternal life, but also by his ascension to his Father's right hand.

Apart from the explicit mentions of his going to the Father, our Lord late in the ministry made use of Psalm 110 to confound his adversaries. After the latter had subjected the Lord to a battery of questions, to their own confusion, Jesus then presented them with a problem. Quoting Psalm 110:1, he asked this question, "If David then calleth him Lord, how is he his son?" (see Matt. 22:41-46, and parallel passages in Mark 12 and Luke 20). This hostile interrogation of their Lord and the way he confounded his interrogators would be an occasion the apostles would never forget.

Psalm 16 also

Hitherto, we have concentrated on Psalm 110, but there is an earlier psalm which deserves our attention, and that is Psalm 16. After an explicit prophecy of the resurrection (vv. 9,10), we read, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; in thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (v. 11). Our Lord would be as familiar with this psalm as he would be with Psalm 110; we especially observe the term "joy", which so obviously has to be linked with Hebrews 12:2 ("the joy that was set before him").

The way in which Scripture throws light on Scripture is in itself fascinating, but it also reveals that there is a mind behind it, a supreme mind. We have seen the gulf which separated the Lord from his apostles in the matter of insight into the Old Testament. However, after his resurrection, he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). He also promised his followers they would receive the Holy Spirit, which came to pass some ten days after his ascension. On the very day the Twelve (which included Matthias) were endowed with the Spirit, Peter preached the gospel of salvation.

Interestingly, the apostle now showed he understood the meaning and relevance of Old Testament passages into which he had previously possessed no insight. After mentioning the fact of the Lord's resurrection, he quoted Psalm 16 (see Acts 2:25-28) and in so doing referred to verse 11. The RV uses "gladness" in Acts 2:28, but the NEB uses "joy", thus providing a clear link with Psalm 16:11. Peter also speaks of the Lord's ascension: "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted..." (v. 33). In this connection, we must not forget Peter and the others had actually witnessed the Lord's ascent to heaven (Acts 1:9).

Exalted above all authority and power

The great truth enshrined in Ephesians 1:20, to which we have given so much attention, is reinforced by verse 21. In his position at the Father's right hand, the Lord is exalted "far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come". Remembering the heresy troubling the Lycus ecclesias, we can see how this is a comprehensive rejection of the worship of angels. It indeed endorses the Lord's own claim made before his ascension to heaven: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18).

There is an interesting difference here with a claim made during the ministry. When Jesus cured the man sick of the palsy, he declared: “Thy sins are forgiven” (Matt. 9:5), thus causing outrage to the scribes. He then reinforced his claim by actually curing the sick man — stressing that this established his authority on earth. However, after he has submitted to the cross and effected the reconciliation between God and man, he can assert that all power “in heaven” has been granted to him, and this before his actual ascension.

Paul in Ephesians 1:22 declares God has put “all things in subjection under his feet”. While indeed we cannot doubt the authority now exercised by our Lord, we know all things on earth have not yet been subjected to him, as Hebrews 2:8 rightly emphasizes.

Paul demonstrates as much in 1 Corinthians 15 — where he speaks not only of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but indicates also the scope of the work he is to undertake when he assumes his dominion over the earth: he is to exercise his power over mankind until all enemies are subjected and the consummation of this process will be the conquest of death itself (vv. 25,26). Then, when this has been achieved, the Lord Jesus will present his completed work to his Father, “that God may be all in all” (v. 28), thus fulfilling the promise made to Moses centuries before, that the earth shall be filled with God’s glory (Num. 14:21).

“New heavens and a new earth”

The Old Testament has much to say about the interim period during which the Lord Jesus with his associates, the glorified redeemed, will progressively subdue the earth. Such prophecies as Psalm 72 and many others come to mind, but Isaiah 65 is especially noteworthy: “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth” (v. 17). Despite the benefits of a righteous government, and the lengthening of human life, sin will not be absent (see v. 20) until eventually the last sinner will perish. Peter was familiar with this great prophecy, for he uses the very language of Isaiah 65: “But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13).

The head of the body

While the early part of verse 22 presents no difficulty, what are we to make of the remainder of the verse? “And gave him to be head over all things to the church.” While the NIV has “for the church”, the preponderance of versions favour “to the church” (see RV, RSV, NEB, and NKJ). In any case, the thought here is clear. What has happened to the Lord concerns the church fundamentally, and the next verse explains why: the ecclesia is the body of Christ. The subject of the Lord’s relationship to his followers has many aspects: as he himself told the apostles, “Ye call me, Master, and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am” (John 13:13). This may seem at first sight to put a distance between the Lord and his followers but, as we shall see, what it implies is that Christ is the “head”.

Paul shows this when he mentions the only hierarchy which matters: “the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3). To this relationship between man and woman we

hope to return; for the moment our concern is with the Lord as head. The figure of the body is dealt with by the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 12. There he stresses the contribution which each part of the body can make to the whole. This illustrates how the diversity of Spirit gifts can contribute to the harmonious functioning of an ecclesia. But while there is a difference, there is also relevance: after affirming that a body has many parts, Paul adds: “So also is Christ” (v. 12).

In the case of Ephesians 1:23, the ecclesia is declared to be the body of Christ, the organism through which he functions. The Apostle is here opening up a rich vein, and one which makes us think of Peter’s remark: in some of Paul’s letters there are “things hard to be understood” (2 Pet. 3:16). We certainly have a challenge to our understanding in Ephesians 1:23. But clearly implicit in the notion that the Lord is the head is the corollary that the church is his body; through this body the head achieves his fulness. Christ is the one who fills all things; this is to be realized in concert with his disciples. What they did, and still do faithfully in full submission to the head, the Lord himself is effectively achieving. This confers on his followers a priceless privilege and at the same time a tremendous responsibility. In acting thus his followers are thereby achieving unity in the Lord; but where there is division, there is effectively a departure from the ideal, as Paul so powerfully reminded the Corinthians (see 1 Cor. 1:10-13; note esp. v. 10). As members of his body (see Eph. 5:30) we should have the same mind, the mind of Christ.

Parallels with Colossians

Not surprisingly, these key concepts appear also in the letter to the Colossians. Without producing a separate commentary on this companion letter, we note the appearance in Colossians of some of the outstanding concepts which have come to our attention already:

- (1) First, we observe that the Lord Jesus is “the firstborn of all creation”, by which we must manifestly understand the new creation, he being “the firstborn of the dead” (Col. 1:15,18; Rev. 1:5; see also Rev. 3:14).
- (2) Then in Colossians 1:19, we learn “it was His good pleasure... that in [Christ] should all fullness dwell”, which underlines that the totality of the divine purpose is to be achieved in and through him, and through his body the church.
- (3) In Colossians 1:24, we come across a concept which at first could startle us but which bears directly on the subject. The Lord Jesus achieves his fulness, the consummation of the divine purpose entrusted to him, through his followers. In that verse the Apostle Paul speaks of his sufferings (and how numerous they had proved to be), as filling up on his part what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ for the sake of the body which is the church. The kinship with the teaching in Ephesians 1:23 is clear beyond any doubt.
- (4) Then in Colossians 2 we find another illuminating statement: “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power” (vv. 9,10). The fullness belongs to Christ but, as his body, his followers share in it.

- (5) Finally, in Colossians 3, we are reminded that through faith and baptism we have not only died but have also found a new life in our Lord.

The testimony of the Acts

To demonstrate historically that we have not been dealing with speculative ideas, but with realities, we can turn to the book of Acts. The Lord ascended to heaven and so was no longer acting as he was during his ministry upon earth. However, he commissioned his apostles to continue his work. This work had acquired a new dimension through his sacrifice on the cross, his resurrection and his elevation to heaven. He told his apostles in some of his final words, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father” (John 14:12).

After the descent of the Spirit upon the Twelve on the day of Pentecost, the first public proclamation of the Gospel by Peter led to the conversion of about 3,000 (Acts 2:41). The account of the establishment and irresistible spread of the Good News is an absorbing story but not one to be spelt out now. What it illustrates so wonderfully, however, is the contribution of the disciples to the “fullness” of the Lord, the head of the body. The disciples also shared in the sufferings of their Lord: Stephen was stoned (Acts 7:58-60), and James, one of the Twelve, was executed (Acts 12:1-2). The former persecutor, Saul of Tarsus, was converted to the service of his Lord; in the account of his conversion, there are two details of considerable significance for our present purpose:

- (1) When the glorified Lord struck the persecutor blind, and Saul asked: “Who art thou, Lord?” then came the totally unexpected reply: “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” Thus the total identity of the Lord Jesus with his followers was established for the persecutor, and he never forgot it.
- (2) When Ananias received the message to establish contact with Saul, he initially recoiled but was reassured, being told that the new convert would be shown what he was to suffer for the name of Jesus. This provides an unmistakable link with Colossians 1:24 (which see again).

Thus Saul was incorporated into the body of his Lord, labouring and suffering on his behalf. This is the call to all his followers; under the present dispensation, they are being prepared for the greater work of cooperating with their Lord in creating the new heavens and the new earth, when our Lord will return to rule in righteousness. As Peter expresses it, the Lord’s disciples are “an elect race, a royal priesthood, a people for God’s own possession” (1 Pet. 2:9). This theme can be further pursued in such passages as Revelation 1:6; 2:26,27; and so on, until eventually God’s great design will embrace all the earth, and God will be all in all.

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

“Every act of conscious learning requires the willingness to suffer an injury to one’s self-esteem. That is why young children, before they are aware of their own self-importance, learn so easily; and why older persons, especially if vain or important, cannot learn at all” (Thomas Szasz).

Bible Study

Rightly Dividing the Word: (6) Varying “Weights”

Some religious critics regard Christadelphians as fundamentalists because of our confidence in the Bible as a revelation to us by our Creator, from the beginning, of His character, purpose, and actions. They assume that we believe that God intends us to understand every Bible passage in absolutely literal terms and as being of equal weight and importance. They suggest that we regard every command of God from Genesis to Revelation as equally binding on us today. Some differentiate between the “harsh” God of the Old Testament and the “loving” God of the New Testament.

However, we know there are many lovely examples of God’s love, forgiveness, and gracious actions in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament are thrilling prophecies about His work with people through His Son, and about the climax of that work in His Son’s ruling the world in righteousness. In the Old Testament, God is revealed again and again to be both holy and a savior. He is totally unlike the cruel heathen gods of man’s imagination — gods who demand appeasement and degrading, immoral worship, and who act as humans do.

No believing and mature reader of the Old Testament regards its every word to be of equal weight. Blasphemous words, like those of King Sennacherib of Assyria, are recorded in historical accounts; wrong ideas about God are expressed by Job’s friends in the poetic book of Job; the words and actions of fools are recorded in some psalms and proverbs. Mature and sensible discernment enables us to distinguish between blasphemy and foolish, wrong words, on the one hand, and truth on the other.

Portions of Old Testament psalms and prophets are poetic — using similes, metaphors, imagery, personification and parables. In his teaching Jesus uses many parables to illustrate his message in simple, powerful ways and to separate the genuine seekers of truth from casual, lazy, and hostile listeners. Parables do take honest, prayerful efforts to understand and to apply.

Some Old Testament and New Testament prophecies about the future use symbols. These are not intended to be taken literally, but to be used with the keys to their understanding that are provided in that book itself, or in other parts of the Bible. These symbolic portions of Scripture are often used improperly and even dishonestly to prove human ideas that contradict the plain teaching of Scripture.

In the Bible, all of the fundamental teachings about God and His saving purpose for us in Christ are stated plainly in various places. When we encounter symbolic teaching, then we must interpret the symbols in accord with the fundamentals of the gospel.

The ten commandments of God's covenant with Israel are also found in the teaching of Jesus and his apostles. However, the other laws that formed Israel's civil code were wise, yet not ideal. As Jesus says in response to a question about the lawfulness of divorce for any cause, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:3-12). So also, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" limited retaliation and the cities of refuge prevented vengeance. But they were not the ideal.

In the Lord Jesus' life and words we have the true ideal. "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has spoken to us by His Son... the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person... upholding all things by the word of His power..." (Heb. 1:1-4). There is a qualitative difference between some of the laws given by Moses to govern Israel (under its imperfect rulers) and the instruction of the Lord Jesus. The law was limited to external actions that could be judged by Israel's human judges. Jesus teaches us how to fulfill, or "fill full", the real intent of the law. He shows us the true standard for our attitudes, thoughts, words, and actions.

In Matthew 5:43-45, in striking contrast to the Jewish traditions about the law ("You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy"), the Lord Jesus says to us, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you."

This is a difficult command to obey when other people show enmity towards us and hurt us. However, when we understand love as defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, we realize that we can still practice love in patience and kindness to unlovable people who hurt us. By love, we reject jealousy, rudeness, and thinking evil of them. We believe and hope the best of them and for them. If we consciously try to think and act in that way towards people whom we don't like or who hurt us, and if we pray for them, then they may no longer seem to us to be our enemies.

This new commandment of the Lord Jesus is in harmony with how we see God working with many sinful people in the Old Testament. Yet, it seems to be very different from the attitudes expressed by some inspired writers in the Psalms and prophets. In his book *Exploring The Psalms*, Bro. Mark Vincent explains that prayers for the destruction of enemies in the Psalms are often in a context where they are the enemies of God, of His anointed king, and of His people.¹

The inspired words of Psalm 137 — where God's people in exile in Babylon say, "Happy shall be he who repays you as you have served us! Happy shall he be who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock" — sound like human, vengeful feelings. But disciples of the Lord Jesus ought not to say that. These words are there so that we can appreciate the depth of longing for Jerusalem, and the anger and grief over the loss of their children that these people of God felt.

Disciples of the Lord Jesus through the centuries and in our day have suffered and are suffering in a similar way. We can empathize with the feelings of God's people in this psalm. However, the Lord Jesus has set us a higher standard in his life and in his words, as the Apostle Peter reminds us (1 Pet. 2:23; 4:19).

In Jeremiah 18:18-23, the prophet — so much abused and persecuted by his own people for speaking words meant to save them — prays in a very human way. He prays that those who conspired to hurt him should be overthrown, that their children should die by famine and the sword, their wives widowed, their young men slain, and that God should not forgive them. It is not the Lord's will that we should follow these words today. They are there to show us the depth of this faithful prophet's suffering and hurt in his lonely struggle. They enable us to feel for Jeremiah, to appreciate the faith and courage it took to speak for God — faith and courage we need, too. However, the Lord Jesus teaches us a higher standard of behavior toward our enemies. We are to pray for them.

Similarly, the spirit of Psalm 149 seems to be in stark contrast to the teaching of the Lord Jesus. It is often used as a basis of rejoicing that, in the kingdom, glorified and immortalized disciples of the Lord will use two-edged swords to cut unbelievers in pieces. This sounds as if we are saying, 'While we turn the cheek to insults and blows now, in the kingdom it will be our turn to hit back.'

Is that the attitude that the Lord Jesus is teaching us? Is this what our present training in His way is preparing us to do? What is this passage actually saying? What does it mean? How does the context of the passage and of the Scriptures as a whole help us to answer those questions?

The Hebrew word "chasisd", translated as "saint" in Psalm 149 ["this honour have all his saints": v. 9], is translated as "saint" in thirteen other psalms, all in the sense of mortal people who are faithful to God:

- (a) "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints" (Psa. 116:15).
- (b) "He preserves the lives of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked" (Psa. 97:10).

The saints in all these psalms are mortal people who use the sword at God's command.

From the time of Abraham's rescue of his nephew Lot (Gen. 14) to the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem led by Nehemiah, the people of God used the sword. By God's help and with the sword, they conquered the land of promise and defended God's people from His enemies over many centuries. However, the words of David, Israel's warrior king, teach us that this is not the ideal. David explains that he was not allowed to build a house for the LORD because he had shed much blood and had made great wars (1 Chron. 22:6-10). The Lord Jesus teaches his disciples a different way.

In the day of his return, and with his Father's power and the aid of the mighty angels, Christ will measure out upon the nations judgments of fire, earthquake, pestilence, and great hailstones (cf. 2 Thes. 1:6-10; 2 Pet 3:10-13; Isa. 2:12-21; Ezek. 38 and 39). Thus all nations will see God's glory and judgments and — along with His people Israel — will know that He is the LORD. Yes, in the symbolic vision of the Lord Jesus coming in judgment in Revelation 19, we see him clothed with a robe dipped in blood and the armies of heaven following him. There is, however, only one symbolic sword and it comes out of his mouth.²

We know that we should not base any important teaching on one Bible passage. Here, attention to the meaning of “saints”, to the context in which the Psalms are written, and to the rest of the Bible enables us to understand Psalm 149.

Bob Green (Brantford, ON)

Editor’s Footnotes:

1. For a similar view on such prayers in the Psalms, see the following note on “The Imprecatory Psalms”.
2. Whether the immortal saints wield literal swords or not, there will of course be terrible judgments upon the mortal nations — and armies — that set themselves against the LORD and against His Anointed. Beyond doubt, the immortal saints will — and should — rejoice in these judgments when they come, for such judgments will be righteous.

The Imprecatory Psalms

Certain psalms are often called “imprecatory psalms” because they pray for or invoke the judgments of God against His enemies. The psalms most generally placed in this category are 7, 35, 58, 59, 69, 83, 109, 137, mentioned above, and 139. A number of other psalms, as well as other parts of Scripture, contain brief imprecations; but these nine have imprecation as their chief element.

The basic question with these psalms, as many interpreters see it, is an ethical question: How can it be right to wish or pray for the destruction of others when the Bible teaches elsewhere and often that one should love his enemies, and pray *for* those who persecute him (Matt. 5:44)?

To this question, generally stated, there have been several suggested answers:

1. ***The imprecations expressed David’s own sentiments only:*** This suggestion is that David is, in such psalms, speaking the sentiments of his own heart and not those of the Holy Spirit. According to this view, the inspiration of David’s curses does not mean that God approved of the anger in David’s heart when he wrote those curses (Alan Hayward, *God’s Truth*, p. 195). This view, however, overlooks or perhaps does not give sufficient weight to the Scriptural record of David as a man who did not indulge in a spirit of *personal* revenge (1 Sam. 24:1-7; 26:5). And furthermore, this view could lead down a tricky path, by which we are repeatedly faced with the dilemma: ‘Is this verse, or that, inspired and meaningful as an example to me? Or is it merely David (or Isaiah, or Moses, or Paul) expressing his own personal sentiment rather than God’s?’
2. ***The imprecations demonstrate the inferior principle of spiritual life in the Old Testament:*** This view seemingly suggests that faithful ones in Old Testament times could not have been expected to show any of the kinder and gentler and more “Christian” virtues of character, since they had not the slightest inkling in their day that such qualities were even desirable! But Christadelphians rightly take Old and New Testaments to be equally inspired and infallible. Also, such passages as Leviticus 19:17,18; Proverbs 20:22; 24:17,18; 25:21,22;

and Job 31:29,30 show that, in the matter of personal vengeance, the Old Testament is every bit up to the standard of the New.

3. ***The imprecations are prophetic:*** David was not only a poet, but also a prophet declaring what would happen to the ungodly. His statements, then, were not private and personal at all, but instead the judgments of God. It is pointed out, in defense of this view, that some of the imprecatory psalms are quoted in the New Testament as being fulfilled then (Psa. 69:25 and 109:8 in Acts 1:20; Psa. 69:22,23 in Rom. 11:9,10). However, in both English and Hebrew, the “imprecations” are not simple declarations of what will happen, but rather wishes or prayers for what may happen. Thus, what appears at first sight to be a very satisfactory solution may be seen as going only half the way to answering the question: “How could David *pray* as he did?”
4. ***Finally, the imprecations are calls to God to remember His covenant:*** Thus the basic reason for imprecatory psalms is the Abrahamic covenant, specifically Genesis 12:2,3: “Now the Lord had said unto Abram... ‘I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; And I will bless them that bless thee, and *curse him that curseth thee*; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.’”

On the basis of this covenant, David, the seed of Abraham, the divinely-selected representative of the nation, had every right to *pray* that God would do what He had promised — that is, curse those who cursed Abraham’s seed!

What is crucial to appreciating the imprecatory psalms is this: David never prayed that he might be permitted to avenge himself, but always that God would rise up to avenge His Anointed (Psa. 7:6; 35:1; 58:6; 59:5). Like Jesus later, David was capable of generosity and “turning the other cheek” when under personal attack (2 Sam. 16:11; 19:16-23). Yet, like Jesus again, he loved righteousness and hated the iniquity that flaunted itself against the honor of God, and he could be utterly ruthless in suppressing such iniquity when he knew the time was right!

Finally, God’s judgments are essential if His righteous ones are ever to be established and glorified on the earth. To pray “Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth” is therefore no different than to pray “Let Your enemies be confounded... troubled... put to shame... perish...” — once it is understood that there is no personal vindictiveness involved.

The imprecations of the Bible are righteous, heartfelt calls upon God to remember His covenant, and to perform it, come what may. David and the other “imprecators” recognized that, only when God’s enemies are finally destroyed, will God Himself be able truly to glorify His Name in the earth.

Thus our prayer can — righteously — be expressed in the same words as Deborah and Barak:

“So may all Your enemies perish, O LORD! But may they who love You be like the sun when it rises in its strength” (Judg. 5:31).

Editor

Coming Events

“We object...”

This generation of the Christadelphian community has enjoyed the freedom from a military draft since 1973 in the USA. We also benefit from a globally documented history of painfully maintaining the integrity of our convictions in denying military service. Christadelphian brethren have been executed (beheaded in Germany), imprisoned, humiliated and brutalized for obeying divine commands. Since the American Civil War, the conviction of our faith displayed through the sacrifices of our brethren have brought hard-earned benefits for subsequent generations. The 1936 US Department of Commerce Census of Religious Bodies reported that: “They (the Christadelphians) have consistently maintained that their faith prohibited participation in the Army or Navy of any country, whether in times of peace or times of war, until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth.” Copies of this census were extensively used by our brethren during World War II before draft boards. This government-generated and government-published census was reportedly quite instrumental in establishing our credibility and consistency in this matter. Although this is no longer available from the federal government, it is available on a CD from the New England Christadelphian Religious Conscientious Objection Committee (NECRIOC).

There has recently been federal legislation submitted to reinstate a military draft. This legislation has been unsuccessful to this point. Additionally, the Department of Defense issued new instructions concerning conscientious objectors on May 5 of this year (No. 1300.06). Historically, military conscription has been a reality in war times. However, this absence of challenge to our convictions over the last few decades may dull our preparedness and relax the vigilance of these convictions. If political realities shift we could quickly find ourselves in a defensive position for which some may be unprepared. Considering current political and social realities, new draft legislation could easily include our young sisters as well as our young brothers.

Our exclusive military commander is God’s Son

Our position is somewhat unique. We define ourselves as ‘religious’ conscientious objectors. We do not consider war as being inherently immoral or unjust. We are not pacifists. We hope to follow the Son of God riding white horses and dressed in linen (Rev. 19:14), binding kings with chains and nobles with fetters of iron, executing divine judgments (Psa. 149:6-9). The seed of the serpent will never surrender peaceably to the ascending authority of the seed of the woman. We have volunteered for Christ’s immortal army, to be activated at the introduction of the Millennial Kingdom Age. However, until the Kingdom of God is restored we are commanded to bless those who persecute us, take no personal vengeance, resist not evil and love our enemies. Participation in the wars of men is forbidden to the faithful. Fortunately, our position is respected by many governments.

The challenge would be that every potential draftee from among the Christadelphian community (young men and possibly young women) would be *individually* examined on the basis of his or her conscientious objection status. The historical consistency of our community on this issue, while significant, does not offer anyone a rubber stamp approval for a CO application. A CO applicant's school records, behavioral records, driving records, internet activity, work records and any additional pertinent data would be assembled and considered by a draft board. If an applicant's history contradicts the professed philosophy of a religious conscientious objector, the CO application might well meet with disapproval.

Procedural changes create new challenges

Governmental procedural changes are beginning to create new challenges to the requirements of our faith. Online Selective Service registration does not allow for anyone to record their religious conscientious objection to serving in the military. *It is recommended that our young men do not register online.* The Selective Service registration form should be filled out in pen, with a handwritten statement expressing a religious conscientious objection to military service. The registration should be mailed to the government. However, this alone would be insufficient, as that handwritten expression of faith would be lost when the information was transferred to an electronic format at the Selective Service office. A copy should be made of that registration form and mailed back to ourselves. That envelope should never be opened until that Christadelphian is required to appear before his or her draft board. The still sealed envelope, with its postal cancellation date stamp matching that young man's original registration timeframe, could then be opened by the draft board. This would witness to the original claim at the point of registration that this individual expressed his religiously based objection to military service. This kind of preparation and forethought would make a powerful statement to the sincerity of a young man's claim before a draft board.

An expanding jury pool

Another category of consistent religious conscientious objection has been our firm denial to serve on a jury, due to divine commands and precedents. Another governmental procedural change that generates challenge to our convictions is that many states no longer use voter registrations as their source for jury service. Many state governments in the United States are converting their jury service databases over to include all people with a driver's license. The Christadelphian community's jury service shield, provided by non-participation in the political process, is now being eroded due to a spreading procedural change. Are we prepared?

Being prepared

There is no law offering automatic exclusion from jury service on the basis of conscientious objection. This determination is strictly individual and at the discretion of the court. When given the opportunity to express our unwillingness to swear to the court or offer any judgments, we should be ready. Peter exhorts us to be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks a reason for the hope that is in us, in a spirit of meekness (1 Pet. 3:15). Memorial service attendance records

have sometimes been instrumental in securing exemption from jury service. One brother at a NECRCOC meeting recounted how a judge actually traveled to the ecclesial hall to personally examine the Sunday school attendance records of a young Christadelphian requesting jury service exemption. The well-maintained records testifying to constant attendance proved to the judge the consistency of that young brother's convictions. He was immediately excused from jury service. Can we scripturally explain why we are forbidden to swear or make an oath? Can we accurately quote Christ's commands relating to why we cannot serve on a jury? Does our particular ecclesial constitution definitively state our objection to serving on juries, swearing an oath, participation in military service and political activism?

The following is an example of just such an Ecclesial Constitutional statement:

72. That no Brother or Sister shall serve on a jury. That whereas the religious community known as the Christadelphians organized in the United States about the time of the Civil War has continuously held and exhibited the following doctrine of religious conscientious objection to:

- a. participation in the armed forces,*
- b. the taking of oaths,*
- c. membership in political parties, and*
- d. voting in political elections...*

We, members of the Christadelphian Ecclesia of ____, affirm that this meeting has historical and continuing religious conscientious objection to serving on juries in courts of law. This is a consistent extension of the foregoing doctrine and in response to Christ's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:34,39,40; 6:2; 7:1).

NECRCOC offers a free disk with PowerPoint Ecclesial Educational Presentations on the three major categories of our conscientious objections:

1. political process participation,
2. military service, and
3. jury service.

These presentations also have speaker's notes and handout sheets. Viewer software is also provided for the Power Point and Word documents in case they are needed. There are recommendations on the disk for the ecclesia, families and individuals in relation to these three categories of our religious conscientious objections. Additionally there is a great deal of research material on the disk, along with some out-of-print publications (such as the 1936 Federal Government Census form mentioned earlier).

Since NECRCOC has met and consulted with the National Service Committee of the Unamended Christadelphian Fellowship, there is additional information and material on this disk that they have been kind enough to share. These disks are sent free to any Christadelphian who requests one. A request for a disk can be made from Bro. Ralph Schwarz via mail, email, or telephone:

Bro. Ralph Schwarz
14 Shadowbrook Dr.
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Correspondence with the New England Christadelphian Religious Conscientious
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Reflections

Famous Last Words: (11) Sarah

Our last article looked at the last words of Lot. We were reminded that God always knows best and we must trust Him implicitly. We also had an insight into the work of the angels, who worked with Lot, modifying their plan as necessary, based on his requests. This may give us a wonderful insight into our work in the Kingdom, where we will have to exercise our discretion and make decisions while administering the affairs of the mortals.

The last recorded words of Sarah are found in Genesis 21:10: “Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.”

Sarah is often maligned for her harsh treatment of Hagar. She is portrayed as a jealous mistress, acting out of frustration, initially because of her own barrenness, and then her own son’s “second-born” status. *Nothing* could be further from the truth! Sarah acted consistently from a godly perspective in her dealings with Hagar. The promises of God were foremost in her mind. Nurturing and caring for the promised seed surpassed all else in her life!

Firstly, when Hagar became pregnant as a surrogate for Sarah, it was Hagar who acted inappropriately by trying to usurp Sarah's rightful place as matriarch. Genesis 16:4 (RSV) states that after Hagar had conceived, "she looked with contempt upon her mistress." It was Sarah who tried to right the situation, instructing Hagar to submit to the divinely appointed order in the family. Genesis 16:6 says, "Sarah dealt hardly with her" in the KJV, and that then Hagar "fled". This wording is misleading. The same word for "dealt hardly" is used in verse 9 by the angel when speaking to Hagar. Here she was told to "submit" herself to her mistress. So God endorsed the words of Sarah, and Hagar listened this time, and returned, submissively. Sarah was *not* physically, verbally or emotionally abusive of Hagar — she was trying to restore order to the family. Hagar was in the wrong.

In this second incident, Sarah was right to insist that the promised seed (Isaac) have the preeminence over the son of the bondwoman (Ishmael). It was Ishmael that had been "mocking" Isaac (Gen. 21:9), perhaps at the prompting of his mother, and perceiving his own status threatened by Isaac. The harmony of the family unit was again at risk and Sarah's solution of "casting out" Hagar and Ishmael, although grievous to Abraham, was the right thing to do. This is clearly seen since God again endorsed Sarah's words (v. 12).

In fact, Paul picks up Sarah's last words in Galatians 4:30, to make a very important point. He summarizes his point in verse 31, by saying, "So then, brethren, we are not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free."

Hagar and Ishmael represent fleshly thinking and bondage to sin and death. Ishmael is *not* the promised seed, but the seed of the serpent. The lesson from Sarah's "Famous Last Words" is that we must "cast out" all the things in our life that will cause us to stumble. These things bring disunity and disharmony to our family and ecclesial life. It is imperative that we put our house in order, and make God's ways a priority in our lives. We *must* be merciless in these situations — Jesus said "If thy right hand offend thee (cause thee to stumble), cut it off, and cast it from thee..." (Matt. 5:30). However grievous such actions seem at the moment, eternal life may be at stake!

Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON)

Jesus' Unlikely Conversions: (2) Malchus

Of the six unlikely conversions surrounding the passion of Christ, Malchus' is undoubtedly the most speculative. What follows are the circumstances leading up to and including Malchus' injury and healing.

The Jewish mob — led by Judas and including soldiers, chief priests, and Pharisees carrying torches, lanterns and weapons — came upon Jesus and his disciples in the garden of Gethsemane. Judas came to Jesus, greeted him and kissed him — all obviously a sign to the leaders as to which one was Jesus, the one they needed to arrest.

When Jesus asked the men whom they were seeking, they responded with “Jesus of Nazareth”. Then he identified himself and told them, “If you are looking for me, then let these men go.” Peter on an earlier occasion had tried to talk Jesus out of going to Jerusalem and willingly allowing himself to be crucified; he was rebuked for his effort (Matt. 16:21-23). Now he leaped to Jesus’ defense and, with one swing of his sword, left Malchus’ right ear lying on the ground, blood flowing from his head. In all likelihood Peter’s aim was slightly off or Malchus’ skull would have been split down the middle.

Jesus immediately came to the aid of this servant of the high priest. And according to Luke the beloved physician (Col. 4:14), Jesus touched the man’s ear and healed him (Luke 22:51). One more time Peter heard Jesus’ rebuke, “Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?” (John 18:11).

This miracle, the last of Jesus’ mortal life, was proof of several things in regard to Jesus and the authorities — Jesus’ divine authority, his deep compassion for all mankind (including his enemies), and the terribly evil wrongheadedness of the Jewish mob. And shortly after, when the trial commenced, the high priest would surely have his own eyewitness experience as to the character of this man they were seeking to be rid of — namely the renewed wholeness of Malchus, his own servant.

But the big question: Is there any evidence that this participant in Jesus’ arrest, this servant of the high priest, eventually became a disciple of Jesus? One point in favor of this is John’s recording of his name (John 18:10). Why would John do this unless his readers would know who this man was? The same reasoning could be used as was mentioned in last month’s article in regard to Simon of Cyrene and the record of his sons Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21). Was there any good reason for stating their names unless the early believers who received his gospel would know who they were? And in like manner one could argue that John was doing the same thing by naming Malchus. Many other men were there for the purpose of arresting Jesus but only Malchus’ name is recorded in any of the four gospel accounts.

So if we can take it as a good possibility that Malchus soon thereafter became a lifelong follower of Jesus, then consider this. Would he have been able (or would he want) to continue in his position as the high priest’s servant? A belief in Jesus (his healer) as Messiah would probably entail his changing jobs. How could he continue to be employed in the service of men who wanted to do away forever with *his* “prince of life”? The same point will be made in later studies when considering the likely conversions of the centurion, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus.

One final point, an ongoing exhortation from Jesus, particularly in his seven letters to the churches in Revelation: “He who has an *ear*, let him hear.” How appropriate would such an exhortation be for Malchus, the man who ventured into a dark garden on that momentous night, lost an ear, but nevertheless left the scene with both ears fully intact!

Wesley Booker (Austin South, TX)

Scenes in a Country Cemetery

Sunday, July 15, 2007: Claudia (“Lady Bird”) Johnson, widow of U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson, died this week at the age of 94. She was beloved by millions, and renowned — in her quiet, gracious way — for the promotion of Texas wildflowers and her conservation and beautification projects in Texas and the nation. Her casket lay in state at the LBJ Presidential Library on the campus of the University of Texas, and then at a funeral service at a large west Austin church.

Then, on this Sunday afternoon, with intermittent clouds breaking up the bright Texas sunshine, her funeral cortege wound its way through the Texas hill country — along a route lined by many thousands of mourners and well-wishers — until it arrived at a small country cemetery near Stonewall, Texas. There she was laid to rest beside her husband.

While untold numbers watched the service on television, a commentator reminded the audience that the Johnson Family Cemetery, on the LBJ Ranch, was the final resting place for many members of his family. The Johnson Family Cemetery is a beautiful site, in a green pasture, beneath old live oak trees. The cemetery is encircled by an old rock wall, and it overlooks the Pedernales River. Cattle graze nearby. “There are 41 Johnson family members and close friends currently buried in this small country cemetery,” the reporter told his audience. “Mrs. Johnson will be the 42nd.”

Then it suddenly struck me... “41 *currently* buried” there! What an extraordinary choice of words! For more than half of those 41 are Christadelphians. Yes, they are... *currently*... buried there! But for how long? Will there be a day, perhaps soon, when another television reporter will announce, in wonder, “There are *currently* only 15 family and friends buried in the Johnson Family Cemetery; about 25 graves seem to have been opened!”

That number would include the grave of Priscilla (Mrs. R.H.) Bunton (1821-1905); she was LBJ’s great-grandmother (my great-great-grandmother, and the first Christadelphian in the family). Hers was the first grave in the cemetery. She was buried there because, when she died, the Pedernales River was overflowing its banks, and the family could not get her across to the regular community cemetery on the other side. And that is how the Johnson Family Cemetery got started, just over 100 years ago.

Her tombstone is small and simple and white; on the top it has a little lamb curled up as though asleep, and underneath it reads, “Here lies a Christadelphian, waiting for the resurrection.”

That number would include the graves of Priscilla’s daughter Eliza, and Eliza’s husband Sam Ealy Johnson, Sr. — Lyndon Johnson’s grandparents, and my great-grandparents. They were converted to the truth through listening to debates between local preachers and the traveling brother Oatman (who had learned the Truth from Bro. Thomas in Illinois). Sam is said to have waited expectantly through several nights of discussions, wondering when the preacher was going to bring out the real “guns” and demolish this Christadelphian “heretic”... until

he finally realized that no more arguments were forthcoming. So he sought out brother Oatman and said, “Please show me what the Bible teaches.”

That number would include the graves of several of Sam and Eliza’s children. Among them is my grandmother, Jessie Johnson Hatcher. As a small child, she lived with her parents — just across the little country road from what became the Johnson Family Cemetery. There she listened to her father reading the Bible — and the newspapers delivered sporadically to that small hill country community — alert to the signs of the times, and talking of the return of Christ and the resurrection.



President Johnson’s stone is the tallest. Behind it on the right may be seen the simple white stone (topped by a lamb) of his great-grandmother, Priscilla Bunton, the first Christadelphian in the family.

When I was a teenager, my grandmother Jessie told me, almost offhand, that her first childhood memory — at the age of three or four — was seeing a wagon and horses coming over the distant hill, and approaching her house. And she was running excitedly, to tell her parents that the angels were on their way to take them to the Kingdom!

My grandmother was born in the horse and buggy era, only a few years after marauding Indians regularly threatened the rough new settlements in the Texas hill country. During her 86 years she jetted around the world, stayed in the White House when her “favorite nephew” Lyndon was president, met prime ministers and other dignitaries, and was buried where she grew up, on the banks of the little Pedernales River.

But her earliest memory, of an eager expectation of the return of Christ, was surely the defining experience of her life. She died with the same hope she had lived with — more mature, and more knowledgeable, certainly, but the same hope nevertheless.

Near her grave there are, now, the graves of my father and mother too — Eldon and Ruth Booker, other Christadelphians awaiting the resurrection. All around them are more Christadelphians besides, ancestors and relatives of some who are reading these words.

Down the country road, only a couple of miles away and also along the Pedernales River, is an old Christadelphian campground, in use since the nineteenth century for ecclesial meetings and gatherings and Bible schools. Just north of the campground is another little cemetery — the sign at the entrance proclaims it “The Christadelphian Cemetery”. Another 50 or so graves, including other Bookers. And Bantas, Buntons, Greers, Hodges, Oatmans, Odiornes, Sankeys, Tanners — all names familiar to those who know Texas Christadelphian history.

One smiles to think, “What a busy place this area will be on the resurrection morn”... when “*currently* buried” gives way to “*no longer* buried”!

“O LORD, our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone do we honor. They are now dead, they live no more... But *your* dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead” (Isa. 26:13,14,19).

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

The Many Aspects of Love

There are many ways to contemplate Biblical love. One method is to describe love in terms of how God has shown His love for us, how Jesus has shown his love for us, and how in turn we are to respond.

God's love for mankind

God has displayed His love, an “agape” love, for mankind in innumerable ways. In fact, He has done so much for the human race that it is impossible to list more than the briefest of highlights.

He created an environment perfectly orchestrated to contain all the elements, plant life, animal life, and other resources to sustain mankind throughout time. The atmosphere provides the perfect balance of gasses to sustain life, protects us from the dangers of space, and provides life-sustaining rainfall. We have plants to provide food, raw materials, and oxygen. We have the fresh and saltwater bodies to provide water, food, nutritional supplements, and exploration into the unknown. We have an abundance of wildlife for food, companionship, and study — even after thousands of years of man’s use and abuse. The Lord God has provided us with everything we need to sustain ourselves throughout time, if we use it reverently and wisely.

He gave us the free will to choose everlasting life as a member of His family. God could have chosen to create a people that were incapable of free thought. We could have been created something akin to robots, able to obey commands and follow orders, but unable to form independent ideas. Or God could have been

a King with a high palace upon a mountaintop, demanding tribute on a regular basis. But He desired a body of people who would seek Him out. As we read in Deuteronomy, God eagerly awaits our return, if we stray away from Him: “But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut. 4:29).

The LORD God also gave us a guidebook to help us attain eternal life. This book is the story of man and his interaction with the Creator of all. The Bible spans a multitude of generations and provides enough information to learn where we have come from, how and why we were made, our purpose in life, who made us, how to become acceptable to Him, lessons from the one who obeyed perfectly, and the rewards for compliance. And yet, to those who disregard its message, none of these things can even be discerned.

And, of course, God gave us His Son as a sacrifice for our sins. The LORD watched as His Son was jailed, beaten, insulted, and nailed to a cross to die. How would any of us feel to see our children treated in such a manner? Could we endure the heartbreak as these events unfolded? Consider the example of Abraham offering Isaac and we can begin to understand the love God has for us in providing His Son, in whom He was well pleased, as a sacrifice for sin.

Christ’s love for mankind

When we think of the sacrifice of Jesus, we often focus on his death, and indeed it was a huge sacrifice. Few who have lived have dared to lay down their lives for others... but a few have. Mothers have given their lives to protect their children, soldiers for their fellow citizens, husbands in defense of their wives. Every once in a while we hear of a heroic individual who has given his life trying to save a complete stranger, but these examples pale in comparison to the sacrifice of Jesus.

Christ chose to do the will of the Father and became a perfect sacrifice. It was a choice Jesus made! I think at times we forget that Jesus could sin. He *chose* not to do so — each and every day of his life — to obey his Father and to demonstrate his love for us. He left behind a legacy of righteousness to guide us on the proper path. Consider 1 Peter 2: 21-25:

“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

Think of the many temptations we face on a daily basis. God tells us to turn our backs to all the illicit pleasures this world has to offer and we do... sometimes. But Jesus *never* gave in to temptation; not even once. He didn’t even allow his thoughts to indulge in fantasy, lest he be led into sin. This was the height and depth of his sacrifice.

Jesus obeyed the Law, and then he fulfilled it. In addition, he also spent his lifetime giving of himself to others: healing and preaching even when tired, hungry, and filled with sorrow. More shocking still, he obeyed God's commands each and every day, filling himself with the Word of God to manifest his Father's character to mankind. And then, when his time was complete, he allowed sinners with evil intent to beat and kill him. Our few hours spent remembering him in the meeting each week pale by comparison, do they not?

Our response to God

After all that the LORD God Almighty and Jesus Christ have done for us, what is it that's expected of us in return? Jesus summarized the answer perfectly when asked by a scribe what the greatest commandment from God was. "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these' " (Mark 12:29-31). Let's break this message into pieces to examine its components.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength

It is impossible to *love* God if you do not first *know* Him. The Bible was provided, not only as a guide for mankind, to learn how we ought to develop, but also to demonstrate God's character to us. One of our basic duties as believers is to learn His ways and mold our character.

We know that we must study God's Word to learn the commandments in order to keep them. In 1 John 2, we read that we show our love for God by keeping His commandments. We do not have the option of worshiping God in whatever way suits us — He requires that we conform to His ways. Take the example of David's company retrieving the Ark of the Covenant. Uzzah died because he did not obey God's commandments concerning the holy things of God. Had David written the Law out, as kings were instructed to do, he would have known how to transport the Ark of Covenant without arousing God's anger (see Deut. 17:18,19).

Another aspect of loving the Lord God is obeying His requirements for repentance. "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:30,31). Even more direct are Paul's words telling us that if we understand the goodness of God, it leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:3-5).

Knowledge of God and repentance lead us directly to baptism. It is the next act required as a response to God's love and mercy. "This water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21). It is in our repentance from our sins, recognition of the salvation offered through Jesus, and compliance of this command that we are saved.

Love your neighbor as yourself

This brings us to the second portion of the greatest command. We are to foster a true love for our brothers and sisters. The love that we need to develop within the ecclesia is possibly the most difficult to understand and cultivate. Because we have the love of the Father and the Son, we should love one another. John, ever the spiritual-minded apostle, summarizes this love for each other: “Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble” (1 John 2:9,10).

Occasions for stumbling come in many forms within ecclesial life. Improper conduct or dress, lack of respect, and poor manners all account for occasions to put stumbling blocks in the way of each other. As society continues to decline throughout the globe (a clear indication that the return of our Lord is imminent and essential), moral behavior and kindness and respect towards others seem old-fashioned and out of place. We must remember that these are not outdated concepts simply because they are on the decline in the world. They are simply out of fashion in a world where decency and restraint are scoffed at, and where young people are encouraged to do whatever feels good.

God wants us to measure our walk before Him in such a way that we consider how our actions might affect our brothers and sisters. As we know from the famous “love” chapter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 13), without love our words are noisy gongs, our otherwise good deeds are useless, and we are nothing. Continuing on, we see that love rejoices in truth, is kind, patient, and not arrogant. This love must be developed, becoming the twine that binds us together.

Paul tells us, in Romans 13, that love is the fulfillment of the Law. We are exhorted to awaken, to put aside the deeds of the night and behave properly as in the day, because the hour of our salvation draws near. Chapter 14 and the beginning of chapter 15 elaborate the concept of loving our neighbor. Those who judge their brother are chastised, as well as those who regard their brother with contempt, as each has put a stumbling block in the other’s way. Paul concludes his section on showing brotherly love by explaining that — although there is nothing particularly sinful in either celebrating certain days or not, or in eating certain foods or not — if partaking causes a brother or sister to stumble, we have committed a wrong. This is indeed the higher principle, and we must examine ourselves to discern whether we are guilty of this. Do we cling to our stance, stubbornly proclaiming that we are correct and there is no Scriptural backing for the opposition’s view? Would it not be better to hold our brother or sister in higher esteem than ourselves, concede the point (regardless of right or wrong), in a purposeful act of obedience to God — loving our neighbor as ourselves?

“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:10).

Rob Webb (Hamilton Greenaway, ON)

A Virtuous Woman

In 1814, Martha Forman was married to a wealthy Maryland plantation owner. One might imagine she spent her days sipping tea, being fitted for lovely gowns, entertaining in society, and charming dignitaries — while giving crisp orders to her servants and slaves.

Instead, Martha worked right alongside the household staff, as well as the field hands, from four in the morning to eleven at night. Among her daily activities were the following:

- Oversight and management of all her workforce
- Seeing to necessary purchases for the household
- Making 30 to 35 pounds of old tallow into candles
- Cutting out dozens of shirts, jackets, or trousers for the slaves (whom she called “my family”)
- Knitting stockings
- Washing and drying and ironing clothes and linens
- Spinning and dyeing wool
- Baking pies and puddings
- Sowing or reaping wheat
- Killing farm animals and salting the meat
- Planting or cultivating or picking fruits and vegetables
- Making jams, jellies, and preserves with her fruits and vegetables
- Cleaning the house
- Planning and preparing for huge parties
- Caring for sick family members and slaves

(Cited, generally, from *Something Old, Something New*, by Vera Lee).

This list might be compared with the detailed description of the “noble” or “virtuous” wife in Proverbs 31:10-31. Obviously, there is a spiritual (and a symbolic) significance in practically every particular of that description — and consequently numerous exhortations to all members of the Ecclesia, the Bride of Christ.

But underlying the well-known spiritual applications, there are first of all powerful practical lessons to be learned here:

- a. Those who keep themselves busy in useful and constructive activities get into less trouble than those who do not seem to have enough to do: “She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness” (Prov. 31:27). Or, to put it another way, “The fellow pulling on the oars has no time to rock the boat.”
- b. Willing hands and an industrious mind go a lot further than “charm” and “beauty” to define a noble woman (Prov. 31:30).
- c. While we know that we are saved by faith, through the grace of God, there is nonetheless a place for “works” in the divine scheme. The description of the “virtuous” woman, as well as the whole of the Book of Proverbs, closes with these words: “Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate” (Prov. 31:31).

Letters

Distraction and music

Dear Bro. George,

The exhortation “Distraction” [June issue], by Bro. Michael Atkin, is a good one.

However, I have one problem with it. The question is asked, “What strategy would an adversary use to test our dedication to the things of the Truth?” And part of the answer offered is: “Encourage mothers to rush around to sports activities, music lessons and such like.”

I understand the point Bro. Michael is trying to get across, but music lessons should not have been classed as a distraction. I wrote to the Tidings some months ago about the necessity of learning music for the benefit of our ecclesias. The future of our singing will be in jeopardy if the children are not taught music now. As I asked, who will be there to play an instrument if the young people are not encouraged to learn music? You cannot just hum along and expect God to be pleased.

God’s name must be glorified; we are taught this in many verses in the Psalms and elsewhere. Musical instruments were used almost 100 percent of the time when singing to Almighty God.

Those who disagree should ask themselves this simple question: Where would all the wonderful choirs and CDs come from if there were no musicians?

*Love in our Lord,
Bro. Tim Drepaul (Brooklyn, NY)*

Dear Bro. Tim,

You have raised a good point. But I think the proper answer is to be found in balance and moderation.

*Just before the last sentence you cite, Bro. Michael had said the following: “Keep them busy with **hundreds** of details of daily living.” And just after that same sentence, he had said: “With their schedules full of activity, their homes will become **frantic**...”*

Bro. Michael was not condemning — not even discouraging — music lessons, any more than sports activities. Nor was he condemning or discouraging — as such — radio, television, crafts, magazines, or newspapers.

*But he was warning against getting caught up in such a **whirlwind** of activities that all time for Bible reading and study, and for family-centered and ecclesia-based social activities, may be sacrificed. And that simply cannot be good — whether the all-consuming distraction be music or sports or movies or games, or even otherwise very worthwhile academic or business pursuits.*

Even the study of music, well meaning as it might be, can become a “distraction”

from a spiritual life if — like a black hole — it swallows up much of the time that could be devoted to other beneficial pursuits and activities.

George

America the Beautiful

Dear Bro. Booker,

Thank you for the thought-provoking editorial for the July edition. As a Canadian, I have always had a slight distaste for Miss Bates' poem *America the Beautiful*... because the poem attributes to the United States something only God's Kingdom of Israel has a right to declare, and something we as Christadelphians should be very careful about. God has never shed grace on a nation, only on individuals. The exception being of course the people of Israel. And America is and never has been like Israel...

Your points about respecting authorities as divinely ordained is entirely correct and appropriate, unless the law contravenes a commandment of Christ...

Indeed, the poem perpetuates a myth... The United States has perpetuated a myth of its uniqueness as a "city on a hill" that all the huddled masses strive to enter, when in fact only a portion of the "masses" sought its shores. And anyway, most didn't emigrate to the US for freedom of religion, but economic prosperity, the religious dissidents of England notwithstanding.

Bro. Glenn Lea
Berlin, Germany (Esslingen Ecclesia)

Dear Bro. Glenn,

I would take mild exception to the statement "God has never shed grace on a nation" — excepting, as you say, the people of Israel. In the general sense of the word, God has indeed bestowed "grace" (gifts, blessings) on all of mankind — "the evil and the good... the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt. 5:45). Furthermore, God has sent special blessings upon peoples (presumably nations as well as individuals) who particularly "bless" Abraham and his seed (Gen. 12:1-3).

Now, such "grace" or "blessings" as are described here do not translate directly into eternal life. And that may be your main point. Still, it is a well-recognized and well-acknowledged idea that those nations that have bestowed "blessings" upon Israel have themselves been "blessed" by God. This has been true of the British Empire, and it has also been true of the United States of America. Politically speaking, there would not be a nation of Israel today had it not been for the financial and military support of the United States.

Of course, other nations have played a part in this same drama — by helping the people and the nation of Israel — including your own homeland of Canada. This leads me to the second point to which I might, again, take mild exception: I see no evidence that "the United States has perpetuated a myth of its uniqueness as a 'city on a hill'." Other nations have also sought to uphold the ideals of freedom of religion, and freedom of opportunity, and — to the extent they have succeeded — they have

also been a blessing to others and to themselves.

And I will freely admit, as I did in the editorial, that America has never been “a perfect light” — what, in this world, is perfect? Still, beautiful sentiments — even when very imperfectly carried out, as in our nation’s history — may nevertheless inspire us, who truly believe, to the higher ideals... just as the imperfect types of the Old Testament (men like Jacob, or Samson, or Solomon) may point to the perfect antitype, the Lord Jesus Christ.

George

And again...

Dear Bro. George,

I just want to thank you for your outstanding editorial “America the Beautiful”. I happen to be a Christadelphian who loves her country in spite of the fact that we are not perfect. You did an excellent job of using Miss Bates’ poem and weaving in the spiritual applications for us. For most of us patriotism is an instinctive emotion and we can use this special feeling to be thankful for all our blessings and be “value-added” citizens in every way we can. Nations in scripture come under special blessings or cursings according to their deportment, and we are even told about many of the nations that will reappear or survive to the kingdom age. Thus we see that nations are of much concern to the Lord. Thanks for this needed input.

*Love to you and Barbara,
Sis. Ellen Styles (Ann Arbor, MI)*

And finally...

Dear Bro. George,

I was moved by your editorial on the poem and song, *America The Beautiful*, to look up another poem, written by Bro. William Tunstall of the Worcester, MA, Ecclesia, that paraphrased it. It was sung to the same tune at each opening session of Wilbraham Bible School from 1947 until the school relocated to another location (it is now known as the Eastern Christadelphian Bible School). This song reminds me of how we are in this world, but not of it, but are aliens and exiles in our country. While we should be grateful for all the bounty that our God showers upon us, we can be even more thankful that we have been given an opportunity to obtain citizenship in the true Land of Promise.

*We’ve come again to Wilbraham
To seek God’s holy ways,
Where kindred spirits fellowship
In thankful prayer and praise.
We’ve come again to Bible school,
Away from sin and care,
To find refreshing holiness
In smiles we’re meeting there.*

*We've come again to Wilbraham,
Where shady trees and lawns
Conspire to bring tranquility
To evenings and to dawns.
We've come again to Wilbraham
Our faith and hope to share,
And finding love preeminent,
Meet angels unaware.*

*Chorus:
Oh Wilbraham, oh Bible school,
God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood,
Till Christ shall come for thee!*

The Bible school committee wrote in the first *Wilbraham Wayfarer Souvenir Issue*: “During eight days we were separated from the world, in the pleasant company of those of like precious faith, under conditions which reminded us of God’s promise of joy and peace...”

The committee also wrote that “faithful ones” will “attain to permanent membership in Christ’s Household: citizens, [yes, even] kings and priests, in God’s Kingdom on earth.”

*Your sister in Christ,
Melinda Flatley (Columbus, Ohio)*

Bruce Metzger

Dear Bro. George,

I was struck by your acknowledgement of the accomplishments of Bruce Metzger under “Current Events” in the June issue. Like you, I find his scholarly work on the New Testament text helpful. I am also drawn to him because he was born and educated in the Lancaster County (PA) area, and built his early library using many of the same sources that I have found beneficial over the years, particularly “a secondhand bookshop located in the countryside of Lancaster County near the village of Blue Ball”.

Dr. Metzger will always be associated with Bible translation, having been involved with the publication of the Revised Standard Version (RSV) and, as you mentioned, the general editor of the NRSV. While some may disagree with the principles that guided the translators as they worked on these revisions, I share an example of their work, made necessary by changes in language over time.

2 Corinthians 11 contains a list of the persecutions Paul suffered as a result of his apostleship. Paul tells us (v. 25), “Once I was stoned.” (!) Under Dr. Metzger’s editorship this was revised to read, “Once I received a stoning.”

*Thanks for your article.
Bro. Ken Wubbels (Lancaster, PA)*

Simon and the cross

Dear Bro. Wesley (Booker),

Thank you for your July article [“Unlikely Conversions: Simon of Cyrene”].

You seem to suggest that Simon carried the cross alone during the final stage of the journey. This interpretation is consistent with the first three gospel records:

1. “As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross” (Matt. 27:32).
2. “A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross” (Mark 15:21).
3. “As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus” (Luke 23:26).

But John’s record is different: “And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha” (John 19:17).

This seems to imply that the Lord carried the cross the entire distance.

May I suggest this version of the events, consistent with all four accounts:

Jesus carried the cross, unassisted for the first part of the journey. For the concluding portion, Simon picked up the back end of the cross, helping the Master after his diminished strength became, as you suggest, no longer sufficient for the task.

This adds fresh significance to the exhortation: “If any man would come after me (‘behind me’ from the previous verse), let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24).

We are each urged to make Christ’s cross our own, to take up the back end, with the king still bearing the major share of the weight.

Quite a different picture from that of a procession of individuals each carrying a cross themselves, unaided by the Savior.

God be with you.

*Your brother in Christ,
Philip Jones (Calgary, AB)*

Dear Bro. Philip,

Thanks for your thoughts, and — yes — they seem very reasonable... and exhortational as well.

Wesley

Preaching from a County Jail

In the past two months Thomas Reed began to write to me from the Orange County Jail. He found a copy of *Exploring the Bible* and did it right away, as much

as he could. However, he had found a defective book. The pages for Lesson #15 and #16 were double printed so he could not do those lessons; it is no wonder someone discarded the book. Thomas went through and finished the whole book, except for those lessons. I sent him a new book and he was able to finish the course. All the while he was writing Bible-based poetry and sending it to me. I found he had much of his old belief in his poetry so I would type it up and send it back for him to change it. He did too. Now he has asked to read *What the Bible Teaches*, by Harry Tennant. I explained to him that I would be delighted to send it to him, but it first had to be approved by Deputy Guerrero in the Orange County Jail system. I emailed Deputy Guerrero and he replied that, if the book meets their standards, then it is okay. He was happy to hear that Thomas was responding to the study. This week I will be mailing *What the Bible Teaches* to Thomas.

Now I want to share with you a part of Thomas Reed's last letter:

"What does Psalm 118:24 tell us? 'This is the day that the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it.' For the past couple of weeks every day I wake up, I sing that in my head 10 times. Then I sing, 'Lord I lift your name on high', and it just keeps going. My days become very beautiful and challenging. Why challenging? I challenge anyone here to show me in their Bible that there is a 'Devil' or 'Satan' that is not just a mere mortal or an angel doing God's will.

"I start by saying: 'Remember when you were five or six years old and you found out that there really wasn't a Santa Claus, Easter Bunny, or Tooth Fairy? Your parents or older siblings decided it was time for you to learn the truth. Well, now I'm telling you there is no supernatural being that makes us or tempts anyone to sin. If you can prove to me — from the scriptures — that I'm wrong, I will do 500 push-ups "on-call" (that means whenever they want them — no more than 25 at a time). You have 72 hours.'

"I now have society's so called 'Bad Guys' trying to prove God's word wrong. A month ago I would have taken that bet!

"What's wrong with this world is people's pride and reluctance to let someone else — that is, God — take control of their lives. I'm turning their arrogance against them to their 'unknowing' advantage. As they search the scriptures, they are getting closer to God. I firmly believe that any rational human being that truly reads and absorbs the scriptures cannot deny that Christ is the Son of the One and only God.

"Once they give up on this bogeyman 'Devil/Satan' thing, then I will have them dig deeper and show me where it says that we go to heaven when we die. Same bet!"

This inmate is amazing. He is still in the county jail and has been sentenced to six years, but I don't know where they will send him yet. He is using his time wisely now to learn more of God.

*Love in Christ,
Sis. Marilyn Seagoe (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)*



Bible Mission News

Thisisyourbible.com Website

This month's update on the website brings more good news. The featured question of the month during June was regarding the importance of Israel in God's plan. Not only was this timely, as there was a lot in the news about Israel's anniversary, but it generated interest on the website as well. There were 276 on-line copies of the pamphlet titled "Israel: God's People, God's Land" downloaded during June. That pamphlet is only a part of the 2423 pamphlets that were accessed in June.

Since January, we have had 1,500 new correspondence course enrollments! Since we feel that this is the most effective relationship we can have with site visitors (getting them on a course with a Christadelphian tutor), we are thrilled. We now have 240 tutors helping with these correspondence courses, two-thirds of which are handled on-line and not generating expensive postal charges.

As promised, we have the first story about one of the baptisms that illustrates the synergy involved among the website, our tutors and local ecclesias. In March 2007, the West Houston Ecclesia baptized our new Bro. Robert Romeo. His story started with a conversation at work with a Christadelphian co-worker, Bro. Mike Jordan. As the discussions progressed, he was referred to the Thisisyourbible.com website where he began taking the correspondence course with one of our tutors, Sis. Patricia Dennis, located in the North Houston Ecclesia. Upon completion of the correspondence course, he was referred back to the West Houston Ecclesia for some one-on-one instruction. He was baptized on March 31.

Next month we'll follow another couple who were baptized this year, and we'll marvel at how God continues to work to call those who are looking for the way.

Want to help?

- Visit the website to find out what it's all about (www.thisisyourbible.com)
- Become an on-line tutor
- Hand out the business cards available in your ecclesia
- Advertise the website in your local newspaper

Jan Berneau

*"We are called to serve, and have our various talents for doing so. The need for service in all fields is greater than ever, and the labourers no more abundant. In praying the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into the harvest (Matt. 9:38), we may also commit our thoughtfully and humbly contrived plans into His hand for His blessing, and believe that it will not be withheld. Indeed, the blessings which have overflowed from God's hand into the fields of missionary labour, notwithstanding all the setbacks and constant anxieties, bear evident witness to the fact that He has not been displeased that His name should have been named through the lips of our missionary brethren" (Alfred Norris, **Preaching the Word**).*

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 Americas, Domestic Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make US dollar on-line donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Charles Brinkerhoff, 15925 La Ronda Cir., Hacienda Heights, CA 91745-4244.

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

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

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.

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

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

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.

News & Notices

EDMONTON, AB

We rejoice with the angels and announce the baptism of our friend, SHERRI BROBERG, on Saturday, May 12, 2007. Sherri's first contact with the truth was through her brother, Bro. Darryl Sacher (North Battleford, SK), who had discovered the truth himself. After attending many Bible seminars, Sunday school classes, Bible classes and baptismal classes, Sherri gave a good confession of her faith and took on the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray our Heavenly Father continues to bless her walk to the kingdom.

The Edmonton/Calgary Thanksgiving Fraternal is to be held in Edmonton, God willing, on October 6-7, 2007. Bro. Dana Kohlman (Calgary, AB) will lead the weekend. Anyone wishing to attend can contact Sis. Linda Ikle at 780-406-2920, or likle@telus.net; or Bro. Jerome Toronchuk at 780-453-1412, or jeromet@telusplanet.net.

We commend our Bro. Theo and Sis. Joy Readman, by transfer, to the North Battleford, SK, Ecclesia. We greatly feel the loss but know they will be appreciated in their new home ecclesia. We look forward to their visits while we await the return of our Lord.

We wish to thank all those who have ministered to us over the last year. As a small ecclesia, we appreciate any and all visitors who come to fellowship with us.

Jerome Toronchuk

ELGIN, ON

Some exciting things are happening with our small ecclesia of just four members. In the winter of 2006, the Elgin Ecclesia ran the "Learn to Read the Bible Effectively" seminar in nearby Kingston, ON, with the help of many brethren who traveled some distances to help us. Following those seminars we were blessed with about twelve students who have gone on to attend our follow-up series, called "Walk Through the Bible," which we ran this past fall, winter and spring. Thus far, the students have completed the "Genesis" course and are now about halfway through the "Nation of Israel" section. For now we have adjourned the classes, but they are scheduled to resume in October. The students are showing a keen interest in the truth.

The "Walk Through the Bible" follow-up course is divided up into four parts; "Genesis," "The Nation of Israel," "The Life of Christ," and "The First Century Church." The course has been developed by the Elgin Ecclesia with the help of Mike Parry (Montreal, QB) and Norm Luff (Brantford, ON). Each section of this follow-up program is all new and complete with a presenter's manual, student manual, power point slides and interactive workshop programs on the first principles. Some of the workshops and power point slides are still under development. Next winter, we hope to have all aspects of the course complete and to create a website that will make all the information available online for download. If brethren wish to obtain it in advance, please contact Bro. Jim Barton at: 613-359-5491 or Jim@skycroft.com.

We have another opportunity for preaching coming up soon in this community. The International Plowing Match will be held this year in Crosby, ON, just north of Elgin, on September 18-22, 2007. The Ottawa Ecclesia is taking the lead in organizing a

booth to help spread the gospel message to this corner of the Lord's vineyard. Between the Elgin and Ottawa Ecclesia there are not enough people to man the booth; we are eagerly seeking others who may be able to come to the area to help. Overnight accommodations will be provided. If this is of interest to you then please contact Sis. Karen Coffell of the Ottawa Ecclesia at: coffellh@rogers.com or at: 613-839-1734.

We thank the Lord for the many brethren and sisters who come by and provide additional fellowship to our small group. Each year in the third weekend of June we have about 50-70 members of the Toronto (East), ON, Sunday school come to Anne and Jim Barton's campground for their year's end camping trip. We always enjoy their fellowship, and the opportunity to have so many brethren among us, and we thank them for their spiritual support.

We pray that the Lord will bless the preaching efforts in this community and that in due course, by the Lord's unfolding, the Elgin Ecclesia will grow in numbers to the glory of His Holy Name.

Jim Barton

MISSISSAUGA WEST, ON

All correspondence for the Mississauga West Christadelphian Ecclesia should be addressed to the recording brother, Doug Jackson, 4141 Varden Court, Mississauga, Ontario, L5L 4A7. This is a different mailing address than the one shown in the 2006 North American Christadelphian Address List.

David Bingham, former Rec. Bro.

SAN FRANCISCO (MARINWOOD), CA

We have enjoyed many visiting speakers from the San Francisco Peninsula Ecclesia. Our sincere thanks to Bre. Robert Sleeper, Jim Seagoe, John Warner, Brett Wickham and John Popel. Our thanks also to our Bro. Bryan Berry (Austin Leander, TX) for his Sunday school presentation and exhortation during our annual Sunday school picnic this past June. We enjoyed the company of 120 brothers, sisters, children and friends.

In other news, Bro. Joseph and Sis. Maria Palmer and their family moved to the San Diego County Ecclesia in March of this year. Our love and prayers go with them.

Paul Campbell

ST. JOHN'S, NF

Our third annual Winter Youth Camp was a success, with 32 young people attending. We would like to thank Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD) for his classes entitled "The Telescope of Revelation". The service of Bro. Ryan and Sis. Julia was greatly appreciated.

We finished a "Learn to Read the Bible Effectively" seminar in May with eight attendees looking for further instruction in the word of God.

We rejoice in the baptism of another Sunday school scholar. APRIL HYNES was immersed into Christ on June 3, 2007. April is the daughter of Bro. Gary and Sis. Elizabeth Hynes. We pray for God's blessing upon her as we walk together in the hope of Israel.

Bro. Paul Ridgway has now assumed the Recording Brother duties.

Jim Keating

SUSSEX, NB

We have enjoyed the company of several visitors recently from Bedford, NS, and Toronto, ON, and we are grateful for the study on “Hebrews” given by Bro. George Jackson (Toronto East, ON) in May.

The undersigned has now been appointed Recording Brother, with no change in the ecclesial address.

Our Thanksgiving study on October 6-7, 2007, will be given by Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI). His subject will be “Godly Love.”

We are sorry to report the falling asleep of our oldest member, Sis. Olive Sharp, on June 20, 2007, at age 96. We pray for that glorious day of resurrection when we will be united with our dear sister. Our loving sympathy to Sis. Deanna Mason and husband Bob, Bro. Dave and Sis. Sherry Sharp, and Sis. Olive’s daughter, Carol and husband Ken, and all their families as they mourn their loss.

Cliff Baines

THOUSAND OAKS, CA

During the past few months we have been pleased to welcome many brethren and sisters from our neighboring California ecclesias. In addition, we welcomed from afar Bro. Lou Pokol (Williamsville, NY); Sis. Jennie Vetkos and Bro. Tony and Sis. Pam Cipriotti (South Yosemite, CA); and Bro. Eric McDonald (North Industry, OH).

Our thanks go out to Bre. Tom Pavone (Reseda, CA), Gordon Hensley and James Walker (Simi Hills, CA) for their exhortations and afternoon classes.

Our special thanks to Bro. Lou Pokol for teaching at our Heritage School for a year and a half. While Bro. Lou was with us, he regularly attended our ecclesia and helped with Bible classes and exhortations, while brightening our functions with his enthusiasm for the Word and for the brotherhood. We wish him God speed as he returns home.

We also wish to thank our Bro. Brian Luke for coming and leading our Bible class while he was in the area fulfilling other speaking engagements.

We are pleased to announce that our Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Tiffany Wisniewski had their second healthy little boy, Josiah Luke, who was born on July 5.

Tom Graham

TORONTO WEST, ON

We rejoice in the baptism on June 17, 2007 of ROSANNA PRASHAD, the daughter of Bro. Stanley and Sis. Zalina Prashad. We pray for God’s continued guidance to her. The occasion presented the opportunity to welcome a large number of their extended family who have ties to the Kilcoy Ecclesia in Guyana.

As a consequence of the interest shown by the public in recent “Learn to Read Your Bible Effectively” seminars in Oakville, ON, we are planning to begin a weekly Bible class in the area. Anyone interested in participating in this class is asked to contact the undersigned.

Mark Carr

TULSA/JOPLIN, OK

The Tulsa/Joplin Ecclesia enjoyed a wonderful study weekend June 29-July 1, 2007, led by Bro. Colin Hollamby (Glenlock, South Aust.). Bro. Colin delivered a series

of classes focusing on the many facets of Christ, titled "What Think Ye of Christ?" The studies are available in the Audio Lessons section of our ecclesial website: www.tulsachristadelphians.com.

It is with great sadness that we announce Bro. Chuck and Sis. Robin Colby have moved to Pennsylvania. They were both very influential and active members of our ecclesia, and Bro. Chuck served as recording brother for over ten years. We wish them the best in their continuing walk in the faith and will miss them both very much.

God willing, our ecclesia will host a study weekend September 14-16, 2007 in Joplin, MO, with series speaker Bro. Paul Billington (Brantford, ON) delivering classes on, "The Apocalypse in Europe". For more information or to RSVP please email davidandchristi@att.net or call 417-782-2213 for Bro. David Perry.

God willing, we will also host another Bible study weekend November 10-11, 2007, led by Bro. Roger Long.

Jonathan Sabo

VANCOUVER, BC

In the many months since our last report, our ecclesia has seen several changes. We joyfully announce the baptism of JODIE MAPSTONE. Jodie has attended all of our meetings and events for the last four years. She was a good example of faithful dedication for us even before her baptism, and we are so thankful to our Heavenly Father that she is now our sister.

We are happy to welcome two new babies into our ecclesia. Emily Hope Fearn, the first child of Bro. Matt and Sis. Michelle, was born on December 15, 2006; and Micah David Snobelen, the third child of Bro. Simon and Sis. Meghan, was born on May 9, 2007. All are doing well and we look forward to watching these precious children grow and join our Sunday school and CYC. We pray for God's blessings on our young families.

We welcome, by transfer, Bro. Steven and Sis. Barbara Darley and their four children, from Mississauga West, ON; and Bro. Einar and Sis. Debra Halbig, and their two children, from New Westminster, BC. We enjoy their warm fellowship and are grateful for the addition of their children to our Sunday school and CYC.

We are sorry to lose our Bro. Clive and Sis. Jennifer Daniel, and their three children, to Victoria, BC; we commend them in love to the ecclesia there. We also miss our Sis. Freda Tarling, who has transferred to the New Westminster Ecclesia. We also commend in love Bro Cyril and Sis. Ruth Deacon to the Plymouth, UK, Ecclesia. We welcome back into fellowship Sis. Joyce Billar and rejoice to have her with us on our walk to the kingdom.

We are sad to report that three of our elderly members have fallen asleep and are now awaiting our Lord's return. Sis. Barbara Leaper fell asleep on August 6, 2006; Sis. Gweneth Bremner on September 22, 2006; and Bro. John Booy on December 29, 2006.

We have been blessed with the privilege of many visiting brethren to minister to us: Bre. Harley Young, Fred Jahns and Tony Ball (Seattle, WA); Gordon Dangerfield, Clyde Snobelen, Mike McStravick, Jonathan Lawrence and Clive Daniel (Victoria, BC); Edward Hart, Clement Hart, Rafeek Soolaman, Andrew Jackson and Dan Osborn (Maple Ridge, BC); Kevin Hunter and Richard Morgan (Saanich, BC); Bill Hlina

(Vernon, BC); Tim Osborn and Graeme Osborn, (Okanagan, BC); David Bilton and Michael Owen, both from the UK, and a special thanks to Bro. Peter King (UK) who led our fall fraternal on the topic “Actions in the Acts of the Apostles,” and Bro. Steven Hornhardt (Aust.) who presented wonderful talks on the theme “In Expectation of Messiah” for our spring study day. We thank all these brethren, along with their wives and families, for their ministrations to us.

We would like to extend special thanks for the efforts of Bro. Rick and Sis. Elaine Sales for leading a marriage retreat for this area in May, 2006, and to Bro. Craig Stickney and Bro. Andrew Jackson for leading our annual June CYC Conference in 2006 and 2007 respectively. Your work for us was greatly appreciated, and all who attended enjoyed the fellowship.

Our ecclesial hall has recently undergone a large renovation to repair a persistent leaking problem. We want to heartily thank the hardworking brethren from Victoria, BC, who gave us a month of their time to fix it for us. Bro. Geoff Higgs and his sons, Bro. Mark and Bro. Dave, as well as Bro. Mark Dangerfield, along with a few others, did a wonderful job and our hall looks as good as new. We are thankful to God for their safety while working on the project.

Dan Orsetti

VERNON, BC

We are pleased to welcome, by transfer from the Maple Ridge Ecclesia, Bro. Kevin and Sis. Sashi Skinner — along with their four children. We have been enjoying their fellowship for some time now and look forward to continuing our walk together toward God’s kingdom.

While we are overjoyed at welcoming new members, it seems we must bid farewell to some who have been members of our ecclesia for many years. Bro. Ivan and Sis. Bertha MacArthur are leaving us for their new home on Vancouver Island; we commend them to the love and care of our brethren of the Victoria Ecclesia. They have been tireless workers in our ecclesia and also for the Winfield Bible Camp, and will be deeply missed.

Also, employment has taken Bro. Dean Bailey east to the Brantford area of Ontario, where he will be joined by Sis. Andrea and their two daughters Samantha and Kassandra. They also will be greatly missed, as they have contributed so much to the welfare of our lightstand here in Vernon. We are confident that whichever ecclesia they choose to call home will benefit from their company.

It is with great joy that friends, family, brethren and sisters were able to witness the baptism of DAN FUHR on June 5, 2007. Bro. Dan is the son of our late Sis. Barb Fuhr who, with God’s help, planted the seed when Dan was a child. Now we rejoice that he has answered the call and committed himself to our God. May our loving Heavenly Father go with Dan, keeping him in His way and preparing him for Christ’s return.

We are very pleased to welcome home two of our sisters who have lived in other places for several years. Sis. Kathy Hlina has returned to Vernon after many years in Victoria and then most recently from Doha, Qatar. Sis. Sharina Zantingh is back in Vernon after living in Edmonton for quite a few years, and — during the last year — traveling to the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Australia. Bro. Ben and Sis. Helen Cawston have also joined us, transferring their membership from the Victoria, BC, Ecclesia. They bring with them their daughter Jaimie. We look forward to the fellowship and

company of our new members.

David Zantingh

WASHINGTON, DC

With joy we announce the May 19, 2007 wedding of our Sis. Erin Kemp, daughter of Bro. Mike and Sis. Melissa Kemp, to Bro. Andrew Amis (Detroit Livonia, MI), and by transfer, commend her to the care of that ecclesia, praying God's abundant blessing on their united walk before Him. Also by transfer, we commend Sis. Deborah Kellett to the Atlanta (North) Ecclesia, there to complete her tertiary education; and Bro. Noah Bradburn to the Norfolk, VA, Ecclesia. We pray they find fraternal love and good work to do in their new surroundings. We have been glad to accept by transfer, from the Detroit area (Milford Road and Ann Arbor, MI, respectively), Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Katy Perry. We trust they will enrich our mutual fellowship while we wait on our Master.

We report with much sadness the falling asleep of two of our members. Sis. Dorothy Walker, after long illness, succumbed January 20, 2007. We have mourned with her husband Bro. Jack Walker and daughter Sis. Debbie Fenn. On June 17, 2007, Bro. Craig Harris died unexpectedly; our prayers are for the comforting of his wife Sis. Karen, daughter Morgan, and mother Sis. Jean Harris.

Our visitors have been very many, gladly welcomed from far and near. We will simply thank those brethren whose encouraging words have strengthened us: David Levin and Bill Link, Sr. (Baltimore, MD); George Bediako, David King and Tim Lange (Petersburg, VA); and Mark Vincent (Stoughton, MA), who — accompanied by Sis. Anita and their family — led our Baltimore/Washington Gathering in studying “The Message of Ecclesiastes”.

With this notice, the undersigned rotates out, and Bro. Cory Crabill moves into the recording brother's duties. Send all correspondence to Cory Crabill, 569 Knollwood Rd. Severna Park, MD 21146; or email him at crabbycory17@verizon.net.

Cornelius Kellett

WORCESTER, MA

The ecclesia is sad to announce that our Sis. Beverly Millard has resigned her membership in the Christadelphian brotherhood. We pray that God will continue to watch over her and that she will someday return to the fold.

Also, we are trying to locate our Bro. Basel Brown who also goes by the name Tony Brown. If anyone knows of his whereabouts (or, Bro. Basel, if you read this), please contact us by writing the Worcester Ecclesia, 218 Greenwood Street, Worcester, MA 01607.

Mark Fulmer

“If the trials of many years were gathered into one, they would overwhelm us; therefore, in pity to our little strength, [God] sends first one, and then another, then removes both, and lays on a third, heavier, perhaps, than either; but all is so wisely measured to our strength that the bruised reed is never broken. We do not enough look at our trials in this continuous and successive view. Each one is sent to teach us something, and altogether they have a lesson which is beyond the power of any to teach alone” (H.E. Manning).

Minute Meditation

Green and growing

Are we green and growing, or ripe and rotting? This question was a favorite of Ray Kroc, the founder of the McDonalds hamburger chain. He said, “As long as you’re green, you’re growing. As soon as you’re ripe, you start to rot.”

The need for a successful business to keep growing also applies to our walk in the Truth — we must keep moving; we cannot become complacent if we want to be accepted into the kingdom. If we stop, we will rot, by backsliding into the easy ways of the world. We must work constantly at increasing our faith, serving the Lord, and resisting our fleshly impulses. The apostle Paul tells us, “Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”

Paul was concerned that he might be rejected at the judgment seat if he did not run purposefully and keep his body under control. If Paul was concerned, we should be too. None of us can achieve the self-control we should have, and Paul explained the problem we all have when he said that there is “something in me that keeps me from doing right.” If it were not for the mercy of our Heavenly Father and the grace of salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ, we would all be doomed. But, even though salvation is a gift of God, we must do our part. Paul tells us that we must labor to be accepted by Christ at the Judgment Seat.

Every morning when we wake up we have a choice to make. What are we going to do today for the Lord? Yesterday is gone, and whatever we did or did not do is history, but every morning we have a new opportunity to serve the Lord. Do we awake with David’s words on our lips? “This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

We should ask ourselves which direction are we going. A wise man once said, “If we do not change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed. Where are you headed?”

When we get up in the morning are we determined to move forward toward the Kingdom, or do we just get up with no particular purpose in mind? As we roll out of bed, we need to be focused on where we are going and what we are going to do today for the Lord. It has to be something. If we can’t think of anything we can do for the Lord, then we are ripe and rotting. He is coming soon, and he is going to ask us what we have done while he was away.

In the parable of the pounds, the Lord told us about the servant who did nothing. He returned to the Lord the pound he had received — nothing more, nothing less — and for that he was soundly condemned.

Let us decide that today we are going to serve the Lord with whatever health and strength we have. It may not be much, but whatever we have, we are going to use it to bring glory to our God. We want to be green and growing today. Here is a little test to find out whether our mission in life is finished: If we are alive, it isn't.

Please don't say that you cannot do anything. As sick as Job was, he said, "All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils... my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit." Although Job could not do much, he was making sure that he would not use his breath to say the wrong things. We can pray for our brethren, we can sing hymns and psalms, and it doesn't need to be out loud, but in our hearts, making melody to the Lord.

Paul tells us, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Paul looked forward to the kingdom and set off in that direction.

Everyday we have the opportunity to increase what the Lord has given us. Let us be green and growing by increasing our pound — so that when the Lord comes he will be pleased with us and invite us to inherit the Kingdom with him.

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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 wendyjohansen@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. Contact Bro. Bob Kling rkling@computer.org 301-498-5245

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

5-7 Vancouver, BC Fraternal Gathering, Surrey Ecclesial Hall. Bro. Paul Billington (Brantford, ON): "Remember the Covenant". Contact Bro. Dan Orsetti dorsetti@telus.net 604-514-4704

6 Brantford, ON Thanksgiving Fraternal Gathering, Copetown Community Centre. Bro. Brian Luke (Adelaide 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

6,7 Petersburg, VA Young people's gathering. Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): "Joseph"

6,7 Regional Bible prophecy study weekend New England. Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch, NZ): "From Eden Lost to Eden Restored: The Amazing Framework of God's Prophetic Purpose". Contact Bro. Joshua McInturff joshandtiff@gsinet.net 603-774-6237

6,7 Edmonton/Calgary Thanksgiving fraternal, Edmonton, AB. Bro. Dana Kohlman (Calgary, AB). Contact Sis. Linda Ikle 780-406-2920 likle@telus.net or Bro. Jerome Toronchuk jeromet@telusplanet.net 780-453-1412

6,7 Atlanta, GA Fraternal. Bro. Joseph Fordham (Arlington, VA): "Building Your Spiritual House". Contact Bro. Carlos Carter atlantaecclesia@hotmail.com 770-465-8915

6,7 Sussex, NB Thanksgiving fraternal. Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI): "Godly Love"

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

13,14 Regional Bible prophecy study weekend New Jersey/New York. Same as last week (above). Contact Bro. Jonathan Link jonlink@optonline.net 973-633-8534

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)

20,21 Regional Bible prophecy study weekend Williamsburg, VA. Same as last week (above). Contact Bro. Jordan Canady jordancanady5@hotmail.com 804-365-8512

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26-28 Camp Kawartha Kawartha Lakes, ON. Senior CYC young people's weekend. Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD): "James". Contact Bro. Darryl Rose darrylrose@rogers.com

NOVEMBER

3,4 Kouts, IN Fraternal gathering, Woodland Community Center, Portage, IN. Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT): "Men Who Changed the Church". Contact Bro. Joe Bennett 219-762-2704 purepro18@aol.com

9-11 New England Bible Study Weekend Barton Center, North Oxford, MA. Bro. Ron Kidd (London, ON): "Out of Weakness Made Strong: A Study in the Life of Samson". Contact Bro. Craig Nevers craignev@cox.net or Sis. Judith Nevers jnevers@verizon.net

10,11 Largo and Sarasota, FL Study weekend, Largo Ecclesial Hall in Largo, FL. Bro. Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON): "Seven Key Events in the Life of Jesus". Contact Bro. Walt Dodrill waltodrill@msn.com 727-528-1197

10,11 Tulsa/Joplin, OK Bible study weekend. Bro. Roger Long (UK).

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): "Lessons for Future Kings: Life Lessons from the Kings of Israel!". Contact Bro. Bob Kling rkling@computer.org 301-498-5245