THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 70 **January, 2007** **No. 1**

Editorial — Loving His Appearing 2
Bro. John Bilello 5
Exhortation — "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel",
Ron Hicks 7
"God makes a land barren", *R.C. Trench* 10
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:
(1) Introduction, *Tom Barling* 11
Reflection — Famous Last Words:
(8) Abraham to Lot, *Chris Sales* 15
Reflection — Jonah and God's Compassion, *Peter Forbes* 16
Youth — Principles from Proverbs:
(4) "Simple" Proverbs, *George Booker* 17
Signs of the Times — Global Warming, Commercialism,
and Armageddon, *Martin Owen* 23
Lake Victoria and the Nile River, *Charles J. Hanley* 27
Letters — Types of the Father; Conscientious objection website;
The best books? 28
A Christadelphian Sampler 30
Read the Scriptures daily, *Robert Roberts* 37
Bible Mission News — Argentina, Bolivia, Chile 38
"This is your Bible" Website 41
Brothers' Weekend 43
News & Notices 44
Minute Meditation — Temptation, *Robert J. Lloyd* 49
Coming Events 50

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060) is published monthly by The Christadelphian Tidings, 42076 Hartford Dr., Canton, MI 48187-3360. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID at San Dimas, California. POSTMASTER: Address Service Requested at The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696.

The Tidings Publishing Corporation: Joe Hill (Chairman), John C. Bilello, Peter A. Bilello, Steve Cheetham, Ken Curry, Clive Drepaul, Mark Giordano, Tony Isaacs, Ted Sleeper, Phil Snobelen, Ken Sommerville, and Jeff Wallace.

The Tidings is published on the 25th of the preceding month. Correspondence to the editor: George Booker, 2500 Berwyn Cir., Austin, TX 78745-3559. E-mail: editor@tidings.org. Administrator: Rose Madge. E-mail: rm_madge@yahoo.com. Home page: www.tidings.org.

Subscriptions

The current subscription rate is $20 in the United States, $28 in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and £14 in the United Kingdom. Subscribers in UK please send checks to: Malcolm Cross, Grange Farm, East Cottingwith, York YO42 4TB; in New Zealand & Australia to: John Beer, P.O. Box 559, Te Awamutu, Waikato, New Zealand 2400. Otherwise checks should be made payable to: The Tidings, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF.

Items for publication MUST be received by the 10th of the month.

Editor: George Booker; Assistant Editor: Donald H. Styles

Editorial

Loving His Appearing

The Bible refers to two very different sorts of people:

(1) those who love Christ's appearing:

> *"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).*

… and

(2) those who love this present world:

> *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).*

It is a simple fact that every knowledgeable, responsible adult falls into one of these two categories. For each of us, it is an "either-or" situation: ***either*** we love Christ and eagerly look for his Second Coming, ***or*** we love this present evil world.

It is true that one's love for the world may be expressed in various ways: one may go in for the "fast life", while another may be generally sober-minded, hard-working,

and a "good citizen". And there are a myriad of other variations on the theme "lover of this world" — but they all come down to the same thing in the end. It really does not matter by which of the many available paths a man becomes lost in the "wilderness" — the only thing that does matter is that he has missed the one path that leads to the Kingdom of God.

But the most deceptive of the ways, or "paths", by which man demonstrates his love for this world is… the pseudo-religious path. To walk in this way, a man may speak highly of Christ and his coming. He may thus fool others (and he may even fool himself) into believing that he loves Christ's appearing, when what he really loves is talking about it!

How can we tell if we fall into this special subcategory of "lovers of this world"? If we are indeed fooling ourselves, then the time to discover that unpleasant truth is now, while we can still confess our sin, and return to our first love.

The Bible can help us answer this question, by directing our attention to a similar class of people in earlier times. These were Jews who lived many years ago, even before the first coming of Jesus. Like many professing believers today, these Jews attached a great deal of importance to the coming of their Messiah. Their prophets had taught them to look forward to the Messiah's coming, and this expectation had become a central feature of their religion.

Yet God instructed Amos to write:

> *"Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD!"*

— Why?…

> *"For what end is it [i.e., will it be] for you? the day of the LORD is [i.e., will be] darkness, and not light" (Amos 5:18).*

And Malachi wrote:

> *"The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (Mal. 3:1,2).*

Unfolding events justified the stern warnings of the prophets. When God's Son did appear in Israel, many Jews — including most of the really "religious" Jews — were still unprepared. The circumstances of the Lord's coming were dramatically different from what they had expected. And the Messiah who appeared was radically different from the "Messiah" they had come to expect. And so they actually hated him and rejected him, bringing condemnation upon themselves.

Why were the people of Israel not prepared? What went wrong? Let Paul explain:

> *"For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him" (Acts 13:27).*

"They knew him not!" They did not recognize the One for whom they and their forefathers had been looking for hundreds of years, despite the fact that they had read the Old Testament Scriptures about him "every Sabbath day".

They would have read Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 time after time, but they gained nothing from their reading. Because their minds were filled with their own ideas about the coming Deliverer, they were not open to receive the truths revealed in those Bible passages. They could not receive the teaching that their Savior would be despised and suffer — they read but they did not understand; and, ironically, they became the very people who despised him and caused him to suffer. And so they fulfilled these scriptures to their own confusion and destruction.

These "religious" Jews read their Bibles as a solemn duty, a ritual performed most regularly and carefully. Probably the mere physical exercise of reading the words made them feel good. But, sadly, it was all a deception and a snare. They did not read to gain instruction: they thought they knew all the answers already. And because they regarded themselves as a holy people, full of wisdom and knowledge, they were altogether unaware of how unreceptive they were. Those truths they did not like, the truths that would have prepared them to receive their Messiah when he appeared, were automatically rejected.

Do we know men like this? Is it just possible that we, today, are shutting our minds to unpleasant or difficult truths when we read our Bibles? We should face the possibility that our mental picture of the coming Christ, and our ideas about the events related to his appearing, may be shaped at least in part by human prejudice. And it is just possible that our acceptance of certain traditions, and our rejection of certain Bible teachings, may be as dangerous to our spiritual wellbeing as the similar prejudices of an earlier generation in Israel were to theirs.

How can we know if this is true of us? The only proper answer is this: Those who truly love Christ's appearing (as distinct from those who love to talk about it, and those who love to have others think they love it) will always read their Bibles with open minds, and will always be willing to be taught further from its pages, especially as regards its prophecies of the Messiah's Coming!

How amazing! Some of those who, in other settings, readily approve of the principle that the Bible must be the ultimate authority, seem to forget this very principle also applies to the Bible's prophecies about the Last Days.

Past Bible students have sounded out similar warnings against a "comfortable", "traditional" reading of the Bible:

> *"All writers and speakers must be unceremoniously tried by this [the Word of God]; for, God hath said, that 'if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' It matters not who the sinner may be; pope, cardinal, archbishop, bishop, minister, or their admirers; or, even*

one of the saints of God…; nothing he may say, or write, must be received unless in strict conformity to this word; and of this the people must judge for themselves upon their own responsibility; and in the face of their eternal weal [wellbeing], or rejection from the Kingdom of God. To this Book [the Bible], then, we appeal for light — for information concerning the things which shall be hereafter" (John Thomas, ***Elpis Israel****, 1847, p. 170).*

These words, written almost 160 years ago, are powerful reminders of what must be the measure of our prophetic understanding and the direction of our lives: for Christ is coming soon!

George Booker

Bro. John Bilello

We take this opportunity to thank Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, Michigan), who relinquishes his role as Chairman of the Tidings Publishing Committee as of January 1, 2007. Bro. John has played and continues to play a major role in the success of the Tidings. His contributions are numerous:

- He formed the 12-member Tidings Publishing Committee in 1993, and has been the Chairman of the Committee since its inception. As Bro. John intended, the Committee provides a firm foundation for the magazine. It advises and supports the editor, who had previously been solely responsible for the magazine.
- He wisely selected Committee members from around the continent and with diverse backgrounds so it would be representative of the Central Community in North America.
- He helped solidify the financial position of the Tidings and relieved the editor of any personal responsibility for the costs of the magazine.
- As Book Editor, Bro. John has led our efforts to expand into the publication of books. He wrote the first book we published, *Parables*, which was very well received, and which successfully launched our book business — selling out of its first two printings. He used this first book to set up distribution channels throughout the Christadelphian world, which are essential for any book publishing endeavor. In addition to that critical first book, we have published two other of Bro. John's books, *Miracles* and *The Bible and Science*, which have also been successful. He has also overseen our publication of *Legalism and Faith* by Bro. David Levin, *John's Creation: A Model for Understanding the Gospel of John* by Bro. John Pople, and *John Thomas: His Friends and His Faith* by Bro. Peter Hemingray.

- He and his efficient wife, Sis. Mary, have run our book order, book fulfillment, and collections operations. (Incidentally, they are looking for a volunteer to take over this labor of love.
- He has willingly donated his immense talents, by which the Central Community of North America has been richly blessed.
- He will continue as a member of the Committee and as Book Editor.

The Tidings Publishing Committee expresses its gratitude to Bro. John for his many years of faithful service and prays that he will enjoy his retirement from the Chairmanship.

Brother John,

> *[We] thank [our] God upon every remembrance of you… for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

The Tidings Publishing Corporation: Brethren Joe Hill (Chairman), Peter A. Bilello, Steve Cheetham, Ken Curry, Clive Drepaul, Mark Giordano, Tony Isaacs, Ted Sleeper, Phil Snobelen, Ken Sommerville, and Jeff Wallace. George Booker (Editor), and Don Styles (Past Editor).

John & Mary Bilello, and Ellen & Don Styles

Exhortation

"Woe is me if I preach not the gospel"

Greatly concerned for the spiritual welfare of the Corinthian brethren and sisters, Paul makes some very forceful comments. A good example: "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). Examining Paul's thoughts in this chapter, we need to note the forcefulness of the word "woe" (Greek "ouai"). According to the *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament,* this word is used as an interjection expressing pain, lament, and especially a threat of exclusion from salvation. It is used in 41 passages in the New Testament. In the Septuagint, it is found mainly in the prophetic writings. Overall, the word has quite an elastic meaning, ranging from indications of potential judgment, often linked to hypocrisy, to a more personal flavor of: 'It is a misery to me.' Hence, the range of meaning allows Paul to be speaking of possible judgments against himself if he fails to preach the gospel, continuing on to a personal feeling along the lines of: 'How miserable I am if I don't preach the gospel.'

A major issue throughout Paul's correspondence to this ecclesia is the repeated assertion of his apostolic authority, against the background of antagonists seeking to undermine his standing and teachings: "If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? If others share this rightful claim upon you, do we not still more?" (1 Cor. 9:11,12). His apostleship allows him certain rights, including being cared for and remunerated by the ecclesia.

No choice

In the context of preaching, Paul declared that those who proclaim the Gospel should be at liberty to obtain a living by the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:14). Paul has ample warrant for this claim, given the Lord's statement that "the laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7), and the Old Testament guide: "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the corn" (Deut. 25:4). Both are cited in 1 Corinthians 9:9. However, with increasing emphasis, Paul states that not only has he refrained from using this rightful provision, but also that the fact could be looked upon as grounds for boasting.

Preaching is a very different issue: "For if I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me" (1 Cor. 9:16). It is impossible for him to boast, even of his apostolic status, as he ***must*** preach the Gospel. Paul is saying that preaching is no credit to him, as he has no choice on it. (Equally for us, we cannot claim credit for preaching, because we have no option but to preach.) For Paul, remuneration for preaching the gospel was presumably out of the question, as it might appear to compromise his motives in the eyes of his antagonists.

Personal accountability

And so Paul states: "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel." This implies strong personal accountability if the gospel is not preached. Furthermore, to understand the breadth of his words, Paul would be 'miserable' if he failed to preach the gospel. Such was the apostle's devotion to God's ways.

Following this clear teaching is a rather difficult verse: "For if I do this willingly, I have a reward…" (1 Cor. 9:17). There seems to be two possibilities of understanding this statement: First, if he preaches of his own free will, then a reward will indeed follow. This would indicate that if Paul had voluntarily undertaken to preach he could legitimately have claimed remuneration from the ecclesia. To put it loosely, 'Seeing that I've chosen to preach, I'll get a reward for it.'

But the second, more appropriate, possibility makes it clear that preaching for him is not a voluntary option. Rather, he preaches not of his own will, but of his Father's will. He must preach because he is entrusted with a commission to do so. Paul was called, and accordingly stands under constraint. What then is his reward if he does it under compulsion and by his vocation? "Just this: that in my preaching I may make the gospel free of charge, not making full use of my right in the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:18).

Satisfaction in doing God's will

Paul is saying that, in this obligation to preach, he derives huge satisfaction from making the gospel available without charge to those otherwise in darkness. This is consistent with his comment that he would "endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:12). So great was Paul's will to preach, conforming to the divine commission, that it would be unthinkable for him to hinder the promulgation of God's message of salvation.

The exhortation at this stage for us is obvious. One needs to preach whether one likes it or not — it's a divine commission. Preaching is not an option; it's an imperative. As Sis. Jane Roberts remarked: "Every Christadelphian is a missionary." Furthermore, we gain immense satisfaction from preaching the gospel, realizing that we are God's instruments in so doing, offering it to people without price.

Contact with the gospel

We could perhaps ask: Why is preaching so important? One could say: 'Well, it doesn't really matter, since God calls people anyway.' Some have even argued that we should not engage in much preaching as it is presuming on God's prerogative to call. But God in fact calls people through the instruments ***He*** has provided, that is, His servants.

There are basically two ways in which people come to the gospel. First, some (but generally only a relatively few) may come from their own reading of Scripture. On occasions, we meet people who have come to the essentials of the gospel from their own Scriptural reading and meditation. But, second, and in most cases, people

come to the gospel because of the instruction given them, ranging from young children at home and at Sunday School to interested friends coming from different backgrounds — work colleague, seminar participant, chance encounter, and so on.

Speaking out for the Lord

We are then expected to be the mouthpiece of the Lord in teaching the gospel: "But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news' " (Rom. 10:14,15).

Preaching, of course, can take many forms, with personal example a key ingredient. Some may have the ability to teach more effectively than others. But the need to open one's mouth to witness for Him remains crucial; we must be forthcoming with our faith? "Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope you possess" (1 Pet. 3:15).

Looking for the opportunity

Consider the experience of the Ethiopian eunuch: "Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' And he said, 'How can I, unless some one guides me?'… Then Philip opened his mouth and commencing with this scripture he told him the good news of Jesus" (Acts 8:30,31,35).

When the opportunity arises, do we open our mouths, explaining the Scriptural message, placing no hindrance upon the extension of God's word? Or do we remain silent? We remember the words of the Lord in another context which is still very pertinent: "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who would enter to go in" (Matt. 23:13).

Watchmen's responsibilities

The responsibilities of faithful watchmen are stated clearly in Ezekiel 3:17,18: "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die', and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand." But happily, the converse applies, as he goes on to explain, with rich blessings for the faithful watchmen. Preaching is therefore an imperative in our service for the Lord. Not to preach, in all its different forms, is to hinder the gospel of grace.

The abundant signs we see around us in these last days witness to the imminent return of the Lord. Therefore, let us faithfully "preach the word, be instant in season

and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2). As with Peter and John, "we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

Ron Hicks
(Washington, DC)

"God makes a land barren"

"[The LORD] turned rivers into a desert, flowing springs into thirsty ground, and fruitful land into a salt waste, because of the wickedness of those who lived there" (Psa. 107:33,34).

Well over 100 years ago, as he surveyed the wastelands of the Middle East, R.C. Trench wrote: "God makes [a land] barren, and ever less capable of nourishing its inhabitants; but He makes it so through the sloth, the indolence, the selfish shortsightedness, the quarrels among themselves of those that should have dressed and kept it. In the condition of a land may be found the echo, the reflection, the transcript of the moral and spiritual condition of those that should cultivate it: where one [the people] is waste, the other [the land] will be waste also. Under the desolating curse of Mohammedan domination the fairest portions of the earth have gone back from a garden to a wilderness: but only let that people for whom Palestine is yet destined return to it again, and return a righteous nation, and in a little while all the descriptions of its earlier fertility will be more than borne out by its later fertility, and it will easily sustain its millions again."

So indeed, the Land of Israel has begun — as Isaiah promised — to blossom as the rose (Isa. 35:1). Lands left as swamps by the Arab peoples have been drained and planted. Other lands, barren deserts, have been irrigated and fertilized. In all this, we see the beginnings of the fulfillment of Isaiah's words (and Trench's as well). But even now, we know it is only the beginning: that same Land of Promise will blossom yet further, and "the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt" (Amos 9:13), when God's true — that is, repentant and truly righteous — people will be planted, no more to be uprooted from their Land (v. 15)!

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians
(1) Introduction

(Unless otherwise noted, Bible quotations are from the Revised Version.)

A necessary preliminary to the study of Paul's letter to the Ephesians is a survey of the circumstances in which the ecclesia in Ephesus was established. This in turn will give support to the conviction that the epistle was intended not only for the believers in Ephesus itself, but also for disciples in other towns in the province of Asia. The length of the apostle's sojourn in the city is his longest in any centre where his labors resulted in an ecclesia.

Understandably, the size of the city in which Paul and his associates preached the gospel bore a relationship to the length of the period spent there (see Acts 18:10). While Corinth was a large centre, Ephesus was greater, ranking third in the empire behind Rome and Alexandria. One estimate is that the city had approximately a third of a million inhabitants.[1] It had been Paul's ambition to carry the gospel to Ephesus in the course of the second missionary journey and doubtless to its hinterland, but he was prevented by divine guidance (see Acts 16:6). Even so, at the conclusion of his great work in Corinth, he called in at Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 18:19,20).

There is a detail at this point worthy of our attention: though the sojourn was brief, the apostle preached in the synagogue and appears to have aroused interest, for he was asked to stay longer (v. 20). This apparently small detail may well possess special significance, as we hope to demonstrate. Encouraged by the initial response, Paul departed, promising that if it was God's will, he would be back (v. 21).

Another important piece of information is provided in the record of Apollos' ministry in Ephesus. This eloquent Alexandrian Jew, although his knowledge of the Lord's ministry was limited, nevertheless "powerfully confuted the Jews… shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 18:28).

These preliminary reflections appear to throw light upon the reasons for the early success of Paul's witness in Ephesus, for the synagogue provided a platform for three months (Acts 19:8). This presents a contrast with what occurred at Thessalonica: there, after only three Sabbaths, the synagogue door was closed to Paul and Silas, and the orthodox Jews, incensed by the success of Paul's preaching, organized such opposition to him that he and Silas were reluctantly obliged to leave the city (Acts 17:10). So resolved were the Jews of Thessalonica to frustrate Paul's work that Silas and he were pursued as far as Berea (v. 13).

When we return to consider Paul's witness at Ephesus, it must be evident that in so large a centre the Jews were much more numerous than those in Thessalonica. From the information Luke gives us, it is clear that an element among the orthodox Jews was prepared to give Paul an extended hearing. Presumably, some embraced the offer of eternal life in the Lord Jesus. But this development gave the Jews no joy and in Ephesus, as elsewhere, they organized fierce opposition to Paul. The apostle himself provides eloquent comments on what happened — in his two letters to the Corinthians, both written during his Ephesian ministry. In the first he speaks of fighting with beasts at Ephesus (1 Cor. 15:32), which language, whether it be literal or metaphorical, speaks volumes. Then there is the brief but eloquent comment: "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Cor. 16:9). In like manner, in the second epistle, his language is expressive: his experiences have been such that he despaired of life itself, and his recovery is likened to resurrection (2 Cor. 1:8,9).

All this is confirmed by what he said to the Ephesian elders when he addressed them at Miletus, after he had concluded his work in the Aegean area and was on the way to Jerusalem. He reminded them how he had served the Lord with all lowliness of mind and that he had been subjected to "the plots of the Jews" (Acts 20:19). Towards the end of his discourse, he mentions that he had spent three years in Ephesus (v. 31). Paul may well be speaking here in round terms; even so it is an indication of the considerable time spent in the city.

If we bring together the scattered chronological clues, we find incidental confirmation of Paul's claim. First we take into account the three months spent in the synagogue (Acts 19:8). Jewish opposition constrained him to find a platform elsewhere and this he found in "the school of Tyrannus" (v. 9), where he spent two years (v. 10), but he may not have been able overnight to move from the synagogue to the new venue. Luke now informs us that, as the result of the apostle's witness and the outstanding miracles performed by him, the word of the Lord spread throughout the province of Asia. This is a detail to bear in mind when we come to the subject of the other ecclesias which may have been established at this time.

A remarkable incident concerns the seven sons of a so-called Jewish high priest, who with others had spuriously invoked the name of the Lord Jesus; these Jews suffered complete discomfiture (vs. 13-17). The episode became widely known, serving as it did to demonstrate the total contrast between a true follower of the Lord and the charlatans. In the process, the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, this being in itself a witness to the unique greatness of the Lord. It is an indication also that Paul, like Peter, had performed the miracles in the name of the Lord Jesus (see Acts 3:6).

The response of some who practiced magical arts was dramatic for they burnt the books, worth a considerable sum, which contained the magical formulas.[2] Whatever obstacles were being encountered, the work was blessed and Luke

makes one of his "progress reports": "So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed" (Acts 19:20).

At this juncture Paul felt his work in Ephesus was drawing to a close and he expresses the intention of visiting Rome (v. 21; see also Rom. 15:25-28). He sends Timothy and Erastus ahead but remains in Ephesus "for a while" (Acts 19:22). This may be imprecise, but we need to add this period to what we have already learnt about the duration of Paul's sojourn in Ephesus. After we have taken into account all the clues, we begin to find increasing support for Paul's own figure of three years (see once more Acts 20:31). During the final indeterminate period, alarm increases among the local artisans who owe their living to the cult of Artemis. They have a leader in a certain Demetrius who organizes the opposition to the apostle.

What he said to his fellows has special interest for us in our assessment of what Paul had achieved during his time in Ephesus: "And ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying they be no gods, which are made with hands" (v. 26). "Ye see and hear" are words which are surely highly significant. Doubtless the great temple had amongst its most frequent visitors worshippers from the surrounding area; they would bring stories of what was happening in their neighbourhood and thus testify to the widespread diffusion of the gospel.

All this leads to what seems a legitimate conclusion: ecclesias were being established throughout the hinterland. In connection with the first missionary journey, Luke records that while Paul and Barnabas were preaching at Antioch, the word of the Lord was spread throughout the region (see Acts 13:49). Inevitably this must have happened during Paul's much longer sojourn in Ephesus. Later, there were at least seven churches in Ephesus itself and the surrounding country, for we know their names from Revelation 2 and 3. While we cannot afford to dogmatise and maintain that all seven were founded by Paul and his associates, yet we know from Colossians, written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome but a few years after he left Ephesus, that the church at Laodicea was in existence, together with one at Hierapolis (see Col. 4:16). The letter to Colosse gives a possible indication how it came into existence: Epaphras is mentioned early (in Col. 1:7) and later Paul mentions approvingly his labour at two ecclesias, neighbours of Colosse: Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col. 4:12,13). Thus, at the time Paul wrote the Colossian letter there is firm evidence of the spread of the gospel to Colosse and its neighbourhood, nearly 100 miles in a straight line from Ephesus.

But where do all these considerations lead us, and what is their relevance to the Ephesian letter? Now it is a significant fact that important early manuscripts of the letter carried originally a blank in the opening salutation.[3] This at least suggests the epistle might have been conveyed to other destinations. Tychicus was the bearer of the letter we know as the Ephesian letter (see Eph. 6:21). He was also the one who carried the letter to the Colossians (Col. 4:7,8) and the charming letter to Philemon.

Also from Colossians we learn they were to share the epistle they received with the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16) and the Colossians in their turn were to read "the epistle from Laodicea". Surely only one sensible conclusion seems possible: the letter from Laodicea must have been intended for a number of ecclesias, and this has to be the one we identify as the epistle to the Ephesians.

When we accept this conclusion, we can appreciate why the two letters have so much in common. We shall discover as we study the epistle to the Ephesians how the great themes treated there appear also in the letter to Colosse.

But something will need to be said about the circumstances in which the three letters delivered by Tychicus came to be composed.

Tom Barling
(Teignmouth, England)

Footnotes:

1. See the article on Ephesus by A. Souter and J. Strahan, *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church,* vol. 1, Edinburgh 1915.
2. See F.F. Bruce: "Many of them also gathered their magical papyri together and made a bonfire of them. A number of such magical scrolls have survived to our day; there are especially famous examples in the London, Paris and Leiden collections. The special connection of Ephesus with magic is reflected in the term 'Ephesian letters' for magical scrolls" (*The Book of the Acts,* Revised Edition, Grand Rapids, Michigan, p. 369).
3. J.B. Lightfoot makes some enlightening comments on the manuscript evidence: writing about the salutation "in Ephesus" he states: "In the Codex Sinaiticus {Aleph} [these words] were absent originally, but are supplied by a third hand. In the Codex Vaticanus they have no place in the text, but are supplied in the margin by a later corrector" (*Biblical Essays,* London 1893, p. 380). These two codices are assigned to the fourth century. Thus early, and very important, manuscript evidence supports the conclusion that the Ephesian letter was intended to be delivered to destinations apart from Ephesus itself.

* * * * *

General Robert E. Lee was asked what he thought of a fellow officer in the Confederate Army who had made some derogatory remarks about him. Lee rated him as being very satisfactory. The person who asked the question seemed perplexed. "General," he said, "I guess you don't know what he's been saying about you." "I know," answered Lee. "But I was asked my opinion of him, not his opinion of me!"

Reflections

Famous Last Words: (8) Abraham to Lot

Our last article considered Noah, whose famous last words were a prophecy concerning his sons. We were encouraged to forsake the ways of Ham, and dwell permanently in Shem's tent — a foreshadowing of the status we have in Christ — in whom fellowship with God is made possible.

Abraham and Lot must have developed a close relationship through all their experiences together. We know that Abraham loved and cared for his nephew. However, the only words that we have recorded of Abraham speaking to Lot are in Genesis 13:8: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee… for we be brethren." The problem was they had too much 'stuff', and the arguments between their managers brought strife between them!

As far as we know these were the last words of Abraham that Lot ever heard. Too bad he didn't take them more to heart! Did Lot remember the "brotherhood" he shared with Abraham? It wasn't long before he was calling the men of Sodom "brethren" (Gen. 19:7)!

Lot had "made peace" with the men of Sodom and their deeds. Even though his righteous soul was vexed by their behaviour, and he protested against their planned actions against the angels, Lot had become numb to the evil around him. He really should have returned to the tents of Abraham and dwelt in brotherly peace with him, at the expense of his worldly possessions if necessary!

What an exhortation for us today! How sad that the "things of this world" had brought strife between brethren. Was separation the only solution to this problem? It resulted in the ruin of one of the parties involved, as Lot found himself in "isolation", out of contact with the spiritual guidance of his "brother".

"Let there be no strife" echoes down to us today. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10).

How did Abraham settle the problem? He let Lot choose the path. Abraham suffered himself to be defrauded (1 Cor. 6:7). Unity and peace were more important to Abraham than getting his own way. Too bad Lot didn't choose to reduce his worldly possessions and stay with his uncle. What personal gain resulted from his choice? He went down to Sodom a very rich man. He left with the clothes on his back, and his two daughters — and nothing else (since his wife never really left the city, but partook of its punishment).

"Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one Hope of your calling; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:1-6).

Unity amongst brethren and sisters is the lesson from Abraham's "Famous Last Words" to Lot.

(Next: Melchizedek)

Chris Sales
(Shelburne, ON)

Jonah and God's Compassion

The prophecy of Jonah contains over 1,000 words. However there are very few that are truly words of prophecy, that is, words predicting the future: e.g., "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jon. 3:4). We must conclude, therefore, that the fate of Nineveh is not the primary focus of the Book of Jonah. Instead, its primary focus is the prophet Jonah and his struggle with the character of his God.

Jonah belied his feelings when, speaking to God, he said, "For I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil" (Jon. 4:2). This attitude was manifest in ways that were contrasted in the life of Jesus.

Jonah "went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city… till he might see what would become of the city" (Jon. 4:5). In effect, he was waiting (and wishing for?) its destruction — as God had promised. But Jesus, on approaching Jerusalem, "when he was come near… beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke 19:41).

Jonah, in response to God's words, "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" (Jon. 4:9), says, "I do well to be angry, even unto death." This contrasts with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, when he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. 26:38).

So the prophet who was "greater than Jonah" (Matt. 12:41) was moved with compassion for the city of Jerusalem, though he knew that compassion carried with it a great cost. That cost was his own life. His compassion drove him to lay down his life for sinners, whereas Jonah's lack of compassion drove him to bitterness. Bitterness was in Jonah's heart even though he was aware of God's compassion.

Does our knowledge of God cause us to be selective in our preaching? Do our actions show that we feel there are some people to whom we should not preach? We may say that our meetings are open to all, but our hearts tell us what we feel about

the presence in our halls of some who do not meet out standards of dress, lifestyle, or cleanliness.

Are we like Jonah or Jesus?

Peter Forbes
(Glenfield, UK)

Principles from Proverbs: (4) "Simple" Proverbs

It is the function of the Bible not just to tell us what we don't know, and to inspire us to greater heights, but also to ***tell us what we do know*** — to knock on our doors, and if necessary batter them down, until we are forced to pay attention to what we might easily forget, or fail to give proper weight to!

How often do we need to read — and hear, and be reminded of — the simple, practical advice of the Book of Proverbs? The answer is obvious: as often as it takes! As often as it takes to keep the warnings of this simple, "dull", down-to-earth book in the forefront of our minds. And then once again tomorrow, ***if*** we are in any danger whatsoever of forgetting. In reading, writing, thinking, and speaking about this Book, we must keep in mind: No 'style points' will be deducted for repetition!

And where may we find the means to remind ourselves, even again, of its exhortations, its admonitions, and its warnings? The answer: wherever we can! The Lord Jesus found the raw material for his parables in the daily affairs of ordinary life — the fields of the farmer and the shepherd, the household chores of the wife and mother, the marketplace of the buyer and the seller. So wherever we are and whatever we are doing, Solomon's proverbs echo in our ears. Our minds having been instructed by its sayings, once and again, then the little voice just behind our ear may whisper again: "Remember…"

*****

"Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men" (Prov. 4:14).

Paul in the New Testament says much the same thing: "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character'" (1 Cor. 15:33). The life of the wicked has far more power to corrupt the righteous than the life of the righteous has to correct the wicked. It is much easier for the healthy to become diseased by contact with the sick than for the sick to be restored by contact with the healthy.

One reason why the company of those who are worldly and indifferent to God will be a great problem is this: If the believer will not forget about his conscience while in their company, then he can expect to be scoffed at, and made fun of.

Another danger is this: In mixing with sinners, he is putting himself into a situation where — sometimes openly and sometimes very subtly — he will be tempted to abandon his principles.

Good men are not usually as concerned to bring their companions to the knowledge and practice of the Bible as bad men are to lead the good astray. Many a person, after having his heart changed with the things belonging to God, has been fatally ruined by mixing with those who viewed his faith with suspicion or contempt, and enjoyed trying to make him forget his God.

Setting a foot on this downward road of the wicked will be like the first venture upon the "slippery slope"; it may be impossible — who can tell? — ever to retrace one's steps, once that crucial first step is taken.

It is fatal to think we can play around with sin because we think we have a built-in resistance. Our only safe course is complete avoidance. All the more reason, as one Christadelphian puts it, that "the solid warning to enter not into the way of evil men holds within it the [further] meaning, '…but if perchance you have entered, go no further'." For it may yet be still possible — if only barely — to escape that fatally dangerous, downward-tending, slippery slope!

Why is sin so dangerous? Because it is deceitful! "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9). "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness" (Heb. 3:13). "Sin" masquerades as innocent pleasure, or as the silliest little trifle of the passing moment, hardly worth notice at all. It may even seem to be praiseworthy action — "getting the most out of life". The "devil" doesn't have horns and hooves; he doesn't have a long tail and a pitchfork. He wears a business suit; he's charming, with a pleasant smile and an easy manner. He talks about "guaranteed future returns", or finding satisfaction in the best entertainment center, or the most expensive car, or living in the very best neighborhood.

Or the "devil" — SHE! — assumes the guise of an attractive young woman who purrs, "So you're married. So what? There can't be any harm in one little drink, can there?"

For how else can the "devil", or "sin", hope to "deceive" mankind?

And so we should each ask ourselves the question: What — and where — is the ***devil*** that ***I*** should be on the guard against?

******

"The wealth of the wise is their crown, but the folly of fools yields folly" (Prov. 14:24).

The first line here leaves unanswered the question: 'But what ARE the riches of the wise? Literal wealth, or spiritual wealth?'

Some writers think that literal wealth is an ornament to those who use it well. They cite examples of wise men who used their riches well: Job, employing his goods to benefit others (Job 29:6-17), and David, assembling the materials for God's Temple (1 Chr. 29:1-5; 2 Chr. 5:1).

On the other hand, others suggest that the wisdom of the wise, which IS their crown of glory, constitutes their "wealth", regardless of material prosperity, or the lack thereof.

This last is, in my mind, the most meaningful. Consider, for example, "the price of wisdom is beyond rubies" (Job 28:18), and "Wisdom is more precious than rubies" (Prov. 3:15; 8:11).

But the real point for our purposes is the second half of the verse: *"The folly of fools yields folly!"*

As this line stands in the Hebrew, it is what some commentators call a "tautology" (i.e., a statement that is redundant, or needlessly repetitious). "Redundant" and "repetitious" it may be, but is it really "needlessly" so? That may be a matter of opinion. One of the strengths of Proverbs, so it seems, is its ***repetition:*** the Book tells us what we ***need*** to hear, even if — sometimes — it seems (needlessly?) repetitious!

So we ought to ask: do we all know, as we should, that a life of folly produces only folly in the end? And the answer, it seems to me, is: No! We do ***not*** understand perfectly such a simple truth. If we did, then the world — along with all of us who claim to "know the Truth" — would have long since given up every vestige of folly, and grasped wisdom with both hands, and embraced it with both arms! But this has not happened, and so the plainest cliché — "The folly of fools yields folly" — remains as one more witness, pointing out to us a warning, and by implication ***the*** "way"!

Some of us may think that a lifetime of folly may be redeemed, in the briefest moment, by one flash of "wisdom" at the end. And of course it might! But… where will that one flash of "wisdom" come from? And who will listen when it comes, if the mind has been drugged by folly all its days? And what presumption there is, in any of us, if we tell ourselves (or others) that "there is always a chance", but do nothing to develop or promote that "chance" to turn from folly to wisdom, before it is too late!

In fact, we might say that this line emphasizes by its very repetition the barrenness of folly. Folly is its own reproach and its own "reward". In other words, to paraphrase

Christ, thorns produce only thorns, and brambles produce only brambles (Matt. 7:16) — unless a good seed is planted and nourished!

In the context (of the first line), we might read this second line: "The folly of fools — *even when accompanied by riches* — is still only folly!"

One old Bible commentator tells us: "Folly is oftentimes made more manifest through the ill use [fools] make of their riches; spending them in the gratification of their sinful lusts; and making no use of them for their own improvement in knowledge, or for the good of their fellow creatures" (John Gill).

Decorate folly as you will, dress it up in rich fabrics and set it off with gaudy ornaments — it is still nothing but folly. And the wise and discerning see it for what it is, and more so for its being flaunted conspicuously, so as to attract witnesses.

In *Gone With the Wind,* a newly-rich Scarlett O'Hara — anxious to move into the highest circles of post-war Atlanta society — offers her old slave and nursemaid Mammy a fine new dress. The wise Mammy replies, "Miz Scarlett, you and me can give ourselves airs and get ourselves all slicked up like racehorses, but we are still just mules in horse harness and everybody knows it."

Adam and Eve had their fig-leaves, Jezebel her special eye makeup, and Scarlett O'Hara her fancy dresses. What do we ***hide behind*** so as to conceal, even from ourselves, the "folly" of our ways?

*****

"Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed" (Prov. 11:11).

Words may have a great power and influence, for good or for ill. The wicked, the selfish, and the fools have a cursed existence, and a cursed fate — which the Proverbs contrast with the blessed state of the righteous, the liberal, the kind, and the wise.

"Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted." This expression may refer either (1) to the blessing God gives the upright (which will benefit society), or (2) to the blessing that the upright are to the city, and the community, where they live. The second, I think, fits the parallelism best: cp. Prov. 14:34: "Righteousness exalts [even] a [whole] nation."

"But by the mouth of the wicked [the city] is destroyed." What the wicked say has a disastrous effect on society, endangering, weakening, demoralizing, and perverting with malicious and slanderous words. Wicked leaders can bring destruction on a city by their evil counsel.

How might the mouth, or words, of the wicked destroy a city? There are various possibilities. When we think of how this chapter began ("The LORD abhors dishonest scales…": Prov. 11:1), then it might be something like this:

The picture is of a city under siege. It is a city with a reputation for goodwill and progress because good people live there, and over a period of time the blessings of their way of life become benefits to all who live there.

But then the story gets around that visitors to the city have been cheated by tricky business people; within no time at all the place has a name for double-dealing. No community can afford to allow that sort of thing to happen because, without business, their standard of living is threatened. How quickly the community leaders respond to any threat of this kind because they know the life of the city is at risk.

On the other hand, the Bible is filled with the stories of good men whose presence blesses a city, or a nation:

a. Joseph, first a slave and then finally a ruler in Egypt, saved many people from famine (Gen. 41:38-57).
b. Daniel, carried into captivity to Babylon as a young man, set a wonderful example of faithfulness to his God for many, many years — and certainly influenced even some of the leaders of that wicked city.
c. The righteous Hezekiah, assisted by the great prophet Isaiah, through faith and prayer, saved Jerusalem from destruction by the Assyrians.

In the classic movie *It's a Wonderful Life!* — still aired regularly during the holidays, 60 years after its initial release — there is an extended parable illustrating this proverb.

George Bailey is a young man with great ambitions: he's going to go to college, become an engineer, and then travel the world building great things — bridges, skyscrapers, ocean liners, whatever strikes his fancy; he's going to make his mark for all to see. He's going to shake the dust of his hometown — "this crummy little Bedford Falls", he calls it — off his feet for good!

But fate intervenes: his father falls ill, and George must take his place in the family business (but "only for a little while!", he tells himself). George's younger brother goes off to college in his stead; then the great war comes, and all affairs are rearranged; George's father dies; and George falls in love and gets married.

Finally, George wakes up one day, realizing that he is not the young man he once was; that he is not going to college; that he has been left behind, in the little "nowhere" place of Bedford Falls. What was a stop-gap — and a necessity — for a few years has become in fact his life's work: he has become his father, the owner of Bailey Savings and Loan — a little company that will never provide him and his family more than a modest living. His contemporaries — who never had half the energy, the brains, or the potential he had — are getting on wonderfully, in bigger and "better" places. And he is stuck!

At this point a terrible financial crisis arises, entirely by "accident", to threaten even the little that George Bailey has built up for himself and his family. And poor George stands on the town bridge, staring down into the swirling waters of the river, and

contemplates ending his "meaningless" life. He wishes, he says, that he had never been born — for he has not made a bit of difference to the world. But a kindly angel, Clarence, helps George see what a difference he ***has*** made — by first of all letting him see what Bedford Falls, and those he loves, would have become had he never existed!

And so we learn, in a "flashback" of sorts, what Bedford Falls (renamed "Pottersville" in George's nightmare) would have become without him. The pleasant, friendly, little "postcard" town would have been filled with bars, nightclubs, gambling dens, and worse.

Why? George's savings and loan helped the working-class folks own their own modest homes, and find dignity and hope for themselves and their families. It brought new businesses to the town; it helped to create jobs; it carried the unemployed through their temporary losses until they could get back on their feet again.

All this, it seems, had kept Bedford Falls out of the greedy clutches of Mr. Potter — for young (and then not-so-young) George Bailey had been the only man to stand up to the monopolistic, money-grubbing, hateful threat of this old miser.

And in the final outpouring of love and goodwill that crowns the movie, George Bailey finds that his friends are all there to help him and his family. "Where would we have been without you, Mr. Bailey?" He comes to see that a life made up of ***little*** kindnesses and charities and good deeds has an effect far beyond what he could ever have imagined, and finally he sees that — in the words of the angel Clarence — "No man is ever really poor who has friends!"

Thus, "through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted."

******

How can we ever be "poor"? How can we ever feel sorry for ourselves? We must remember: we have the greatest of friends, in Jesus Christ. "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command" (John 15:13,14). And even if we do not do ***all*** that Jesus has commanded (for we know we will fall short), yet ***if*** we have tried faithfully, then he is still our friend: His life, laid down for us, secures the forgiveness of our sins.

And we have many other friends around us, friends who share our hope, in him and in his God. Friends whom we can help and encourage, and friends who can help and encourage us, toward the Kingdom of God.

We may never do the "great" things that we imagine; but as we follow Christ, we can always do the small things that come our way.

Quietly, and sensibly, encouraged by Proverbs and the other simple and "dull" commands and promises of God's book, we do what we can with what we have, where we are.

It is enough.

George Booker

Signs of the Times

Global Warming, Commercialism, and Armageddon

Some scientists tell us that global warming is the greatest environmental crisis of our time. By now, we are all aware of the problem and its unpleasant effects. Because the atmosphere and the oceans are getting warmer, weather patterns around the world are changing, leading to bigger and more frequent storms, floods, and droughts.

One of the more frightening signs of global warming is the melting of the polar ice caps and glaciers. The eventual melting of the glaciers and ice in Antarctica or Greenland is predicted to cause a rise in sea levels of 20 feet, inundating much of Florida, low-lying Europe, and several Asian countries. Other consequences of melting glaciers include the drying up of rivers and water supplies for people who depend on them. The Himalayan glaciers, in particular, provide half the drinking water for 40 percent of the world's population, who are even now facing severe water shortages.

Global warming is caused by an increase in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Burning of fossil fuels such as oil and coal is the biggest contributor to the greenhouse effect. An explosion in the world's population and the unprecedented technological revolution of the last 50 years compound the problem.

As the atmosphere thickens from rising carbon dioxide levels, the sun's light rays, reflecting off the earth in the form of infrared rays, become trapped and unable to escape back out to space. The trapped radiation raises the temperature of the atmosphere and the oceans.

All over the world, entire ecosystems (including animal, bird, marine and plant species) are faced with extinction, as they fail to adjust to warmer conditions, loss of habitat and changing cycles in the seasons. Biologists now use terms like "mass extinction crisis" to describe the accelerating loss of species. Algae blooms and red tides in the warmer oceans are suffocating marine life and creating dead zones. Coral reefs, which are important to many ocean species, are dying due to coral bleaching, the result of carbon dioxide absorbed into the sea. Deserts are expanding because of higher air temperatures and loss of water from the soil by evaporation. Mosquitoes and other germ-carrying life forms that used to exist only at lower elevations are now thriving at higher elevations, broadening the areas for diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and E. coli.

Scientists are able to measure historic atmospheric carbon dioxide levels by coring through glaciers and extracting samples of centuries-old ice, which contain encapsulated air bubbles. Carbon dioxide levels prior to the industrial revolution were relatively constant, at about 280 parts per million [ppm]. Since the 1950s, carbon

dioxide (CO_2) levels have been rising steadily and are now at about 380 ppm. By 2050, projected carbon dioxide levels are expected to reach over 600 ppm.

An inconvenient truth

Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore has convincingly portrayed the global warming crisis in a recent documentary film (and also in an illustrated book), entitled *An Inconvenient Truth*. Based on the evidence of environmental damage he has accumulated, and projected CO_2 levels, Mr. Gore gives our planet until about 2050 before its basic infrastructure is destroyed. His message is not universally well received, however. Major nations and industries remain skeptical about the magnitude of the problem, or are unwilling to make substantial changes. The United States is the largest contributor to global warming, but has refused to sign the Kyoto Treaty, an international, largely symbolic agreement to lower atmospheric CO_2 levels. The reason? Some feel the scientific data is flawed, or at least incomplete at this time. Moreover, others suspect that signing the treaty will lead to a reduction in the United States' standard of living.

Man's selfishness the heart of the problem

At heart, the global warming crisis is the product of man's selfishness, at all levels of society. We are all part of the problem really, since we drive automobiles that emit carbon dioxide and live in homes that require cutting down trees (trees absorb carbon dioxide). As Al Gore puts it, to reverse greenhouse gas emissions and prevent more damage to the environment would be — at the very least — an "inconvenience", since we would have to change the way we live. Furthermore, industries would have to spend millions, if not billions, of dollars adapting to restrictive, environmental standards.

And yet, Mr. Gore believes we can do it. Despite his own grim forecasts, he is optimistic that the world can change direction and overcome the crisis. Of course, since Mr. Gore is [presumably] not a believer in the coming Kingdom of God on earth, this is the only position he can take. Without a believer's hope in that kingdom, he and others have no choice but to put their trust in themselves.

But we know that trust is misplaced, since "the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

The world is unlikely to solve the global warming problem soon, without divine intervention, because it doesn't have the collective will to do so. In fact, by ignoring the clear signs of impending disaster, the world is demonstrating a willingness to sacrifice the lives of its children for its immediate self-interest.

Jesus will resolve the problem

The global warming crisis is another sign of the times that presage the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Fortunately, we know that Jesus will return before the earth is destroyed, and he will resolve the problem. He will restore this beautiful planet, in which God has placed His glory, to its former pristine condition. It is unthinkable

that Jesus would allow mankind to continue depleting the earth's limited resources and destroying the environment under his reign. As a result, there seems little future for fossil fuels and other harmful energy sources in the Kingdom. It is much more likely that Jesus will use the natural elements — sun, wind, and water — to fuel the world's economy, and that mankind will return to a simpler society.

Armageddon prompted by threat to commercialism

But we know the nations aren't going to be happy when Christ returns, because their cherished commercial enterprise system and wealth will be threatened, and ultimately destroyed, as part of Christ's restoration of the earth.

> *"And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth" (Rev. 11:18).*

The nations "which destroy the earth" are the ungodly nations that are physically destroying the earth and morally corrupting its people.

The Beast that is destroying the earth

In the Apocalypse, the nations at war with Jesus and the saints at Armageddon are described as being ruled by a powerful, evil beast (Rev. 17:12-14). The multi-headed beast is a figure of the apostasy and false religions, including commercialism. The growth of commercialism parallels the rise in power of the apostate beast and other false religions, which are all enemies of God.

[Editor: This article points to a commercial "beast". This need not imply there are no other Last Days "beasts" except Mammon or commercialism — but rather that all the "beasts" of the earth (representative of those nations and leaders that know not God: consider the implications of Psa. 49:12,20) will have materialistic and commercial aspects. Consider, as an example, the commercial emphasis in Revelation 18:9-17.]

Mankind has been assaulting the earth and the environment for commercial gain since Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden (the first true ecosystem) and the establishment of cities, nations and empires. Ancient empires such as Egypt and Babylon became rich from exploiting the earth, but also introduced environmental problems, such as deforestation and soil erosion, and pollution of rivers from human and mining waste. As energy and mineral resources were depleted in the areas under their control, empires were forced to venture further afield to find new sources of wealth.

The Roman Empire raised commercial exploitation of the earth to new levels. Rome, Inc. was expert in extracting riches from the furthest corners of its empire. It did so ruthlessly and efficiently, for the benefit of the emperor and its citizens, but at great cost to the environment and the lives of the people it conquered. This tradition was later continued by the European nations in the Middle Ages, through their colonializing of the western hemisphere, and their plunder of gold, minerals and other raw wealth from the New World.

The western nations of today have followed in the footsteps of their Roman and European ancestors. Modern commercialism appears civilized but is really an evil beast. Commercialism produces goods that are desired by many and that help people become rich, but that also require vast quantities of non-renewable energy resources (oil, coal and gas) to produce. Commercialism is a license to plunder and destroy the earth in its self-centered and relentless pursuit of wealth.

The commercial threat to the Truth and the saints

Commercialism is an assault not only on the earth, but also on the Truth and godliness, by the corrupting power of money and materialism. The citizens of the western, capitalist nations are increasingly beguiled into worshiping the commercial "beast", through the pursuit and accumulation of wealth. They believe that the global economy will bring them freedom and security, and luxuries and material pleasures — and that all this will bring them happiness and spiritual fulfillment.

The saints who live under commercialism also find their faith assaulted by the "beast". Jesus said, "Ye cannot serve (both) God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24) — but, increasingly, western believers find themselves trying to do just that. Because money and materialism have become ends in themselves, and human success is measured strictly in terms of the bottom line, godly values have become secondary or irrelevant. The apostle Paul said, "The love of money is the root of all [kinds of] evil… causing some to err from the faith" (1 Tim. 6:10). The challenge for today's western saints is to remain strongly grounded in the faith, and to resist the pressure to worship the commercial "beast".

The Beast destroyed at Armageddon

Fortunately, we know that when the beast and the angry nations of the world attack Israel at Armageddon, they will be met by Jesus and the immortal saints, and will be destroyed.

> *"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Rev. 19:19,20).*

Only then, it seems, will the earth be able to take a deep breath and begin the process of environmental and spiritual recovery.

"Come out of her, my people"

Al Gore says we all need to do our bit to overcome the global warming crisis, by consuming less and recycling more. And no doubt, as good citizens of the earth, we should heed that admonition. In Revelation we are exhorted to "come out of her (Babylon, the Harlot)…that ye be not partakers of her sins" (Rev. 18:4). This means not only resisting the allure of riches and materialism, but respecting the earth and its limited resources.

In the Kingdom age, the nations will have to change, not just in the way they treat the earth and the environment, but in every aspect of their lives, especially their spiritual lives. However, the prospect of a rejuvenated, clean, unpolluted earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness", will surely be worth the inconvenience of those changes.

Martin Owen
(San Diego County, CA)

Lake Victoria and the Nile River

"At 27,000 square miles, the size of Ireland, Lake Victoria is the greatest of Africa's Great Lakes -- the biggest freshwater body after Lake Superior. And it has dropped fast, at least six feet in the past three years, and by as much as a half-inch a day this year before November rains stabilized things.

"The outflow through two hydroelectric dams at Jinja [on the shores of Lake Victoria] is part of the problem... half the problem, say environmentalists. But much of what is happening to Victoria and other lakes across the heart of Africa is attributable to years of drought and rising temperatures, conditions that starve the lakes of inflowing water and evaporate more of the water they have.

"In a yet unpublished report obtained by The Associated Press, an international consulting firm advises the Ugandan government that supercomputer models of global-warming scenarios for Lake Victoria 'raise alarming concerns' about its future and that of the Nile River, which begins its 4,100-mile northward journey here at Jinja.

"The report, by U.S.-based Water Resources and Energy Management International, says rising temperatures may evaporate up to half the lake's normal inflow from rainfall and rivers, with 'severe consequences for the lake and its ability to meet the region's water resources needs.'

"A further dramatic drop in Victoria's water levels might even turn off this spigot for the Nile, a lifeline for more than 100 million Egyptians, Sudanese and others.

" 'People talk about the snows of Kilimanjaro [discussed in some detail in Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth],' said Aris P. Georgakakos, the study's chief author, speaking of that African mountain's melting glaciers. 'We have something much bigger to worry about, and that's Lake Victoria.'

(From a report by Charles J. Hanley, AP, December 9, 2006).

Letters

Types of the Father

"It is quite common for men to typify Jesus Christ, but not nearly so common for men to typify the Heavenly Father. What other instances of this can you find in the Bible? We'd be pleased to hear about them" (G.B., Nov., page 469).

Dear Bro. George,

(1) One "type" of the Heavenly Father is Solomon, who writes, "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and reject not your mother's teaching; for they are a fair garland for your head, and pendants for your neck. My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent" (Prov. 1: 8-10, RSV). This fatherly advice was surely intended primarily for Jesus.

Throughout the early chapters of Proverbs, the same pattern is apparent: "My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life and abundant welfare will they give you. Let not loyalty and faithfulness forsake you; bind them about your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man" (Prov. 3:1-4). How sadly ironic that the writer who thus portrays the yearnings of the Father eventually rejects the advice conveyed to him both by God and by his own natural father.

(2) Hosea's experience provides a poignant counterpoint to Ezekiel's. The latter felt the anguish of losing one who was faithful and beloved [cf. Ezek. 24:16]; the former was required to restore to himself one who had been habitually unfaithful. "Go again, love a woman who is beloved of a paramour and is an adulteress; even as the LORD loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods" (Hos. 3:1). We have each been unfaithful to the Father… bringing pain to His heart. But still He is willing to restore us to Himself.

Philip Jones

I'd suggest one minor caveat to the first example: there may be good reasons to suppose that much if not all of the "fatherly advice" in the Proverbs was initially ***David's*** *advice to his son Solomon rather than* ***Solomon's*** *advice to his son Rehoboam. (Also, the "man after God's own heart" ought surely to make a better "type of the Father" than would Solomon!)*

This would of course mean that the "father" who gave the advice (David) did not so much reject that same advice, as that the "son" who received the advice (Solomon) rejected it.

But who composed the fatherly advice in the first place is something of which we cannot be certain.

George

Conscientious Objection website

The website mentioned in the last issue — www.christadelphianco.org — has been closed down, unfortunately. (The server has been hit twice by hackers in the past year and wiped out.) Much of the same information that had been posted there is available from the Christadelphian National Service Committee, through Bro. Andrew DeLorenzo (andymart@vermontel.net), or — as mentioned earlier — Bro. Jim Dillingham (bible888@aol.com). Other materials on conscientious objection in general are also available from the Detroit Christadelphian Book Supply (www.christadelphianbooks.com) and Thousand Oaks Christadelphian Library (www.bigbrand.com/library).

The best books?

A brother writes: "What are the best, most profitable Christadelphian books you have ever read? And why?"

Of course, you can't go wrong with **John Thomas'** ***Elpis Israel,*** "The Hope of Israel". Written in 1848, it is well worth the time, on historical grounds alone, for it marks the beginning of the modern "Christadelphian" movement.

The Protesters *and* ***Brethren in Christ*** **(Alan Eyre):** The primary reason to read these two books is to marvel at the spiritual strength of the pioneers of our faith (going back much earlier than the 19th century!), and to be motivated, by their examples, to greater efforts in these days of laziness and indifference.

As a young man, the most revolutionary, eye-opening thing I ever read was **Harry Whittaker's** ***Exploring the Bible*** (and of course, its sequel, ***Enjoying the Bible).*** They changed my life. I still go back and skim through them every several years. It is probably safe to say these two books have helped more readers to become true Bible students than any other writings.

For Bible overview, background, and apologetics, **Alan Hayward's** ***God's Truth*** is a must read.

Almost anything by **Islip Collyer** is worthy of attention. He was the most reasonable, calmest, gentlest, and kindliest of writers — but with a profound grasp of the Bible.

Read any of the many exhortations by "Rene" Growcott. You'll have to find most of these on the internet — just search for **"G.V. Growcott"** and you'll find them in short order (but be careful of some of the other things you might find along the way). GVG was a polite, courteous, and pleasant man, as well as a dedicated Bible student, but — as a writer — he was a throwback to the sternest and most uncompromising of the old Puritans. So stern, in fact (in print, at least), that his messages are a little frightening. I always like to read a bit of Islip Collyer alongside GVG: they balance one another off quite nicely.

Wrested Scriptures, by **Ron Abel,** is an organized, in-depth analysis of Bible verses regularly misapplied by various denominations to justify their own special false doctrines. It is very useful in preaching work.

For deep insights, and a feeling that God is still working today, read **Robert Roberts'** ***Ways of Providence*** (Bible-based exhortation of the highest order).

For light reading, try **Len Richardson's *Sixty Years a Christadelphian,*** subtitled ***A Worm's Eye View of our Community.***

But for the very best example of Bible study and exposition, you can scarcely do better than **HAW's *Studies in the Gospels***.

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of…" — so many other writers. As a community, we are richly blessed: not just in the fundamental doctrines passed along to us, but in the fine brothers and sisters who have labored with pen (and typewriter and computer!) to "open" God's Holy Book for us.

We would welcome other answers from our readers to the question: *"What are the best, most profitable Christadelphian books you have read? And why?"*

George

A Christadelphian Sampler

John Thomas

"Search the scriptures with the teachableness of a little child, and thy labour will not be in vain. Cast away to the owls and to the bats the traditions of men, and the prejudices indoctrinated into thy mind by their means; make a whole burnt offering of their creeds, confessions, catechisms and articles of religion; and, after the example of the Ephesian disciples, hand over your books of curious theological arts, and burn them before all. These mountains of rubbish have served the purpose of a dark and barbarous age; the Word, the Word of the Living God alone, can meet the necessities of the times" *(Elpis Israel,* pp. 5,6).

"Where is the man among 'philosophers' who will stultify, or idiotize himself by saying that the Creator permitted chance to elaborate the terrestrial system? The thing is absurd. The fool says in his heart it is not God. Why does he say so? Because he would make the cause of all things, a mere physical disposition in matter, destitute of all intellectual and moral attributes, in order that he may get rid of all responsibility to such a Being. He hates truth, righteousness, and holiness, and therefore he vainly strives to persuade himself that there is no God of a truthful, righteous, and holy character" *(Elpis Israel,* p. 169).

"Beloved brethren, human nature is always tending to extremes and transcending what is written. As the saying is, it will strain at gnats and swallow camels by the herd. It set up the Inquisition and is incessantly prying into matters beyond its

jurisdiction. It is very fond of playing the judge and of executing its own decrees. It has a zeal but not according to knowledge, and therefore its zeal is intemperate and not the zeal of wisdom or knowledge rightly used. It professes great zeal for the purity of the Church, and would purge out everything that offends its sensitive imagination. But is it not a good thing to have a church without tares, black sheep, or spotted heifer? Yea, verily, it is an excellent thing. But then it is a thing the Holy Spirit has never yet developed, and cannot be developed by any human judiciary in the administration of spiritual affairs. There are certain things that must be left to the Lord's own adjudication when he comes" *(The Ambassador,* 1866, pp. 91,92; reprinted under "Dr. Thomas and Divisions", *The Christadelphian,* Vol. 67, No. 788 — Feb. 1930 — pp. 52,53).

Alan Eyre

"On the evening of this fateful winter Saturday [in 1525], about 20 men gathered in the home of Felix Manz in Zurich. They walked over the situation, and their own needs before God. Let a contemporary account speak of what followed: 'As they were together, anxiety came on them and pressed upon their hearts. So they began to bend their knees before Almighty God in heaven… they prayed that He would grant them to do His divine will, and that He would reveal His mercy to them. For flesh and blood and human frowardness did not drive them, since they well knew what they would have to bear and suffer on account of it… And so they together dedicated themselves in the high fear of God to the Name of the Lord. Each confirmed the other in the service of the gospel and began to teach and hold the faith.'

"They linked themselves into a brotherhood of faith: Bruder in Christo, Brethren in Christ. It was sealed by a solemn but intimate 'breaking of bread', either the same evening or the next day, Sunday.

"To appreciate the spiritual power generated in that hour it is well to pause and consider what manner of men these were who so determined that they would obey God rather than men. Most of them were in the prime of life. Cajokob, Manz, Eberli, Hutzer, and Brotli were all to be burned, drowned, or beheaded within five years of this Zurich meeting, in places hundreds of miles apart. Grebel was to survive little more than eighteen months. They fully realised the peril of the step they took" *(The Protestors,* pp. 28-30).

" 'You are the salt of the earth.' Jesus of Nazareth invested the tiny band that he called apart to testify to him and all he stood for with a staggering responsibility. Into all the world they were to go. Not with the hope of converting the world, but with the aim of creating and forming a redemptive society that would be as the savour of salt in a world of corruption. In parable, metaphor and allegory, the Gospels illuminate the Master's teaching as embodying the one element of permanence and true selfhood in a world of doubt, changeableness and transcience. To build on it was to build on rock; by it one entered the light and joy of the bridal festivities

while outside was the darkness; to bear witness to it was to be bearing lamps which shone with divine illumination; it was enduring bread and living water. In the wild darkness of the stormy night human guidance was in vain, and all their rowing brought no aid to a boat sinking with water. They were unable to discern any ethical landmarks; in all their doubts and fears they were in jeopardy. It was the voice of the Lord which stilled their storm.

"The world has had — so it is said — an age of gold, an age of faith, an age of reason. Now perhaps we are in the age of uncertainty; which is strange since we know more about things than ever before. Yet we do not know what to give in exchange for our souls. 'For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits himself?' That is true enough now, but in the day of reckoning if our self has been compromised and sacrificed to the Moloch of expediency, what will there be left to perpetuate?

" 'You are the salt of the earth.' Many of the characters in this book, most of them virtually unknown, worked and struggled to season their generation with the savour of sincerity, charity and faith, and they are their own commendation. Many of them wrote, not with the cool pen of the academic theologian, but with the passionate intensity of tested conviction and a love that overflowed from a source which they felt was infinitely more precious than anything that this world affords. There is much we can learn from them" *(The Protestors,* pp. 213,214).

Harry Whittaker

"Every time you learn some new thing — a piece of out-of-the-way information which throws light on an obscure passage of Scripture, a neat explanation of a long-standing difficulty, the name of a book which will supply useful knowledge on a particular subject, a simple association of two Bible passages which illuminate each other — whenever you encounter anything which might conceivably be of value one day, *make a note of it* somewhere. Of course, you have a blotting-paper memory and can carry these details easily, so the note is not necessary. But please accept an emphatic assurance that one day your memory will not be as good as it is now, so it would be well to start the note-taking habit right away" *(Exploring the Bible,* p. 10).

"And so the search for the more exact meaning of Bible phraseology goes on. It is those who soak themselves in the language of Scripture and who pore over its words, trying in a sympathetic, imaginative fashion to think themselves into the minds of the men who wrote — it is they who learn the more precise, inner meaning of what is written. But to this attitude of mind must be added a willingness to persevere in the comparing of Scripture, and to spend long hours with Bible and concordance side by side" *(Enjoying the Bible,* p. 87).

"Hebrew is essentially a picture language. It has astonishingly few abstract terms. Presumably the language grew up this way because the genius of the people naturally expressed itself in illustrations and pictures taken from life and the world they lived in. Consequently even the most matter-of-fact narrative in the Old Testament

is liable to be unselfconsciously helped along with some vivid metaphor, as when Jacob said to Laban: 'The Lord hath blessed thee since my coming' (Gen. 30:30). Here the phrase Jacob used is literally 'at my foot', giving the picture of prosperity springing up wherever the foot of Jacob trod in the service of his father-in-law. When Joseph's brethren were scared at finding themselves given special treatment by the unrecognised chief minister of Egypt, they explained the experience thus: 'We are brought in that he may seek occasion against us' (Gen. 43:18). But again, literally, the expression is: 'that he may roll himself upon us' — and immediately the picture is before the mind of an imperious tyrant crushing defenceless victims beneath his chariot wheels. In countless places in the Hebrew Scriptures this literary phenomenon is observable — and it should always be observed. All the more is this true in the poetic books. There the wealth of imagery has such a variety and splendour as to make these ancient writings a wonderful inheritance for any who appreciate good language put to good use — this, quite apart from the inspiration which is undoubtedly behind it all" *(Enjoying the Bible,* pp. 36,37).

Alan Hayward

"In every walk of life people learn to sense the difference between true and false. Old hands in the teaching profession can glance down an examination room, and pick out the one boy who is trying to crib [cheat]. The customs officer gradually learns to spot which suitcases are worth opening. The experienced magistrate can nearly always tell when a witness is lying. In every walk of life things either ring true, or they ring false.

"But before you can detect the ring of truth with any certainty you need experience. It is therefore significant that *those who know the Bible best trust it the most.*

"A Bible lover once told an anecdote about a pompous colonel at a dinner table. 'In my opinion,' he declared, 'the Koran is vastly superior to the Bible.'

" 'Excuse me, Colonel,' said a clergyman. 'Do you mind if I ask you two questions? Have you ever read the Bible from beginning to end?'

"The colonel admitted that he had not, and waited uneasily for the second question.

" 'Have you ever even seen a copy of the Koran?'

"When the colonel again answered that he hadn't, the clergyman asked him what he thought of himself. 'You publicly declare that a book you have never seen is vastly superior to a book that you have never read right through!'

"That story rings true. I have met dozens and dozens of people like the colonel, who condemn the Bible vigorously but have never read it. On the other hand I know people whose whole attitude to the Bible changed entirely when once they started to read it. As they read it, they could see that here was a book that rang true" *(God's Truth,* pp. 69,70).

Islip Collyer

"'Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up' (1 Cor. 8:1). [Paul] was not condemning knowledge, but simply stating a truth. Knowledge of the right kind is excellent, but even that may tend to inflate the individual who possesses it. Men may be puffed up even by their knowledge of the Scriptures, especially if their reading has been ill-balanced. Much charity is needed to guard against this evil and to make knowledge lead to edification. There are people who will say that it is only the dangerous 'little knowledge' that puffs men up, while those who have studied deeply are truly humble and never boast. This thought has been stated often, but it is not true. Indeed it would be difficult to define the words of such a saying. All the knowledge of mankind is only little. The most ignorant and the most cultured are only separated by a few degrees. It is quite true that intelligent people perceive the ugliness and folly of blatant boasting and so if they boast they do it more skilfully. Or it is possible for a man to feel himself so superior to the common run of humanity that he finds no pleasure in the admiration of the multitude. His detachment is a form of pride, and he may fall into the worst of errors by being puffed up against God" *(Principles and Proverbs,* pp. 128,129).

"To summarize the difference between ancient and modern doubt we may suggest that in olden times men saw superhuman beings in every shadow, and so in time of trial, they supposed that their God was only one of many. In modern times men seek a prosaic and ordinary explanation for everything, and so in times of trial even God is explained away" *(The Guiding Light,* p. 31).

Comments related to the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10):

"The Samaritans were neighbors in the most literal sense, but as for loving them, that seemed impossible. Christ loved them and caused his disciples to marvel at the manner in which he spoke to the woman at Jacob's well and afterwards to others who came out to hear him. The Jews as a whole almost made it a part of their religion to hate the Samaritans, and if they were able to analyze their own feelings, they would probably have to admit that the hatred was directly traceable to the fact of their being such near neighbors. This is a common weakness of poor human nature. Those who are near but not quite with us arouse more bitterness of feelings than complete strangers. Then when such an evil feeling has once been started, the deceitful heart begins to build up fancies to justify the hatred, thus further traducing those who have been already wronged" *(The Guiding Light,* p. 66).

G.V. Growcott

"The human mind and body are incredibly marvelous creations of wisdom and capability. We do not use one hundredth of our potential. It is probably safe to say we do not use one thousandth of our potential. What the body can be trained to do in the lines of acrobatics and balance would be incredible if it were not proved by the accomplishments of some, as multiple somersaults in the air from a narrow bar,

landing in perfect balance on the bar again. And as to the mind, some have memorized the whole Bible. Men spend a lifetime of effort and practice, and accomplish unbelievable marvels, all for a corruptible crown… What effort are WE making to obtain an incorruptible crown? Do we imagine the riches of the universe will be just handed to us on a platter? Why us, and no one else? What is so special about us? And yet we profess to be in the 'race' for life — 'striving' toward the mark? Earnestly preparing ourselves to the best of our ability for eternity with God. But we tend to just drift through life in ease and comfort, and unprogrammed, day-to-day, meandering self-pleasing? Absurdly assuming that because we happen to be fortunate enough to have 'learned the Truth' in its bare essentials, and have gone through the motions of baptism, and show up at some of the meetings, we thereby are guaranteed eternity, while the 'heathen' world perishes. What do we think we are given seventy years preparation time for? Just to play and accumulate and please ourselves? What unutterable, tragic folly! As we sow, so shall we reap: God is not mocked."

" 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35). Be big. Most people are small: small-minded; small-hearted; small-thoughted. The children of God are called on to make the supreme effort to grow up from mankind's natural, infantile, self-centered smallness. Think eternity, not peanuts. Devote your life to giving, not getting. The getting will come in God's good time — eternally: 'heaped up, pressed down, shaken together, running over' — divine good measure. Relax into goodness and largeness of heart. Let the little minds burn themselves out in anxious seeking and fear of being shortchanged. Have no fear that you are going to lose something unless you constantly consider your self-interest and fret about your fair share. You cannot possibly lose if you are in track with God."

Ron Abel

"Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king" (Matt. 2:1).

"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem" (Luke 2:4).

"The Problem: Matthew indicates that Mary and Joseph lived at Bethlehem, but Luke says that they returned to Bethlehem for the census. Therefore, it is argued, there is an apparent discrepancy.

"The Solution:

1. Jesus' birth in Bethlehem is no more proof that his parents lived there, than the statement that 'I was born at sea' implies that my parents lived in a ship.
2. A reading of Luke 2:1-7 shows that, while his parents were at Bethlehem for the census, Jesus was born. But Mary had lived at Nazareth in Galilee before the journey to Bethlehem (Luke 1:26,27)."

Robert Roberts

Speaking of the trials of Joseph (Gen. 37), RR writes that Joseph, as type of Jesus, needed to suffer chastisement:

"Joseph was innocent and excellent, but Joseph was young and untried, and God had a great purpose with him that required that he should be matured and perfected in character as men only can be perfected — in the school of adversity. Joseph had to be fitted for exaltation and the exercise of power, and therefore Joseph had to suffer for Joseph's own good and for the bringing about of a great result to the whole house of Israel. Joseph was allowed to become the object of his brethren's successful hatred. Therefore, if sympathy sheds a tear, the understanding admires, while Joseph is bound by unfeeling brethren, and in spite of his frantic entreaties, lowered into a pit where death appears inevitable, both in his own estimation and that of his brothers.

"No greater evil short of death could befall a human being than that which thus came to Joseph. A spectator on the spot would have said it was evil in which it was not possible to imagine any good purpose. There was no explanation of it. Joseph was not permitted to know the meaning. He could not have understood if told. It would have frustrated the object for him to know.

"Let us recollect this when in any matter similarly situated. Circumstances may be dark; calamity unmixed; the situation such that enemies may say, 'There is no help for him in God'; yet God may be at the bottom of all the trouble for purposes of goodness which the future alone will reveal. The only policy is, in all circumstances, to commit ourselves to the keeping of our Creator in faith and well-doing: 'Commit thy way unto the Lord; and trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday'" *(Ways of Providence,* p. 87).

Len Richardson

"Our preaching efforts in Basingstoke at least made the name Christadelphian known. We cannot always measure the effects of our witness in the number of converts, for there is a wider aspect to our work. 'Ye are the salt of the earth,' said our Lord and, as grains of salt in an alien environment, we have the responsibility of trying to influence our little bit of the world with the ideas and ideals of Jesus Christ, which alone can save it from putrefaction.

"So it was a great delight to me on one occasion, when we were holding some lectures in the Town Hall there, to learn that a car-load of supporters from the Reading ecclesia had [started out] without noting the address of the meetings. It was a dark winter's night and as they entered Basingstoke they realised that they had no idea where to go, so stopped and asked somebody if they could tell them where the Christadelphians were having their meeting.

"The stranger replied, apparently, 'Oh, you mean Mr. Richardson's meeting — it's in the Town Hall.' It was heartening to know that to a total stranger in the dark 'Richardson' and 'Christadelphian' were synonymous terms.

"When they told me, I felt a little like Gideon must have felt when he heard the Midianite soldiers talking about him (Judg. 7:13) as he lay on his belly listening outside their tents in the dead of night. 'And when he heard it, he worshipped,' the record says. What a simple statement, yet how profound. 'He worshipped…' He did not need to be in a place of worship, or a posture of prayer. There he was, with his servant, doing a night time reconnaissance, eavesdropping on the enemy; but what he heard made him so thankful that 'he worshipped.' 'Thank you, Lord, for letting me hear such encouraging news from the very camp of the enemy…'" *(Sixty Years A Christadelphian,* pp. 49,50).

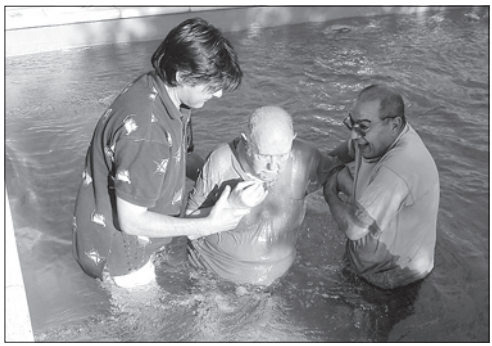
Read the Scriptures daily

"Salvation depends upon the assimilation to the mind of the divine ideas, principles, and affections exhibited in the Scriptures. This process commences with a belief of the gospel, but it is by no means completed thereby; it takes a lifetime for its scope, and untiring diligence for its accomplishment. The mind is naturally alien from God and all His ideas (Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14), and cannot be brought at once to the Divine likeness. This is a work of slow development, and can only be achieved by the industrious application of the individual to the means which God has given for the purpose, viz., the expression of His mind in the Scriptures of truth. Spiritual-mindedness, or a state of mind in accordance with the mind of the Spirit as displayed in these writings, can only grow within a man by daily intercourse with that mind, there unfolded. Away from this, the mind will revert to its original emptiness. The infallible advice then to every man and woman anxious about their salvation is -- read the Scriptures daily. It is only in proportion as this is done, that success may be looked for. The man who sows sparingly in this respect will only reap sparingly" (Robert Roberts, *Introduction to the Bible Companion*).

Bible Mission News

Argentina

On November 21, 2006, Dr. Francisco Gilardoni was baptised into Christ in Córdoba, Argentina. Our new brother is now a part of the small ecclesia in Córdoba who witnessed his baptism and received him into fellowship on behalf of their brethren throughout the world.



Bre. Ruben Barbosa, Francisco Gilardoni, and Hugo Petrilli.

Bro. Francisco's baptism is a *"witness"* to the power of God's word to change lives at any stage. At 88 years of age, after a life as a judge in the Argentine judiciary, a teacher of law, and a regular reader of the Bible, he was *"arrested"* by the clarity of the Truth as presented to him through a series of correspondence courses, and he was *"convicted"* by its message with the help of regular classes with Bro. Hugo Petrilli. His public *"testimony"* was frank and firm, leading to the *"sentence"*: "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life though Jesus Christ our Lord."

The baptism served as a further witness to the small group of friends in Córdoba who came along to the appropriately named King David Hotel in the city centre to hear talks based on "The Hope of Israel".

Robert Alderson

"Witness", "arrested", "convicted", "testimony", "sentenced"! Powerful, evocative language of the courtroom — echoed more than once in the New Testament.

*"Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. [Or, '**Is** it God — the One who declares righteous?']… Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus who died… was raised to life… and intercedes for us [Or, again, '**Is** it Christ Jesus — the one who died, was raised, and intercedes… for us?']" (Rom. 8:33,34).*

The last two sentences, translated as questions, beg for answers in the negative, and emphasize the passage's main point.

To read the verses this way is to make a wonderful discovery: in the passage that seemingly pictures the judgment as a courtroom scene, the "accused" finds, to his eternal joy, that "there is no condemnation" for those who are truly in Christ (vv. 1,4). Rather, the Ones who might be expected to act as "judge" and "prosecuting attorney" are in fact on his side! Christ is the "Advocate" (1 John 2:1) — the "Counselor", the one who "stands alongside" him, the defense attorney who has in fact done all that can possibly be done to effect his acquittal and release. And the Father, who might be expected to "condemn" the admitted sinner, is — amazingly — the One who has arranged all things (including the death of His beloved Son) so as to bring about the "not guilty" verdict. "Not guilty", by reason of the mercy of God Himself, demonstrated in His Son. "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Rom. 8:31,32).

The Córdoba Ecclesia with their newest member, Bro. Francisco.

*Though we will all stand before that bench in that courtroom one day, the question must be asked: who **will** "condemn" us? Will there be a "prosecuting attorney" ready to produce evidence to condemn us? No! Instead, Christ, who might have filled that role, will be "interceding" for them. There **is** no prosecuting attorney; look, that seat is empty! And the one who might have sat there has instead taken over the role of defense attorney. Now he is pleading, to a sympathetic Judge (his own Father!) — the mitigating circumstances that negate the sins of the "defendant". Let's read the transcript of that trial; here's his final appeal:*

"Your Honor, whatever these men or women did or did not do that fell short of Your glory, they believed in You through Me. In that faith they cast themselves upon Your mercy, and trusted in Your promises. They followed my example, and they did what they could, given the limitations of the nature they possessed, and the body of weakness in which they lived. Now, Father, they lean upon me for what they could not do. I personally vouch for their love, and their sincerity. They are part of our family too! For my sake, O LORD, and for the glory of Your Holy Name, in Your great mercy and Your everlasting love, declare these — my brothers and sisters — to be, ever and always, Your sons and daughters! And, dear Father, declare them 'righteous' for my sake!"

George

Bolivia

The four-member ecclesia in La Paz, Bolivia, was established in February 2006. The two sisters have moved to other countries for various reasons, but do plan on returning to Bolivia. After the departure of the resident missionaries, Bro. Steve and Sis. Sally Jefferies, in August, the two brethren (Martin Mostacedo and Freddie Monrroy) have continued to hold weekly studies and breaking of bread services. They have received study material and exhortations from the Jefferies and Bro. Frank Woodcock (of Canada), on a weekly basis.

Bre. Victor Hugo Fernandez Montaño, Martin Mostacedo, and Freddie Monrroy.

One of the many encouraging features is that about eight friends, who began attending during 2005, continue to support most ecclesial activities, even though there is no missionary presence in Bolivia at this present time. The impact of the Truth on these brothers' lives resulted in the baptism of Victor Hugo Fernandez Montaño on Sunday, November 12. Victor has been preparing for his interview for some time, and he gave a good confession of his faith. All of his family, several close friends, and his brothers in Christ were present to witness his baptism — 16 in total.

During the weekend of the baptism, several special lectures were given which received good support by the regular attendees and a couple of new contacts. The talks were about the hope of Israel, the hope of the Resurrection, and Jerusalem as the burdensome stone. We emphasized that we must be "in Christ" in order to share in God's promises.

God continues to open "the door of faith unto the Gentiles" in many parts of the world in these last days.

Robert Alderson and Don Luff

Chile

For the third time in 2006, approximately 800 contacts were invited to special lectures in Santiago, Chile. About 25 contacts attended the five talks given on Saturday, November 18, and about 15 attended the two lectures on the Sunday afternoon. The general themes were related to the hope of Israel, the divine solution to the problems in the Middle East, God's Name, the Spirit of God, and the importance of baptism.

A number of the visitors have been attending these weekend lecture series for a few years and provide a "lively" atmosphere during the course of the day. A few of these visitors have been asking us when we are going to have a meeting place in Santiago, so that they can attend regular studies.

Sis. Gisella Pintado, Bre. Hugo Petrilli, Richard Castillo, Don Luff, and Bernardo Soto. (Gisella's son Jeremy is in front.)

Bre. Robert Alderson (New Zealand) and Don Luff (Canada), with the support of Bro. Hugo Petrilli (Argentina), gave the weekend series of lectures. They also enjoyed a breaking of bread service with Sis. Gisella Pintado and Bre. Bernardo Soto and Richard Castillo.

We pray that God will bless these efforts with the workers and the funding in order to maintain a consistent presence in this capital city of Chile.

Robert Alderson and Don Luff

"www.thisisyourbible.com" is looking for help

The CBM and CBMA preaching website is generating a lot of interest. The site has been "live" for just under a year now and has attracted over 720 students located in many different countries.

We have tutors in 12 countries but are receiving communications from countries where we do not have tutors. We feel it is good for students to have a tutor who lives in the same country, or is of the same nationality as the student. This appeal is for brethren and sisters to sign up as tutors on the site. In particular we are looking for tutors in South Africa.

Potential tutors can register online by visiting the website and clicking on ***[tutors]*** in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen, or simply by sending an e-mail to Bro. Mike LeDuke at mduke@gto.net or Bro. Peter Forbes at peter@forbes31.freeserve.co.uk

These brothers will be able to answer any questions you might have about the website or becoming a tutor.

Bre. Mike LeDuke and Peter Forbes

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

for tax ID numbers please contact the editor

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brothers' Weekend: A Time to Heal and a Time to Build

There is no doubt that the pressure and pace of life is greater now than a generation ago. Suddenly in the 1990s, because of the wonders of modern technology, our personal time became our employer's time. It became an age when it was as easy to work at home as in the office. On top of that, for brethren, there were still the family and ecclesial responsibilities. And as if that were not enough, during the past ten years or so, the influence of all media have grown enormously. The "in your face" seductive (and often explicit) messages can so quickly undermine the faith and holiness of any saint, young or old!

On Friday evening, October 27, 2006, forty brethren from as far away as England and the western United States gathered for the first eastern Brothers' Weekend. The occasion began with a welcome and the daily Bible readings. Then on Saturday there were four sessions, each opened by a presentation and followed by group discussions. During the day there was plenty of time for fellowship: the building of friendships, sharing of prayers, and personal discussion were part of this lovely day. Even the very wet, snowy weather did not dampen the enjoyment of the weekend. Sunday included a fifth session, and a breaking of bread.

The entire occasion was one where the pressures of life, as outlined above, were discussed in an atmosphere of godly love and trust.

Based on the life of David, the topics included:

1. Building friendship among brethren (led by Bre. Gary Cousens and Martin Webster)
2. Balancing family, the ecclesia and work (led by Bro. Matthew Trowell)
3. Sexuality and self-control (led by Bro. Don Styles)
4. Competition (led by Bro. Mike LeDuke)
5. Leadership (led by Bro. David Lloyd)
6. Mentoring (the memorial service exhortation, by Bro. Don Styles)

Each of the first five sessions was allocated 75 minutes, for the initial presentation and group discussion. It was no surprise that each session proved to be too short!

Everyone left after lunch on Sunday, feeling a little stronger for the battle. Each greatly appreciated the friendships they had built, and the trust that had grown among brothers. Each gave thanks to our Heavenly Father for the wonder of His grace.

Brothers, do mark in your calendar November 9-11, 2007: the next eastern Brothers' Weekend. Plan to join us for what, God willing, will be a time to heal and a time to build.

Nathan Badger, Gary Cousens, Steve McKay, Joe Sparacino, Martin Webster

News & Notices

DETROIT (LIVONIA), MI

Sis. Audrey Small and Bro. Randy Schultz have transferred their membership from the Detroit (Milford Road) Ecclesia, and Bro. Ken and Sis. Becky Moss from the Ann Arbor Ecclesia. Sis. Christy Michaels, and Bro. Dave and Sis. Shawn Bell have transferred their membership to the Detroit (Milford Road) Ecclesia; and Sis. Cheryl Cseke has transferred her membership to the Ann Arbor ecclesia. We commend these brethren and sisters to the care of their respective new ecclesias.

We rejoiced in the baptism of MICHAEL BELL on May 31, 2006.

Jeffrey P. Adams

DOHA, QATAR

We are pleased to have with us Bro. Ben and Sis. Elissa Brinkerhoff (San Diego, CA). We pray their efforts to work in the mission field where required will bring fruit. We are also happy to have had Bro. Tim Galbraith (Hyderabad, India) visit our ecclesia and give us words of exhortation and Bible study classes.

Steve Hracs

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We are happy to have had the following visitors in the past few weeks: the brethren and sisters of the Union, NJ, Ecclesia; Bro. Marcel and Sis. Dawn Hinds (South Ozone Park, Queens, NY); Bro. Tom and Sis. Sally Davis (Pomona, CA); and Sis. Alisa Markwith (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON).

We regret to announce our sister, Naomi Bahr, sister of Bro. Alvin Brittle and mother of Bro. Jim Bahr, has fallen asleep in Christ. Sis. Naomi has been a steadfast member of the Echo Lake Ecclesia for some thirty years. She will be missed by all.

Jonathan Link

KITCHENER-WATERLOO, ON

We thank the following visiting brethren for their ministrations to us in the gospel in the past months: Colin Badger, John Selway, Ted Hodge, Jr., Bill Mannell, and Dev Ramcharan. We also thank many other brethren and sisters, who have visited recently, for their support and fellowship. We continue to welcome into our midst, on a regular basis, several young brethren and sisters who have been attending university here over the last several months.

We are happy to report that four new members have joined us over the last few months. In July, Bro. Nathan Badger transferred from the Hamilton (MacNab) Ecclesia. In September, Sis. Donna Jennings transferred from the Simi Hills, CA, Ecclesia. Also in September, Bro. Peter and Sis. Dae Ventresca joined our meeting and the Central Fellowship. We pray that our association together with our new brethren and sisters will be edifying to us all as we wait together for our Lord to return.

Unfortunately, we are sad to report that in September Bro. Peter and Sis. Becky Miles left our ecclesia, due to Sis. Becky's health. We understand they will be attending the Hansworth, UK, Ecclesia but pray that conditions will permit them to return to us again soon.

In the spring, our ecclesia was conducting two follow-up classes, but this has been reduced to one this fall. Five interested contacts are attending a class on the Acts. We pray that God will give the increase as we try to convey to them

the impact the Apostles' Doctrine had on the Roman world, and the enthusiasm with which they preached the gospel message. We are trying as much as possible to make the class a reading and discussion class, with no special aids except the Bible before us, so that our contacts get right into the word of God.

We tried something new in proclamation this past summer. Two of our sisters organized a vacation Bible school for children in the neighborhood of our rented hall. Twelve children attended the week-long event, and one has continued to come to our Sunday school from that effort. We thank Sisters Cheryl Pearce and Becky Miles for their substantial effort.

Jim Robinson

LA PAZ, BOLIVIA

We are pleased to report that after a good confession of his faith, VICTOR HUGO FERNANDEZ MONTANO was baptized in La Paz on Sunday, November 12, 2006. He started attending during early 2005 and had been preparing for his interview for some time. His immediate family, several close friends, and his brothers in Christ were present to witness his baptism, 16 in total.

We do also thank Sis. Joanne Hulme and Sis. Judith Norcross (Sale, UK), and Sis. Zoe Norcross (Liverpool, UK) for their visit to the ecclesia in La Paz between November 5-12. Their attendance and support was greatly appreciated by the members and regular attendees.

The young ecclesia is grateful for the fellowship it has experienced from the worldwide brotherhood this year through visits, cards, letters and e-mails.

Don Luff

LARGO, FL

We very much thank our Bro. Matt Drywood (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON) for his wonderful presentation of "Developments in Apostasy" during our recent study weekend hosted by the Sarasota and Largo ecclesias in November. We appreciate his hard work and enjoyed visiting with him, his sister-wife Stephanie, and their two children, Cassia and Joel. The study was attended by about 80 brethren, friends and young people from the Sarasota, Orlando, and Largo ecclesias. We thank all for their participation and support.

We are delighted to report the baptism of one of our "How to Read the Bible" scholars, JAN REESE, in August 2006. Sis. Jan attended the first seminar and the follow-up seminar, and was a faithful attendee at memorial services and other ecclesial functions prior to answering God's call and requesting baptism. We welcome Sis. Jan and pray she has a most productive walk in the truth. We are also very happy to receive Bro. Bill Rollason by transfer from the Knowle and Dorridge, UK, Ecclesia. He has been a long-time and most helpful visitor to our ecclesia and we welcome his fellowship. We also welcome by transfer Bro. Mark and Sis. Sharon Flannagan from the Canton, OH, Ecclesia. We look forward to loving and rewarding fellowship with all our new members.

We have been blessed with the following visitors since our last reporting: Bro. Jared and Sis. Esther Keyes and their children (Ann Arbor, MI); Bro. George and Sis. Joy Butler (The Villages, FL); and Bro. Troy and Sis. Annette Haltom (Grand Rapids, MI). We also wish to thank Bro. Troy for his excellent exhortation on Esther, explaining how the book relates to our present-day lives in the truth.

Remember to bring your new green hymnal when visiting. Inquiries may be forwarded to Recording Bro. Walt Dodrill at waltdodrill@msn.com — or

you may call at 727-528-1197 or leave a message at 727-410-0896.

Walt Dodrill

MANITOULIN ISLAND, ON

We have been very blessed this past year with all of the visiting brethren and sisters we had at Manitoulin Island, ON.

We would like to thank Bro. Mike LeDuke for speaking to the young people this past March at our Annual Young People's Weekend. His invigorating classes on the epistles of Peter were truly beneficial for the older members as well as the CYC members. We would also like to thank the young people who traveled from Southern Ontario and Michigan to join us. Bro. Ken Styles is scheduled to be the speaker for the March 10-11, 2007, Young People's Weekend.

Bro. Ron Kidd spoke at our Spring Study Day in early May. Bro. Frank Abel presented a special lecture on August 27 on the "Trinity." Bro. Mike Moore led the classes at the Fall Study Day. Bro. Dave Noble is tentatively scheduled to speak at our spring study day on April 28, 2007. The topic is "A Lamb without Blemish".

We appreciate any effort that is put forward to preach to the community on Manitoulin Island, as we are remote from other ecclesias.

Our ecclesia was formed over 100 years ago. We have met in homes, in rented buildings, and at the Bible camp. We are now actively pursuing a meeting hall that has been made available with the closure of a funeral home.

Joe Cooper

NEW WESTMINSTER, BC

Our fraternal gathering, for 2007 only, has been brought forward one week from our usual Easter weekend, and is planned for Saturday, March 31, and Sunday, April 1, 2007. We look forward to having Bro. Steven Hornhardt, of Australia, to lead the sessions. Further details will be announced.

Art Bull

SUSSEX, NB

Our Sis. Georgina (Jean) McCann fell asleep in March. Sis. Jean was a vibrant sister who lived in isolation in Sydney, NS. She met with us whenever she could. Sis. Jean was baptized in Toronto at the Cosburn Ecclesia in August 1978. We look forward to the day of reuniting at our Lord's return.

In August many of our ecclesia enjoyed participating with the Bedford (Halifax), NS, Campaign. Fellowship was enjoyed with our brethren and sisters there. We pray for God's richest blessing on their continued work in His vineyard.

Bro. Dale Crawford and family of Bedford, NS, visited in September; we thank Bro. Dale for his exhortation.

October brought our annual Thanksgiving Fraternal Gathering. Bro. Peter Edwards (Derby, UK) shared his study of "Philippians — Letter of Joy". In an isolated area, such weekends as these are extremely strengthening. Our visiting brethren and sisters included Dave and Mary Green (Edmonton, AB); George and Ruth Jackson (Toronto East, ON); Jenny Baines (Cambridge ON); Ken Easson, Phil Camplin, Michael and Ruth Carr, and Dale Crawford (Bedford, NS); Jim and Katie Boyko, Andrew and Louise Taberner (Boston, MA); John and Mary Martin, and Tom Newman with his wife, Angela (Cranston, RI). On the Friday of the same weekend, we held our annual CYC Harvest Festival. It was lots of fun, and fellowship was enjoyed by all.

We are currently preparing for an outreach effort in a local community

where interest has been cultivated. We pray for God's richest blessing and direction on our efforts.

Please amend the ecclesial mailing address for the undersigned as follows: P.O. Box 4526, Sussex, NB, E4E 5L6.

Brad Goodwin

VICTORIA, BC

We are very pleased to report the baptisms of MATTHEW NEVILLE on April 16, 2006, DREW RALPH on May 7, 2006, and ANDREW DIXON on November 12, 2006. We pray for our Father's blessing on our three new brethren.

With sadness we report that Sis. Nancy Evans fell asleep in Christ February 8. Her love of God's word, and her quiet, cheerful disposition will be missed and long remembered. Our prayers are with her husband, Bro. John Evans, and his family. Although we will miss our sister, we know that she died in hope and now sleeps until resurrection day.

We have been blessed with the birth of two healthy babies for which we are very thankful: Natalie Robinson, born on March 1 to Bro. Stephen and Sis. Kristy Robinson, and Josiah Lawrence, born on March 17 to Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Beth Lawrence.

By way of transfer we commended Sis. Nyssa Hracs to the Saanich Peninsula Ecclesia.

We are very happy to announce the marriage of Bro. Mark Higgs and Sis. Kayla Bennett on October 14. We pray that they will be richly blessed in their life together.

We thank Bro. Ian Dangerfield (Aberfoyle Park, Aust.) for speaking at our Fraternal Gathering in September; Bro. Richard Morgan (Saanich Peninsula, BC) for speaking at our CYC conference in April; Bro. Wayne Coutu (Orangeville, ON) for speaking at our March study weekend; and Bro. Stephen Snobelen for speaking at our October study weekend.

We also thank the following brethren for their talks: Dan Orsetti, and Phil Snobelen (Vancouver, BC); Peter King (Worcester, UK); and Richard Morgan (Saanich Peninsula, BC).

We are planning a study weekend for March 10-11, 2007. The speaker is due to be Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA), speaking on "Road to Atonement". We are also planning a study weekend with Bro. Stephen Hornhardt on April 14-15, 2007 — the subject for this weekend is undetermined as of this date.

We thank Truth Corps for their assistance with the joint Saanich Peninsula and Victoria Ecclesias' Bible exhibition, special lectures and other programs last summer,which were led by the Saanich Peninsula Ecclesia.

Art Hibbs

WASHINGTON, DC

With great delight we announce the baptism on September 17, 2006, of another of our Sunday school scholars, DEBORAH KELLETT, youngest daughter of the undersigned. Along with her mother, Sis. Millie Danns, we pray our Father's good blessing on Sis. Deborah's journey to His kingdom

We have just completed another "Learn to Read the Bible Effectively" seminar, which yielded two earnest applicants for follow-up classes.

Our Family Weekend at Camp Hashawha, November 24-26, 2006, studied

"The Amazing Mirrors of God: Reflections of God Manifestation" as presented by Bro. Stan Isbell (North Houston, TX). Mid-November saw Bro. Leen Ritmeyer (Brighton, Aust.) lead our Bible class pictorially through the Temple Mount and its environs. Other visiting brethren and sisters have been: Clive Martin (South Birmingham, UK); Andrew Perry (Sunderland, UK); Derek and Pat Bartle, Mark and Vania Higgs, Becky Higgs, and Stephanie Washington (Toronto East, ON); Tom Colby (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON); Paul and Erin Sparacino, Bill Perry and newlyweds, Jonathan and Katie Perry (Detroit Milford Road, MI); Bob and Sue Jarvela (Ann Arbor, MI); and Erlinda Muscat (Detroit Livonia, MI); Clive and Christine and Gideon Drepaul, Terry Lackwood, Cosmon Gordon, Nikki Baynes and Essie Smith (Brooklyn, NY); Marcus Tarrant and D.J. Perry (Manhattan, NY); David and Karen Anderson, Jeff and Ruth Jensen, and Kevin and Julie Fadely (Shenandoah Valley, VA); Jordan Canady (James River, VA); Adam Canady (Petersburg, VA); David and Susan Link (Echo Lake, NJ); Nancy Adams (Moorestown, NJ); Bill, Jr., Carol and Ezra Link, and John Gishel (Baltimore, MD); Millie Danns (Atlanta, GA); as well as Connie Walsh, Audrey Small, Priscilla Kellett and Kristina Kemp.

For their words of exhortation, we thank Bre. Anderson, J. Canady, Gischel, Higgs, Martin and Ritmeyer.

Cornelius Kellet

"To give my life for Christ appears glorious. To pour myself out for others… to pay the ultimate price of martyrdom — 'I'll do it. I'm ready, Lord.'

"We think giving our all to the Lord is like taking a $1,000 bill and laying it on the table — 'Here's my life, Lord. I'm giving it all.' But the reality for most of us is that he sends us to the bank and has us cash in the $1,000 for quarters. We go through life putting out 25 cents here and 50 cents there. Listen to the neighbor kid's troubles instead of saying, 'Get lost.' Go to a committee meeting. Give a cup of water to a shaky old man in a nursing home.

"Usually giving our life to Christ isn't glorious. It's done in all those little acts of love, 25 cents at a time. It would be easy to go out in a flash of glory; it's harder to live the Christian life little by little over the long haul"

(F. Craddock)

Minute Meditation

Temptation

Someone once said, "I can resist everything in the world except temptation."

Why do we give in to temptations when we know it is a mistake? The reason temptations are so difficult to resist is that they are part of our nature and they come from inside us. James writes, "Everyone is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires." Giving in to temptation leads to sin, and the final result is death. No wonder that, in the Lord's prayer, Jesus taught us to ask God not to lead us into temptation!

People have always found ways to be tempted to do wrong, but nowadays there are temptations everywhere around us. Our world is full of media that cater to the carnal mind because people like it. It becomes increasingly more difficult to resist evil when it is commonly accepted as normal in our society. We can feel overwhelmed by the troubles of daily living, dealing with frail, mortal bodies, and living in such a corrupt world that constantly tries to entice us to do evil.

We know that Jesus was tempted in every way as we are, and that he had to deal with the same mortal weaknesses we feel. Looking at how he resisted temptation can help us to do so also. When Jesus faced his greatest temptation, he took his disciples off to a quiet place to pray and told them, "Pray that you do not enter into temptation." Then he prayed earnestly, turning to God in prayer for help because he felt such an overwhelming desire to escape the coming trial.

Sadly, Christ's disciples fell asleep when he most needed them. Later they forsook him and fled. He would endure the trials, scourging, and crucifixion, his time of greatest need, without his closest friends. Because of his fervent prayers in Gethsemane, he was strengthened by God and accomplished his mission. At times we may feel abandoned by those we rely on for support, but we need to continue to trust in God. God will never leave us or forsake us. When we feel overwhelmed, we need to recall that Paul tells us there is no temptation that has taken hold of us except such as is common to men. But God is faithful, who will not allow us to be tempted beyond that which we are able to bear, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, so that we may be able to bear it.

When we are being tempted, it is wonderful to be able to turn to others who can encourage us, pray with us, and help us resist the temptation. We need to make sure never to leave someone in need, as the disciples left Christ. When Paul was really discouraged, God comforted him — not with a miracle — but

with a fellow worker. Paul explains, "For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn — conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus."

Just as Paul was comforted by the support of Titus, we should turn to our trusted brothers and sisters to help us when we are cast down and discouraged. We need to be conscious of the needs of others, and to encourage them in their time of need. Sometimes just being there is helpful; it is not always necessary to have something to say. Quietly listening to problems, and supplying a comforting touch or thoughtful support by helping with daily tasks, or simply being a companion during a difficult time — these are all ways to help.

How blessed we are to have a worldwide family of believers who care for each other. Paul describes how warmly his brothers and sisters in Galatia received him: "And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." They did everything they could for Paul when he needed them, and we need to follow their example.

Never give up or give in to temptation. Pray to God for the strength to resist, and He will help us. May the blessing James describes be ours: "Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him."

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

DECEMBER

29-Jan. 1 Cranston, RI New Year's Study Weekend. Bro. Jim Styles (Livonia, MI): CYC class on Friday; Study day on Saturday: "God's Wonderful Plan of Redemption"; Sunday: New Year's Eve dinner and program: "Lessons from Nature in Proverbs". Monday: outdoor activities. Contract Bro. John A. Martin 401-467-4060 jamsr818@msn.com

JANUARY

27 San Diego County, CA Annual Study Day. Bro. Jonathan Bowen (Brantford, ON): "The Vision Tarrieth Not". 9:30 am, ecclesial hall. Contact Bro. Kent Ellis ellisk@san.rr.com 858-674-5645

FEBRUARY

3,4 Camp Ladore Young people's gathering. Bro. James DiLiberto: "Spiritual Welfare: Spirit vs. Flesh". Contact Bro. Ryan Mutter rmutte1@umbc.edu 202-437-0641

17,18 Saanich Peninsula, BC Fraternal gathering. Bro. John Mannell (Toronto West, ON): "Behaviour in the House of God: A Study of 1 Timothy". Contact Bro. Richard Morgan richest@telus.net

MARCH

3 Worcester, MA Sisters' study day: "Women at the Well". Contact Sis. Beth MacAdams 978-870-0492 beth.macadams@gmail.com or Sis. Linda Reding 508-769-9003 lreding@charter.net

10,11 Victoria, BC Study weekend. Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "Road to Atonement". Contact Sis. Pat Williamson 250-721-4938 pwilliamson@telus.net

24 Toronto East Ecclesia study day. Saturday 1 to 6 pm. Bro. Jim Styles (Livonia, MI): three talks plus dinner. Contact Bro. David Willoughby 905-427-3756

31-April 1 New Westminster, BC Fraternal gathering. Bro. Steven Hornhardt (Australia). Details to follow.

APRIL

6-8 Wichita Falls, TX Annual Spring Gathering. Texas Christadelphian Camp and Conference Center, Freestone, TX (near Buffalo, TX). Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA). Contact Bre. Larry Beutel 940-592-9418 or John Clubb jclubb4081@aol.com

6-9 Kilcoy, Guyana Bible School. Bre. Ted Hodge and Clive Drepaul. The school will incorporate a preaching campaign, extending to April 12. Contact Bro. Ted Sleeper tsleeper@rcn.com

7-14 Florida Bible School, Bradenton, FL. Bre. Jeff Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA), Tec Morgan (UK), John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). Contact Bro. Norm Luff 579-754-1251 normluff@yahoo.ca. Registration Sis. Diane Jennings 727-528-1886 mikejenn@ffn.com

14,15 Richmond, VA Petersburg Fraternal Gathering, Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON). Contact Bro. Dave Kerr gr8eats@comcast.net 804-360-5299

28 Washington, DC Study Day. Bro. Mark Vincent (Stirling, UK). Contact Bro. Bob Kling rkling@computer.org

29 Washington, DC Baltimore/Washington Gathering. Bro. Mark Vincent (Stirling, UK). Contact Bro. Bob Kling rkling@computer.org

MAY

11-13 Nanaimo, BC Vancouver Island Sisters' Weekend, Beach Acres Resort, Parksville, Vancouver Island, BC. Sis. Yvonne Rosenau (Nanaimo, BC): "My Strength is Made Perfect in Weakness". Contact Sis. Beth Dangerfield, 1155 Ranger Place, Victoria, BC V8X 3P5 gdanger@shaw.ca 250-479-8422

26,27 Sussex, NB Study Weekend. Bro. George Jackson (Toronto East, ON): "God's Striking Revelation of His Son: A Study in Hebrews". Contact Bro. Brad Goodwin 506-433-6681 braddeb@nb.sympatico.ca

JUNE

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

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
P.O. Box 530696 • Livonia, MI 48153-0696
Periodicals Postage Paid at San Dimas, California

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

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

JULY

8-14 Southwest Bible School, Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. Bro. Tec Morgan (Birmingham, UK): "Romans: The Gospel of Salvation"; Bro. Nigel Patterson (Newquay, UK): "David: From Sheepfold to Palace"; Bro. David Styles (Shelburne, ON): "The Ecclesia of the Living God: The Pillar and Ground of the Truth". Contact Bro Joe Hill, 11110 South Bay Lane, Austin, TX 78739-1580; joehill@io.com www.planofgod.org

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

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

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 Wisnieswski (Ontario, Canada). kidscampcalifornia.com or Bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 70 **February, 2007** **No. 2**

IFC — From the Editor **54**
Editorial — Milk and Butter, Nose and Blood **55**
Exhortation — Lessons from Jonah, *Adam Booker* **60**
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (2) How and Why the Letter Came to be so Called, *Tom Barling* **63**
Bible Study — Rightly Dividing the Word: (1) Using the Bible with Reverent Care, *Bob Green* **66**
Bible Study — Visions of the Third Heaven, *Jim Dillingham* **70**
Reflection — Bro. Bill Minor ("Uncle Jay") **74**
Music in Worship — The Harp, *Bob Burr* **77**
Music in Worship — "Hark, Ten Thousand Thousand Voices" **79**
Current Events — A New Holocaust Archive **80**
Current Events — Muslim "Trash" is Israeli "Treasure" **83**
Signs of the Times — The Parable of the Fig Tree, *Jim Robinson* **85**
Bible Mission News — Latin American Activities: 2006 in Review **91**
Letter — "Crowned with glory and honor" **92**
News & Notices **94**
Minute Meditation — We Must Decide, *Robert J. Lloyd* **100**
Coming Events **102**

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060) is published monthly by The Christadelphian Tidings, 42076 Hartford Dr., Canton, MI 48187-3360. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID at San Dimas, California. POSTMASTER: Address Service Requested at The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696.

The Tidings Publishing Corporation: Joe Hill (Chairman), John C. Bilello, Peter A. Bilello, Steve Cheetham, Ken Curry, Clive Drepaul, Mark Giordano, Tony Isaacs, Ted Sleeper, Phil Snobelen, Ken Sommerville, and Jeff Wallace.

The Tidings is published on the 25th of the preceding month. Correspondence to the editor: George Booker, 2500 Berwyn Cir., Austin, TX 78745-3559. E-mail: editor@tidings.org. Administrator: Rose Madge. E-mail: rm_madge@yahoo.com. Home page: www.tidings.org.

Subscriptions

The current subscription rate is $20 in the United States, $28 in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and £14 in the United Kingdom. Subscribers in UK please send checks to: Malcolm Cross, Grange Farm, East Cottingwith, York YO42 4TB; in New Zealand & Australia to: John Beer, P.O. Box 559, Te Awamutu, Waikato, New Zealand 3840. Otherwise checks should be made payable to: The Tidings, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF.

Items for publication MUST be received by the 10th of the month.

Editor: George Booker; Assistant Editor: Donald H. Styles

FROM THE EDITOR

Coming issue

Instead of the July-August double-issue of previous years, we plan a March-April double-issue for 2007. The March-April issue should arrive some time in April.

Announcements of coming events

An alert to those who send in announcements of coming events: Please send in such announcements ***AT LEAST*** two months ahead of time. This will allow for the best possible publicity for your event.

Apologetics: "The Hard Questions"

Bro. David Levin's series on "The Hard Questions" will resume, Lord willing, with the March-April issue.

Apology

The exhortation that appeared in the December issue of *The Christadelphian Tidings* purports to have been given by Bro. Joe Coutts (Aberdeen). We are now assured by Bro. Joe that while "it did contain parts and phrases of a talk" he gave in 2006, it was "very freely adapted", "presented in someone else's words and style", and might more accurately have been footnoted as "Based loosely on an exhortation by Joe Coutts, Aberdeen". We apologize for this, and we will be exceedingly careful that such a mistake does not happen again.

Editorial

Milk and Butter, Nose and Blood

These last verses of Proverbs 30 (vv. 32,33) point out that the outcome of foolish behavior is strife. Christ-like behavior involves avoiding strife whenever possible.

The command (v. 32)

"If you have played the fool and exalted yourself, or if you have planned evil, clap your hand over your mouth!" (NIV).

The activities mentioned in this verse may "stir up anger" (i.e., in others) and thus "produce strife" (v. 33). Therefore they should be guarded against.

The believer "plays the fool" in (1) "exalting himself", and (2) "planning evil".

"Play the fool" is a verb derived from the noun "nabal" — which describes someone who is godless and immoral in a crude, overbearing way — as was the man named "Nabal" (1 Sam. 25:25; cf. Psa. 14:1). A "nabal" is a hardened, hateful, and deliberately hurtful "fool" — not just a simpleton!

"Exalt yourself" is the Hebrew "nasse" — to lift up oneself, proudly and arrogantly. This is generally condemned (Prov. 8:13; 11:2; 16:18), and especially if it includes put-downs of others — which is the point in the following verse 33.

"Plan evil" is "zammoth" (one word): signifying "to plan, usually in an evil sense" (Strong). Compare similar thoughts in Proverbs 6:14 (the scoundrel... "who plots evil with deceit in his heart"... will be destroyed without remedy) and 16:27 ("a scoundrel plots evil").

Finally, "Clap your hand over your mouth!" is — literally, and abruptly — "Hand to mouth!" It is sharp and strident, like a crisp military command. It is not unlike the command of Proverbs 23:2 ("Put a knife to your throat!"). Generally, this phrase may be compared to Job 40:4,5 ("I put my hand over my mouth"), as well as Job 21:5; 29:9; Judges 18:19; and Micah 7:16. This is a gesture of unworthiness, and repentance, as well as a resolution to speak no more, either in defense of oneself, or in continuance of evil words.

The reason (v. 33)

Verse 33 gives the reason for the admonition of verse 32: do not "play the fool" by "exalting yourself" or "planning evil". These actions will surely lead to and cause the "strife" mentioned in verse 33.

"For as churning the milk produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife."

"Strife" is the Hebrew "riyb". The word occurs at least 12 times in the Book of Proverbs alone. The use of this word strongly implies that the setting is a courtroom, or

some other setting where formal inquiry and debate and deliberation take place. One commentator writes, "This is the kind of person who thrives on acrimony and who seeks a pretext to transform every difference or disagreement into a bitter legal contest" (William McKane, *Expositor's Bible Commentary).*

On the stirring up or producing of strife, we might consider, generally:

- Proverbs 6:14: "[He] who plots evil with deceit in his heart — he always stirs up dissension."
- Proverbs 15:1: "A harsh word stirs up anger."
- Proverbs 29:22: "An angry man stirs up dissension."

Repeatedly, the admonition of the Proverbs is to avoid "strife" (e.g., Prov. 17:1,14; 18:6,17; 26:17,21).

In the New Testament, "strife" (Greek "eris": strife, quarreling, contentiousness) is one of the kinds of "wickedness" and "depravity" listed by Paul in Romans 1:29-31. Of it Paul warns, "Although [men] know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them" (v. 32).

Paul has a similar list in Galatians 5:19-21, where among the "works of the flesh" he groups "discords... jealousy... selfish ambition... dissensions and factions". Are we surprised when it is pointed out that these works are listed right alongside "sexual immorality, debauchery... idolatry... and drunken orgies"? Possibly we feel like asking: *Shouldn't such 'trifles' as discord and dissension and factions be listed in a separate section — marked, perhaps, "minor infractions" or "simple misdemeanors"?*

But Paul firmly concludes with these words: "I warn you... that those who live like this will ***not*** inherit the kingdom of God" (v. 21).

Do we ever stop to think that "strife" keeps such deadly company? We know the rationale, though, don't we? What is hurtful "strife" for the other fellow is, ***for me,*** "earnestly contending for the faith" (Jude 3), wielding "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17), and "fighting the good fight" (1 Tim. 1:18; 6:12). Of course it is.

But even ***if*** it is, ***sometimes***... is it ***always?*** That's not for me to say about you, or you about me — at least not nearly so much as it is for each of us to ask, and answer, the question about ourselves as individuals: 'Is what I'm doing, or saying, or writing — right now, at this moment — a righteous, kind, loving labor for God's Truth, absolutely and only? Or does it include some measure — maybe just the least little bit — of anger, hurt feelings, pride, natural combativeness, jealousy, or ambition?'

And the answer ought to be: "Let a man examine... himself" (1 Cor. 11:28).

"The Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be gentle to everyone... Those who oppose him he must meekly instruct" (2 Tim. 2:24,25, NIV).

"Slander no one... be peaceable and gentle... show true humility toward all men" (Tit. 3:2).

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet. 3:15).

In 1 Timothy 6:4,5, Paul puts "strife" ("eris") right alongside "conceit", "controversies", "quarrels about words", "envy", "malicious talk", "evil suspicions", and "constant frictions". In verse 6 he contrasts it with "godliness with contentment".

"Quarrels about words" (NIV) is the translation of the powerful Greek word "logomachia" — literally, "word-wars"! A variant of this same word, "logomacheo", is also found in 2 Timothy 2:14. These are the only two places the word is found.

To the wise man, words are no more than tools that he uses to convey his thoughts. He conscientiously defines and uses his words so that they mean only one thing; thus he seeks to lower the risk of being misunderstood.

But to some men, words may be an end in themselves. Those whom Paul warns against "logomachia" are those who spend time in useless debate, trying to 'win points' — so much time, in fact, that they never have time for true reflective thinking, much less self-examination. By 'word-wars' they strive against — and also encourage strife in — their opponents. Their word-wars create an atmosphere of fear, doubt, and anger, not only in themselves but in others as well.

Such activity leads to judging others unnecessarily for their exact words. "Watching for iniquity", or "making a man an offender for [one] word", or "laying a word-snare" for a man are all strongly disapproved of by the LORD (Isa. 29:20,21). Word-wars have caused some to be driven away by the intolerance of others — who contrive a 'case' against them, spread it abroad, and then will not listen to reasonable explanation.

Word-wars have led brothers to lie, deceive, and misrepresent matters — concerning their own brethren, for whom Christ died (cp. Rom. 14:15)! Those who fight word-wars set battle lines, choose sides, and form cliques. There are accusations and then too often counter-accusations, leading to grudges and mistrust. And all in the name of "earnestly contending for the Truth"!

Churning and twisting

Back to verse 33...

The NIV of verse 33 has "churning", "twisting", and "stirring up". The same Hebrew word is used in all three cases: "miytz" — to press or squeeze. (These are the only occurrences of this particular word in all of the Old Testament.)

[An aside: a related word, "matzah", describes flat, unleavened bread — perhaps because of its pressed-out form unaltered by the rising caused by yeast or leaven.]

Also in verse 33, the word "produces" occurs three times. Again, as with "miytz", the same Hebrew word is used in all three cases: it is "yotsir" — to go out, to result in, to produce.

"Churning the milk produces butter": A form of butter is produced by squeezing and pummeling animal skins filled with milk. W.M. Thomson, who toured Palestine and studied its Bedouin peoples in the mid-19th century, comments on this practice: "What are these women kneading and shaking so zealously in that large black bag, suspended from this three-legged [tripod]? That is a 'bottle'... not a bag, made by

stripping off [in one piece] the skin of a young buffalo. It is full of milk, and that is their way of churning. When the butter 'has come', they take it out, boil or melt it, and then put it in 'bottles' made of goats' skins. In winter it resembles candied honey, in summer it is mere oil... There is no analogy between our mode of churning, and pulling a man's nose until the blood comes, but in this Arab operation the comparison is quite natural and emphatic" *(The Land and the Book,* p. 235).

"Twisting the nose produces blood": The blood vessels in the nose are weak and near the surface. If the nose is squeezed, hit, or strenuously twisted, these vessels will break and blood will flow from the nose. If the nose is subjected to surgical procedure, this may result in a new weakness inside the nose. Nosebleeds are very common, and a simple "twisting" or "wringing" of the nose — or even a bit more "pressure" at the wrong place — is enough to cause this bleeding. As sure and certain as gravity, a twisting of the nose will rupture blood vessels and bring forth blood.

It is practically a natural law: just as "churning" or "pressing" milk produces butter, and just as "twisting" the nose produces blood — so with the same certainty "churning, twisting, or stirring up" another's anger produces strife!

'Stop picking on him!'

When I was growing up, it was called 'picking on' (someone). Small children knew exactly what this meant: poking and prodding, calling names, funny looks, or little punches, often in the back seat of the car on a long trip. These were all designed to provoke an angry response from the other child, and if possible to bring parental rebuke or punishment down upon him or her.

These days we sit in our living room and watch the young dog dancing around the older dog, sometimes pawing, sometimes sniffing, sometimes nipping the tail, sometimes grabbing an ear — until finally the older one whines or growls or snaps back. Then the younger one dances away, waits a few moments, and renews his meddling.

Those who watch sporting events — baseball or basketball or football — will notice, especially now that instant replay is available, how many fouls are called on the ***second*** person to do wrong — while the instigator gets off free. A little push, a clandestine punch, or an insulting whisper may provoke retaliation — and the second party in the altercation is penalized, or removed from the game. The one who incited it all smiles to himself and struts away.

In similar ways ordinary men and women do this too — perhaps subconsciously, or as a matter of habit, or simply for lack of something better to do. A man may repeat some small action that he knows will irritate a coworker, just because he can! A woman may retell someone else's unkind comment, knowing this will cause anger in her friend — just for the pleasure of seeing her reaction.

The Book of Proverbs has it right: in verse 32 Solomon talks about:

(a) "playing the fool" — joking or jesting, but with the intent of hurting;

(b) "exalting oneself" — deliberately pointing out one's own 'good points', and making a listener feel inferior by the comparison; and worst perhaps,

(c) "planning evil" — planting lies or exaggerations that harm another's reputation.

All such actions — just like those of the children or the athletes — are 'picking on' someone else, and possibly provoking that other person into committing the sin of anger. As if there should be satisfaction in seeing the shortcomings of others! And afterward the provocateur may 'innocently' deny that he had any part in the final outcome. Or, best yet — that he was 'only joking!' *'He didn't take that* ***seriously****, did he?'* (cp. Prov. 26:19).

In ecclesias there may be some members who do the very same things:

(1) They deliberately speak, or dress, or act in ways that offend others, or

(2) They deliberately bring up issues in Bible classes they know will cause arguments (and perhaps even anger and bitter words), or

(3) They deliberately recall something best forgotten — and then feign surprise when someone else is hurt by such a revelation.

While it is true that love "is not easily provoked" (1 Cor. 13:5), it is also true that there is no excuse for being the PROVOKER!

Paul may not say, in so many words, that love "does not easily provoke OTHERS!" But he does say that love "is kind... it is not rude, it keeps no record of wrongs... it does not delight in evil, and... it always protects" (1 Cor. 13:4-7). All these characteristics are diametrically opposed to the subtle and malicious stirring up of anger that produces strife in the brotherhood!

In the same chapter, Paul also says, quite to the point, "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me" (1 Cor. 13:11).

Children, and child-like adults, engage in childish behavior. Those who are mature in Christ put away such tactics. The truth of the gospel can be upheld without word-wars, bitterness, recriminations, character assassinations, vendettas, or political campaigns. The truth can be upheld in love, and gentleness, and patience, and mercy.

If a man cannot uphold Truth in the right way — with the right motives and attitudes — then it is better for him to do... nothing at all. If he tries to uphold Truth in the wrong ways, then surely the 'medicine' he offers the patient is worse than the 'disease' it is intended to cure.

George Booker

* * * * *

Footnote: *The editor experienced quite an extraordinary irony. Almost to the day he finished writing this editorial, he had several very significant nosebleeds, at the site of an earlier nose surgery. These were finally treated by a cauterizing process — but not before he spent a few anxious and concerned days... time that allowed him to ponder the deeper meaning of this proverb. And to remind himself to think carefully before he chooses his next Scriptural illustration!*

Exhortation

Lessons from Jonah

No wonder children love the Book of Jonah. The story is packed full of impressive visuals. Jonah being thrown overboard in a raging storm, sinking to the bottom of the ocean and then being swallowed by a whale that vomits him out onto dry land. To young people it is an adventure tale. For the mature mind, however, the book is a challenge, compelling the reader to search for deeper messages hidden below the surface. Today we will focus on Jonah himself and draw lessons from his behavior.

"The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, 'Go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.' " The call from God to one of His prophets is a common occurrence in the Old Testament, but the blatant disobedience shown by His servant here is unique. Whatever the reason, be it fear or resentment, or perhaps the feeling that he knew better than the Almighty, Jonah's response was to board a ship and sail in the opposite direction. 'How strange,' we say. 'How could any human being think he could possibly run away from the omnipotent God?' But herein lies the lesson.

God has sent us a message in His Bible, and from its pages we learn that He has called us to serve Him by preaching to sinners. Are we not guilty of running away at times? God has reached out and touched our lives in many ways. Maybe we are given the opportunity to shine as a light in the missionary field, only to find ourselves 'hiding' behind the many reasons as to why it is 'impossible' for us to go. God tries to craft our character through trials and difficulties. We resist and back away instead of meeting those trials squarely and praying for strength to work through them.

Jonah was fully aware of his intentions. Sometimes this is the way with us; we deliberately refuse to do the Lord's will. Being masters of self-deception, we convince ourselves that various thoughts and actions are acceptable, even though they fall well below the standards of Christ.

So when the Lord calls, it is foolish to run away. It may seem the safest course, but In the long run it is much easier to obey than to wait for the 'whale' to swallow us!

Thankful for problems

Of course, it is highly unlikely that a huge sea creature will swallow us whole. What is more likely is that, after we have resolved one problem, we will become enveloped in an even bigger one. In the vernacular, this is called jumping from the frying pan into the fire. This is precisely what happened to Jonah; he was saved from drowning and then swallowed by a whale. Incredibly, he uttered

a prayer of thanks from the dark, dank and smelly stomach of the fish. Being honest, how many us could give thanks in such dire circumstances?

Looking at things from a modern perspective, are we thankful for the everyday difficulties to which we are subject, recognizing that they may be trials necessary for our development? According to the apostle Paul we should be thankful: "And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.' Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are not true sons…" (Heb. 12:5-8).

Deep beneath the sea in the belly of a whale, Jonah recognized divine chastening. Although his present circumstances were intolerable, he had been saved from certain death by the mercy of the Lord: "In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me… you brought me up from the pit, O Lord my God. When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple" (Jon. 2:2,7). His faith in God's plan of salvation and the final deliverance from death is evident in his prayer of praise and thanks: "With a song of thanksgiving, I will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the Lord" (v. 9). The response of the Lord God to this declaration of faith and hope was: "The Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land" (v. 10).

Would that we could be thankful for the discipline of problems and trials and look beyond them to praise and thank God for His promise of salvation.

An obvious lesson

Before we leave this section of the book, we should not miss an obvious lesson: "Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time… Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh" (Jon. 3:1-3). Had Jonah obeyed God's command the first time, he would have avoided a great deal of aggravation and suffering. In fact the first two chapters would have been superfluous. In the wonderful wisdom of God they were written for our learning. Therefore let us take heed and attempt to be obedient to the Lord's direction ***the first time around!***

Inappropriate response

The outcome of Jonah's reluctant preaching was the repentance of the wicked people of Nineveh. What is even more surprising is that the prophet's reaction was one of extreme anger. Apparently he had anticipated that God's mercy and longsuffering would extend to the Assyrians: "Oh Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That this is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live" (Jon. 4:1-3).

There have been many suggestions regarding this extreme reaction of Jonah but whatever the cause, God gently challenged the prophet to re-evaluate it: "Have you any right to be angry?" (v. 4).

Jonah's reply is not recorded. He went to a place east of the city to watch and await results. Judging from his continued testiness, the inner turmoil had not been resolved. He became angry at the destruction of a plant that God had kindly provided to replace the ineffective shelter that he had made himself: "Then God said to Jonah, 'Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?' " Again came the petulant reply: "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!" (v. 9).

Comparing ourselves with Jonah

On the surface, Jonah's reaction seems childish, shortsighted and selfish. Are we any different? When things don't happen quite the way we want, we get annoyed. Whether large or small things, either way, we get riled up and go and sit in our respective corners — just like Jonah.

Sometimes we need to step back and look at the bigger picture. Jonah's comfort level didn't really matter; there was a much more vital issue to consider: "But the Lord said, 'You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?' " (Jon. 4:10,11).

Often, we are so distracted by the drying up of our own little 'vine', and the discomfort of our immediate situation, that we fail to see the more important and serious issues that should concern us. Ideally we should pray for guidance to learn discernment and the ability to refocus our energy in the areas of greater need.

Whether or not Jonah got the point is not clear, because the book ends somewhat abruptly. However, the lesson of the vine was much more subtle than that of the whale, and God was very direct with Jonah in His last speech. Given Jonah's propensity to recognize his mistakes, one is left with the distinct impression that Jonah would respond positively at the next opportunity.

So ends our consideration of the man Jonah. Hopefully we have seen some of the lessons that he can provide for us. I know that many of the examples hit home for me. Jonah was an 'Everyman'; we can all see a little of ourselves in him. Like us he reacted unwisely, especially when under the stress of trials and testing. The uplifting thing is that the Lord God treated His prophet with mercy and compassion. The Lord is unchanging and when we fail and repent, these same attributes are extended to us. Evidence of His plan of salvation is here before us on the table. Let us partake of the bread and wine with thankfulness and praise.

Adam Booker
(Austin South, TX)

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (2) How and Why the Letter Came to be so Called

In this study we must endeavour to determine for whom the Ephesian letter was intended, and how it came to be known as the Letter to the Ephesians. In such an exercise of reconstruction, there may well appear to be conjectural elements. Moreover, in this study we shall cover some of the ground already covered in the first article, but this is inevitable.

First, we concentrate on the letter to Colosse, because it contains clear clues which enable us to decide in what circumstances it was composed. This, in its turn, may enable us to see how the longer letter (the Letter to the Ephesians) came to be written. Epaphras had played an important part in the founding of the ecclesia at Colosse: Paul informs us the ecclesia resulted from the work of this "beloved fellow-servant" (Col. 1:7). But his activities had not been confined to Colosse, for he had laboured in the cause of the gospel also in the neighbouring centres of Laodicea and Hierapolis (4:13). Although Paul had heard much from Epaphras which redounded to the credit of the Colossians (see 1:3-8), yet a strange heresy had found support among certain members of the community: the worship of angels and legalistic practices (2:8,16-23). These details furnish all the evidence we need to conclude there were Judaisers in Colosse. While this is not the place to examine the heresy in detail,[1] what we know of the Jews, even within the confines of the Christian church, demonstrates how subversive their teaching could be. It is not difficult to understand how they could be persuasive, for they could invoke the authority of Moses and appear very knowledgeable because of their familiarity with the Old Testament, especially in the eyes of new converts with a pagan background.

Epaphras, understandably, was experiencing difficulty in coping with the heresy, but he knew there was one well capable of handling the problem: the Apostle Paul. Aware that Paul was in Rome, he made the long journey to the capital with the express intention of acquainting him with the situation in the ecclesia and soliciting his help in dealing with the heresy: hence the Letter to the Colossians.

As already mentioned above, the Judaisers were active in propagating their teaching wherever they could. Close to Colosse lay Laodicea, and it may well have been that the heretical ideas had also affected the Laodiceans.[2] If we look at Colossians 4:16, we discover Paul there instructs the Colossian brethren to ensure the letter they received would also be communicated to the Laodiceans. Hence it is surely not unreasonable to conclude the heresy had found some support in Laodicea, or at the least there was the danger of such a development.

Now the care of ***all the churches*** was ever a major concern for the Apostle (see 2 Cor. 11:28). One can therefore see that as his mind prayerfully dwelt upon the

Colossian problem, he may have contemplated the desirability of writing to all the ecclesias in Asia. Prominent among these was the one at Ephesus; Paul knew his letter-bearer Tychicus would pass through the city on his way to Colosse, and there may well have been a chain of Christian churches already in existence in the hinterland of the city. Thus the Apostle would decide to send them a circular letter, with the same basic theme: the all-sufficiency of the Lord Jesus and his unique place in God's cosmic purpose. Righteousness from God the Father on the condition of faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus: this was the essence of the gospel of salvation, and there could be none other. While the work of the angels as ministering spirits was unquestionably important, the elevation of the Son to the Father's right hand conferred on him a status that was unique, and the supreme visible demonstration of this fact will be on the occasion of the Son's return: "And when he {the Father} again bringeth in the firstborn into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Heb. 1:6).[3]

As we endeavour to follow Tychicus on his travels, we see that he would certainly need to pass through Ephesus and from there the direct route was up the Maeander valley, and then along the valley of its tributary, the Lycus. But let us first consider his visit to Ephesus. He would assuredly make contact with the brethren there and give news of Paul's welfare (see Eph. 6:21), and also explain the reason for his mission, reporting on the heresy troubling the Colossians. He would tell them about the letter he was conveying, destined to deal with the Colossian heresy. As Onesimus was in his company, he would explain why they were travelling together and that he was the bearer of a letter to Philemon. All this would be of the greatest interest to the Ephesian brethren. But there was also another letter and doubtless Paul had given Tychicus instructions to make this known at Ephesus, although it was not specifically addressed to them. Its high spiritual value would be immediately apparent and they would want a copy. Indeed it was probable the Apostle had told Tychicus that they were to have one. Paul had foreseen that heresies would disturb the ecclesia at Ephesus (see Acts 20:29,30).

Now Tychicus would not want to tarry at Ephesus but would be anxious to reach the ecclesias in the Lycus valley as soon as possible, so that assistance could be afforded in combating the heresy. We saw in our first study that the manuscript evidence favoured the view that the Ephesian letter had more than one destination. Indeed when we take note of the following passage, we perceive at once it could not refer to Ephesus: "For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and which ye shew toward all the saints..." (Eph. 1:15). Can we imagine him writing in these terms to the converts he had made himself, and among whom he had spent so much time? But in the case of the ecclesias in the Lycus valley, which he had never seen (cf. Col. 2:1), he was dependent on what he had heard from Epaphras. We thus discover a first clue which indicates the ***primary destination*** of the Letter to the Ephesians was the brethren in the Lycus valley.

If this indeed be the case, how did it come about that the letter generally bears the title it does? We now engage in an exercise of reconstruction, recognising, as we have already done, there is an element of conjecture in it. There can be little doubt

that Ephesus possessed its own copy. Appreciating as they undoubtedly did the quality of the letter, the brethren may have assumed the responsibility of ensuring other ecclesias also had a copy, or indeed they may have been requested by Paul to do this on his behalf. We know already the Apostle's preaching activity, assisted by such fellow-workers as Tychicus, had spread well beyond Ephesus itself. It was this fact which so alarmed Demetrius who, to alert his fellows, declared: "And ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people..." (Acts 19:26).

While we cannot be sure which ecclesias were already in existence in the province of Asia, such ecclesias were assuredly known to each other. They lived in a pagan alien world. It was in their interests to support and encourage each other. Understandably they could exchange letters they had received, especially in the case of epistles written by the Apostle. This could lead to the multiplication of copies, thus ensuring their survival, and their being available to ourselves centuries later.

Moreover, Ephesus — having received its own copy and, being a large ecclesia, with many converts made by Paul during his preaching in the city — could have become in a special sense the custodian of the letter, which could explain why in due course it became known as the Letter to the Ephesians.

At a first glance, we see one letter is longer than another, Ephesians containing six chapters and Colossians only four. But that Paul intended them to be looked at together is made evident by Colossians 4:16, where he requests an exchange of his letters by the Colossians, and the Laodiceans. We can confidently identify the letter ***from Laodicea*** as The Letter ***to*** the Ephesians. So in our time we shall do well to embrace for ourselves Paul's instruction.

(Next: Paul sends his greetings)

Tom Barling
(Teignmouth, England)

Footnotes:

1. This I have attempted to do in *The Letter to the Colossians*, The Christadelphian, 1981, ch. 4.
2. See J.B. Lightfoot's admirable chapter on "The Churches of the Lycus", London, 1876. In connection with the proximity of the ecclesias, this is what he says: "Laodicea and Hierapolis stand face to face, being situated respectively on the southern and northern sides of the valley, at a distance of perhaps six miles, and within sight of each other, the river lying in the open plain between the two. The site of Colossae is somewhat higher up the stream, at a distance of perhaps ten or twelve miles from the point where the road between Laodicea and Hierapolis crosses the Lycus... The three cities lie so near to each other, that it would be quite possible to visit them all in the course of a single day" (p. 2).
3. We should take note of the rendering in the RV which rightly brings out the fact the homage paid to the Lord by his attendant angels will be on the occasion of his return to the earth. Other versions (e.g., the RSV) can wrongly give the impression this homage was paid at the Lord's first coming. This verse is discussed in an enlightened manner by B.F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Macmillan 1906, p. 22: "The first introduction of the Son into the world, described in v. 2, had not issued in an open triumph and satisfied men's desires, so that there was good reason why the writer should point forward specially to the Return in which Messiah's work was to be consummated."

Bible Study

Rightly Dividing the Word: (1) Using the Bible with Reverent Care

The strength of the faith of the Lord's ecclesia lies in its knowledge of God and of His Son, knowledge about their creative purpose and work with people. This is knowledge that we may learn from the Bible. To this end, we as the Lord's people should be thankful that we live in this age of increasing knowledge and increasing access to that knowledge — especially as it relates to the Bible itself.

To maintain our own faith, to teach our young, to edify the Lord's ecclesia, and to preach the gospel... we must learn to "rightly divide the word of truth", while not arguing over words, but shunning profane and vain babblings (2 Tim. 2:14-16). Thankfully, profane and vain babbling is almost unknown among us, although striving over words to the harm of our hearers is not altogether so.

Rightly dividing the word of truth depends on a reverence for this word as the oracles, the utterances of God brought to us by His prophets and by His Son. The Bible is not written as a dictionary or encyclopedia of religion might be — that is, with chapters on sin, mortality, human nature, God, the Lord Jesus, and the future of God's creation — although it tells us so much on all these subjects. Nor is the Bible a mere collection of proof texts, by which we prove our beliefs and disprove doctrinal error.

First — An overview of the Bible!

Reverence for the Bible means reading it as the account given to us by God of His work with people — a work culminating in a new and perfected creation brought into being through His Son.

The Old Testament

Genesis simply and beautifully describes God's initial creation, as well as His declaration of His creative purpose. It then describes the coming of sin into the world through the choices made by Adam and Eve, and the consequences of those choices for them and their descendants. Then Genesis follows their descendants' decline into lawless violence — a decline that God brought to an end by sending a great flood, while saving eight people for a new beginning.

We read in Genesis 12 that, after the Flood, people multiplied and were dispersed, and the first city-states and nations began to be formed. God tells us how He then called a man of faith to leave his own country and people for a foreign land. There he would become, through God's power, the father of a new and special nation, Israel. God wanted the people of this nation to serve as His witnesses to the other nations and peoples of the world. In other words, Israel was to be the channel of God's communication with all peoples and nations (Rom. 3:1,2).

God called Israel to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod. 19:4-6), and to make His wise laws known to all peoples (Deut. 4:5-8). From its beginnings, God's work with Israel drew the attention of other nations. Out of these other nations God called into Israel individuals whose faith led them to God, and to joining His people Israel.

From Genesis to Malachi, in the first 39 books of the Bible, God tells us about His work with and through His people, Israel. Here we have the words of the God-inspired prophets, who communicated to Israel His instructions, reproofs, warnings, hopes, and encouragements. Through the prophets God also promised His people a glorious future, when He would judge the nations but save forever those who would truly be His own.

In this first part of the Bible, the Old Testament, we read of the ten-command covenant God made with the people of Israel, the civil law that He gave them, and His laws about sacrifice and cleanliness. Even these more technical laws have much to teach us today, about our own approach to God.

The first part of the Bible also includes songs of praise and lamentation, often prophetic, and filled with beautiful imagery and poetry. Finally, there are also books of wisdom about living, books of philosophy about the meaning of life, books of mourning, and even a love poem.

Yet, this inspired account of God's work with people through Israel seems to be more about failure than success — excepting the response to God's prophets of a faithful remnant among them. Incomplete by itself, the Old Testament is always looking forward to a coming savior who will fulfill God's purpose to bring blessing to all families of the earth (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:15-18).

The New Testament

In the New Testament, the gospels tell of that savior's coming, that is, of his conception, birth, life, death, resurrection and exaltation as Lord and Christ. He is the culmination of all God's work and promises in the past, and he is the focus of all that follows after, as the good news about him bears fruit all over the world.

As that work continues in the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus Christ is the risen and glorified Lord who guides, encourages, and assists in the preaching of the gospel. With his guidance and the blessing of the Holy Spirit that he had promised to his apostles, they establish communities of new believers, and write them letters of instruction.

The New Testament ends with Jesus revealing to his servants the trials and joys that lay before them in the symbolic book of Revelation.

What is the purpose?

This overview of the Bible is intended to illustrate both the unity of its theme and the extraordinary variety of its contents. Some of it is not easy to understand. However, the important truths that the Bible reveals to us are few and simple. Nevertheless, our human nature makes it hard to put these truths into practice in

daily living — which is, of course, God's whole purpose of revealing them to us. It requires the Lord's gracious help for that purpose to be fulfilled in us.

"I commend you to God and to the word of His grace which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified", says the Apostle Paul to the elders at Ephesus (Acts 20:32). The Bible has this extraordinary power to change and sanctify us because it is a revelation of the mind of our Creator and the word of His grace. It reveals Him for the wonderful Being that He is — as we see throughout the Bible in His patient and merciful work with very imperfect people like ourselves.

God is revealing Himself to us in all His word, especially when He speaks to us through His Son (Heb. 1:1,2). In contrasting human wisdom, which has no lasting value, with the wisdom of God given to us by the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul rejoices that "we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:1-16). The Bible is given by God to teach us to know His mind and that of His Son. This is a knowledge not gained solely by learning facts about them from the Bible. It grows through the practice of living by faith as Jesus' disciples in an intimate relationship with him. This is the secret of the Bible's power.

With reverence and care

With what reverence and carefulness must we, therefore, read the Bible and use this word of God in teaching others! In his lovely book, *The Prophecy of Hosea,* Bro Cyril Tennant writes:

"Sound Bible exposition is based upon two very simple but often ignored steps. They are:

1. 'What is the Bible actually saying?' and
2. 'What does the Bible mean by what it is saying?'

So often the meaning is sought from a superficial reading of the text with the context being almost completely ignored. This leads to a fanciful interpretation of scripture and even stretching the meanings of words to make them fit in with a previously conceived theory. Before attempting an explanation one must be sure that everything possible has been done to ensure a correct understanding of what is actually written. This is the only way to listen to what God is saying; and failure to achieve this will not only cause one to miss the truth — it may also lead to sin through teaching others that which is not Bible teaching" (p. 19).

Knowing God and His Son

What Bible words actually say, and the context in which they are said, are both key to understanding the meaning of the inspired word. This may be seen in the lovely prayer of the Lord Jesus for his disciples and for future believers in him in John 17. There Jesus says, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (v. 3).

Sometimes these words are read incorrectly: as though knowing the facts about God and His Son (e.g., that they are not two Persons in a "trinity"), leads, by itself, to eternal life.

But Jesus' words to his Father do not say that. Jesus says, "This is eternal life", i.e., ***this*** is what eternal life consists in: knowing God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent. "To know" (Greek "ginosko") is used in the New Testament with a deeper meaning than knowing facts about someone. It means knowing someone personally — as we might know a close friend. It is used in both the Old Testament and the New Testament to describe the intimate relationship between a man and his wife.

So, the Lord Jesus' words about knowing God and himself mean something more and something deeper than just knowing facts about them — although some facts are essential as a first step. But, above and beyond that, the knowing involves a close personal relationship experienced in life — a relationship that begins with, and grows through, a trusting faith in our Father and His Son.

In the context of the gospel of John as a whole, eternal life is not just life without end. It is a life lived in the closest fellowship with God and His Son.

The words "eternal life" and "everlasting life" (from the same Greek words) are used 17 times in John's gospel — often in the present tense as something that a believer in Jesus has now. Such usage may seem, at first glance, to be confusing and contradictory of other Bible promises of what is plainly a ***future*** eternal life — but they should not be. For this transforming relationship begins now, however imperfectly, and grows until the day when we shall be changed to be like him, and to see him as he is (1 John 3:2).

We must read carefully and reverently to see what the Bible is actually saying — seeking to understand its meaning in harmony with the context. This is how we "rightly divide the word".

There are many aspects of "rightly dividing". Some of these will be developed in subsequent articles, if the Lord will.

(Next: Respecting the actual words)

Bob Green
(Brantford, ON)

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

"God has hidden every precious thing in such a way that it is a reward to the diligent, a prize to the earnest, but a disappointment to the slothful soul. All nature is arrayed against the lounger and the idler. The nut is hidden in its thorny case; the pearl is buried beneath the ocean waves; the gold is imprisoned in the rocky bosom of the mountains; the gem is found only after you crush the rock which encloses it; the very soil gives its harvest as a reward only to the laboring farmer. So truth and God must be earnestly sought" (Albert B. Simpson).

Visions of the Third Heaven

The Apostle Paul was apparently rather embarrassed at having to promote himself to the brothers and sisters of Corinth. As he recounts his particular honor, he speaks of himself in the third person. He also immediately counterbalances this self-promotion by highlighting the humbling lesson the messenger of satan inflicted upon him lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations. Immediately following the severe trials and challenges itemized in 2 Corinthians 11, Paul offers a unique validation of his authority: he had been caught up into the third heaven. He heard things he was forbidden to repeat, *"unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter"* (2 Cor. 12:4). It was such a consuming revelation that Paul didn't know whether he had witnessed it all in his mind or physically experienced it... *"whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell"* (v. 3).

What was this authority-validating, unique honor that Paul experienced? ***What is the third heaven?***

Interestingly, the Apostle John recounts a similar experience and similar injunction during his eventful stay on the island of Patmos. John was forbidden to record what the seven thunders uttered (cp. Rev. 10:4 with 2 Cor. 12:4) — when time itself would cease to exist and the mystery of God would be finished (Rev. 10:3-7). This period would seem to be the post-millennial kingdom period, when death and the grave will be totally eliminated (Rev. 20:14,15; 1 Cor. 15:25-28). Time will be meaningless when all of creation will be spirit-based. The infinite will eclipse the finite. This post-millennial kingdom period that John reported seemingly corresponds to the third heaven that Paul experienced briefly. But why would this ultimate period be understood as the *"third heaven"*?

Heaven and earth stages

There is a simple answer that leads into a far more comprehensive understanding — bridging divine promises, dreams, commandments and prophecies. The simple answer is that there are specifically three heaven-and-earth periods defined in scripture. The millennial kingdom is referred to as "**new** heavens and a **new** earth" (Isa. 65:17-25; 66:21-24). This distinction of newness presumes an old heavens and old earth that must be replaced with the new. This would make the millennial kingdom at least the second heaven-and-earth period. Immediately following the final judgment at the conclusion of the millennial kingdom and the elimination of death and the grave (Rev. 20:11-15) comes this next period described as yet another "new heaven and new earth": *"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea"* (Rev. 21:1).

Since the sea may represent nations (Isa. 57:20; Psa. 65:7; Dan. 7:2,3; Rev. 17:15), "no more sea" indicates the absence of nations. In the previous "new heaven and earth" of the millennial kingdom there was a sea but it was *"like glass"* (Rev. 4:6; 15:2), indicating the presence of nations but without conflict. The sea of nations was calm and glasslike. Yet in the new heavens and new earth that follows the millennial kingdom there is no sea at all. There will be no nations, no governments, and no death in the third heaven period.

The simple answer to the third heaven question would be that Paul (and John) briefly experienced the ultimate plan of God, but were forbidden to share what they saw or heard with anyone else.

Identifying the third heaven as the post-millennial kingdom period opens a river of thought with several significant tributaries.

The heaven-and-earth promises and dreams

Since the millennial kingdom is identified as a **new** heaven and a **new** earth, the logical question would be: What represented the previous heaven and earth? The simple answer would be the previous kingdom of God constructed around the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The foundation for this understanding begins with the promises to Abram in Genesis.

Initially, Yahweh compares Abram's future descendants to the dust of the earth: *"And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered"* (Gen. 13:16). God confirms this promise, comparing Abram's descendants to the stars of heaven: *"Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be"* (Gen. 15:5).

Thus God identifies the descendants of Abraham with earth and heaven. These two parallels are maintained throughout the Old Testament many times. Joseph has two dreams projecting how his authority would eventually exceed that of his brothers and even his father and stepmother. The first dream presents himself and his brothers as sheaves of grain that have grown up out of the dust of the earth. The second dream presents his family as the sun, moon and stars of heaven. This earth-and-then-heaven parallel mirrors the same earth-to-heaven progression of the promises to Abraham. Both divine promises and dreams validate the parallel between heaven and earth with the descendants of Abraham.

Therefore it is very logical to hear God addressing the nation of Israel (through Moses) as heaven and earth: *"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew..."* (Deut. 32:1-2). God similarly addresses Israel in the first verses of Isaiah: *"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken"* (Isa. 1:2). And in the last verses of Isaiah's prophecies we see a similar parallel: *"And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain"* (Isa. 66:21,22).

Heaven and earth will pass away

The identification of the divinely-constituted Jewish nation as "heaven and earth" is presumed in New Testament prophecies. Jesus presents to his disciples the prophetic parable of the fig tree while looking down on the temple from the Mount of Olives. The parable of the fig tree is a prophecy of how the resurrection of the Jewish nation will herald Christ coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. This national resurrection is expressed as the fig tree progressing from

the death of winter to the rebirth of spring — when the branch is tender and puts forth leaves and summer is nigh. By prophesying of Israel's national rebirth, Jesus prophetically presumes its death.

The nation of Israel still existed as Jesus was foretelling its spring-like rebirth. Immediately following this parable and his statement that the generation witnessing the flourishing of the fig tree would not pass away before all things took place, Jesus confirms the conclusion that the nation would have to die before it could be reborn. Jesus says, *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"* (Matt. 24:35). In order for new heavens and a new earth to appear, the previous heaven and earth would have to be dissolved. The Roman army, under the father-son team of Generals Vespasian and Titus, accomplished the prophecy. Heaven and earth passed away with the destruction of the Jewish nation.

Peter uses similar terms when prophesying of the destruction of the Jewish nation: *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"* (2 Pet. 3:10,12,13). Peter describes the military destruction of the Jewish national constitution as the burning up of heaven and earth in the day of the Lord along with the hopeful anticipation of the new heavens and new earth.

The first heaven was the kingdom of God under the Jewish constitution. The second heaven will be the millennial kingdom of God. The third heaven will be the period following the end of the millennial kingdom, when the Creator will be in perfect harmony with creation, when He will be "all and in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).

Heaven and earth "tributaries"

There are other tributaries from this river of thought that can take us into such concerns as divine law. The two witnesses God calls against Israel (the first "heaven and earth" kingdom) are identified as heaven and earth: *"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live*" (Deut. 30:19). According to divine law, the hands of the witnesses must be first against the accused (Deut. 17:6,7; 19:15-17). These necessary two witnesses of heaven and earth would confirm this law by withholding the rain and dramatically reducing agricultural productiveness.

Another tributary is the progression of "earth before heaven" — the curse of the dust of the earth preceding the heavenly blessing, the natural before the spiritual (1 Cor. 15:46); death before life and humbling before exaltation (in Jesus' case, the towel and the thorns and the cross before the crown).

This principle of "earth before heaven" is beautifully portrayed in the ritual the High Priest performed on the Day of Atonement. To preserve his life, he had to transform the incense into a cloud through fire; this enveloped the ark of the

covenant in the Most Holy so that God would not slay him: *"And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not"* (Lev. 16:13). This transformation of aromatic dust into a mercyseat-enveloping cloud portrays the change in nature springing from the atonement work of the Messiah. Those suffering under the curse of the dust, who offer a pleasing aromatic benefit to their Creator, will be transformed in nature from the curse of the dust to the blessed divine nature of the cloud. God identified Himself as the cloud that led Israel in the wilderness, filled the tabernacle at its dedication, filled Solomon's temple at its dedication, received up Christ into heaven, and accompanies him upon his return in like manner as he was seen to go. The Day of Atonement transformation from dust to cloud ritually portrays our hope of mortality changing into immortality. The earth-before-heaven progression expounds a divine principle manifested subtly throughout creative activity, and in law, visions, prophecies, historical events and promises. (The book *Creation's Gospel* examines many of these applications of the "heaven and earth" Scriptural theme in greater detail.)

Paul and John were not allowed to express what they had seen and heard in the third heaven. It was for them alone. One might ask how we could possibly understand without experiencing it for ourselves. Mankind has a very difficult time comprehending even the simplest divine expressions, often distorting God's words by filtering them through its self-worshipping ego. How can the finite mind explain infinity? It shouldn't be surprising we are offered very little information in Scripture about the third heaven. Though reluctant to do so, Paul appropriately offered his extraordinary experience with the third heaven as a badge of his authority.

Jim Dillingham
(Dunbarton, NH)

"One sometimes wonders if we are beginning to worship *worship* rather than worship God. As a brother put it to me, it's a bit like those who begin by admiring the sunset and soon begin to admire *themselves* admiring the sunset… There are far too few choruses and services and sermons that expand our vision of God – His attributes, His works, His character, His words.

"Some think that corporate worship is good because it is lively where it had been dull. But it may also be shallow where it is lively, leaving people dissatisfied and restless in a few months' time. Sheep lie down when they are well fed (cf. Psa. 23:2); they are more likely to be restless when they are hungry. 'Feed my sheep,' Jesus commanded Peter (John 21); and many sheep are unfed. If you wish to deepen the worship of the people of God, above all deepen their grasp of His ineffable majesty in His person and in all His works" (Donald A. Carson, *Worship by the Book*).

Reflections

Bro. Bill Minor ("Uncle Jay")

Sis. Melody Mahan reports that Bro. Bill Minor has passed away, at his home in Oklahoma City. Bill was 68.

Bill had contracted mercury poisoning some time ago. And ever since his heart attack a year or so ago, he had been in somewhat failing health. The family last heard from him on Friday, December 15. After telephone calls went unanswered, friends and family investigated, and discovered his body on Monday, December 18. Seemingly he had "fallen asleep" quietly and without discomfort.

He was in his usual pose, sitting in his chair near his keyboard and computer — where he spent countless hours doing research on the internet; checking up on political news; discussing Bible prophecy and "signs of the times" with various brothers and sisters; and writing long, rambling letters of exhortation and encouragement to Christadelphians and others, near and far.

I'll think fondly of him there, like an Old Testament prophet, or a watchman on the city walls, looking out upon the world in a spirit of concern and eager expectancy — marking the signs that pointed to the return of his Lord and Saviour. Bill died at his "post", doing his duty as best he could until the very end.

Bill talked, and wrote, in a charming, folksy, and totally unpretentious manner. He told stories, he reminisced, he talked about old cars and football and hunting dogs, he quoted and paraphrased countless Bible passages, and he always looked for something positive and supportive and uplifting to give others. For years he wrote regularly on an ecclesial discussion group, in which — at some times — his seemed almost to be the only voice for love and kindness and courtesy, no matter what "issues" were under consideration. For this reason alone, if there were nothing else, I would love him.

When I knew that I was to become the editor of *The Christadelphian Tidings,* I asked Bill if I might occasionally use some of his (what shall I call them?) thoughts... articles... letters... commentaries in the magazine? He said, "Yes, of course." But he asked that I use a pseudonym, as he had also used on the discussion group.

And so, in the December issue, he was "Uncle Jay" for the first (but perhaps not for the last) time — writing out of his own personal experiences, and directing his correspondent to consider that a believer's tribulations ought to be a cause for rejoicing. Why? "Because we have learned that there is a purpose in all things that happen to a believer."

He continued:

"How can we be bitter? How can we complain? How can we kick against the goads? How can we turn away, no matter how intense the purifying flames of our fiery trials? We are living sacrifices on God's altar.

"We belong to God, and He belongs to us.

"You ask, How do I know this? I'll tell you. Because I learned this lesson myself; it's not 'theory'. I profited by my painful experiences, by my loneliness, when I called out to my God from a place of desperate need, where it seemed no one else could know what I was going through. And in that place I learned about the truly 'deep things' — God's goodness, His love, and His grace. 'Springs whose blessings never fail. A sea without a shore.'

"I would not, willingly, undergo the sufferings of that time again, no, not for many millions of dollars! But, as I look back on it now, I consider that time the greatest gift our Heavenly Father could ever have given me. I know now that it did more for me than a 'good, comfortable, happy life' alone could ever have done.

"It brought me closer to Him.

"And it will do the same for you.

"Trust me. I know.

"With love in Christ, *Uncle Jay*."

* * * * *

Sis. Rachel Black writes: "Bill was always 'there' with a comforting word (or a thousand!) when it was needed. More than a watchman, he was a trusted friend in Christ — someone 'safe' to carry concerns to. Many will remember Bill's often humorous, homey, wise and loving e-mails, but what really won me over was his ability to listen, really listen — and respond with understanding. Truly understanding and relating to difficulties others may be facing seems a rarity these days."

* * * * *

Bro. Kyle Tucker writes: "It was not unusual for [Bill's] e-mails to be ten pages long. The thing that really struck me about his e-mails is just how much they were full of genuine praise for God. Bill was head-over-heels in love with God and with Christ and truly thankful for what they had done for him. Bill was probably the most praiseful person of God that I have ever known.

"I can honestly and embarrassingly say that I found his e-mails in most instances painful to read because of their length. This was somehow justified in my mind because he didn't net things out. In this world of time management and deadlines, there just wasn't time to read a Bill Minor e-mail. He would pour out his heart about love, mercy, grace, forgiveness and so forth; things which apparently I didn't have time for, to my loss. In April of this year, sensing his demise due to his failing health, Bill wrote to me and said, 'It's just too bad you have to cash in your chips about the time you finally develop a modicum of "wisdom!" No problem though, if eternal life lies ahead.'

Bill closed that e-mail with these words: 'Press on! By His Majestic Grace, Love, Bill'."

* * * * *

Bro. Dwight Kindred writes: "The writer to the Hebrews, referring to faithful disciples, says that the world was not worthy of them. The world did not even blink on the day Bill Minor breathed his last breath in this age, which is to its shame — for he was a man who understood its ills and knew the Source for its healing. Yet I do not say these things to condemn the world, but to remember Bill.

"I greatly respected Bill for his sterling character that made him so memorable. He had a wry, self-deprecating sense of humor which I thoroughly enjoyed. Sometimes he would poke fun at what he called 'his towering intellect' (he was truly a humble man), and then again express amusement (tinged with sadness) at the world situation.

"Bill was also an honest student. Despite his self-deprecation, it was clear the Creator blessed him with a superior intellect. He followed his explorations honestly regardless of where they took him, and he stood with quiet courage and spoke the truth with love to any who would listen.

"Bill was a kind man, loving and merciful. I don't recall in all he wrote or said that he was ever unkind to anyone, even to those who disagreed with him. One of his greatest desires was to serve those who were in trouble or in pain, and to give them hope in the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God and in His endless mercies. One of the things that grieved him most was the tendency of some to take the 'sword' that is the Word of God and turn it against men and women of faith. Bill always tried to use the Scriptures for the healing and encouragement of the faithful, always striving to love his neighbor as himself.

"Most of all, though, Bill's life was governed by a tireless hope in God's coming kingdom — and by a determined effort to learn to love Yahweh his God with all his heart, soul, and mind. He always seemed in awe, but absolutely grateful, of the fact that God in His mercy had chosen him a fellow-heir of the promises to Abraham.

"I will miss Bill. He had a lot to say, and he will surely be grateful for the resurrection and a body with stamina, and for a thousand years so that he can get it all said at last. I hope we will all see him again very soon."

> "The Bible in a man's life is God in a man's life. Where people place the Bible, they place God. The place it demands is the heart – the throne. With nothing less will God be satisfied. Do you neglect it? You neglect God. Do you allow the affairs of house, or business, or friends... to put it in the comer? Then is God cast behind your back, and great is your danger... You say you have no time to read. The plea is absolutely inadmissible. You take time to eat and drink, and this is the most important kind of eating and drinking… Death will rap at the door, and he won't ask you if you have time to attend to him. Christ will stand in the earth one of these days, and what about your family, your house, your business then?" (Robert Roberts).

Music in Worship

Section editors: Ken and Joan Curry
Markham and Eglington
P.O. Box 90525
Toronto, ON M1J 3N7

The Harp

"Oh may my heart in tune be found
Like David's harp of solemn sound."

The harp is best known as the instrument that David played, specifically for the soothing and calming effect of its music on Saul's troubled nerves and conscience. It was suggested to Saul: "Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well... And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him" (1 Sam. 16:16,23).

It appears the harp was small and light enough to be carried about, as the instrumentalist could play it and sing at the same time. This can be concluded from 1 Samuel 10:5: "Thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with... a harp, before them." Also Isaiah 23:16: "Take an harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered."

The harp was used in both secular and sacred rejoicing. The only reference to its use other than in cheerfulness or praise is in Job. "My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep" (Job 30:31). In almost all other Bible quotations where the harp is mentioned there is either merrymaking or thanksgiving. The following quote is typical of its 13 occurrences in the Psalms:

"Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous;
It is fitting for the upright to praise him.
Praise the LORD with the harp"

(Psalm 33:1,2, NIV)

Harps contributed to the selfish carousing of the wicked: "And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands" (Isa. 5:12; see also Job 21:12).

When joy ceased, the harp was silent: "For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon… And they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses… And I will cause the noise of

thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard" (Ezek. 26:7,12,13; see Isa. 24:8).

David danced before the Lord to its music: "And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps…" (1 Chron. 13:8; see also 1 Chron. 15:28). David also arranged for its use in regular worship: "Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps…" (1 Chron. 25:1; see also 1 Chron. 16:5; 15:3,6).

The kings Solomon, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah also used the harp in worship and praise of God (2 Chron. 5:12; 20:28; 29:25). When the children of Israel returned from exile, at the dedication of the wall under Nehemiah, the harp and other instruments were used to express thanksgiving and gladness: "And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps" (Neh. 12:27).

Most of the references in the Old Testament to stringed instruments involve only two Hebrew words. "Kinnor" is almost always translated "harp", while "nebel" is rendered "viol" or "psaltery" in the Authorized Version but "lyre" or occasionally "lute" in modern versions. The distinction between them is not certain but was probably as follows:

Both instruments consisted of a set of strings stretched over a wooden frame, which vibrated when plucked. The harp was triangular in shape and each string produced only one note. The lyre was roughly rectangular and the strings differed in thickness and tension and were stopped to give different notes. Often the lyre was played with a plectrum[1] while the harp strings were plucked with the fingers. In very early times the strings were of twisted grass. Later they consisted of strips of sheep gut.

Harps and lyres are both seen in paintings and carvings from ancient Egypt, Greece and Assyria. The oldest actual specimens of musical instruments from Bible times are four lyres found at Ur of the Chaldees by Sir Leonard Woolley. There also exists an ivory carving from the Canaanite city of Megiddo showing a woman playing a nine-stringed lyre.

In Bible times the Canaanites were celebrated for the superiority of their musicianship. The people of Canaan had a higher standard of material culture than the Israelites, and that is one reason why their way of life presented such temptations to the people of God.

In the book of Revelation various groups are described as holding harps and singing praises to God: "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song…" (Rev. 5:8). "And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps…" (Rev. 14:2). "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire:

and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God" (Rev. 15:2).[2] The association of harps in these Revelation passages with thanksgiving, praise and rejoicing fittingly represents the immense, unparalleled and indescribable joy of the Kingdom of God.

Bob Burr
(Barnt Green, Birmingham, UK)

Footnotes:

1. A plectrum is a piece of some material such as horn, tortoise shell, quill, or ivory used to pluck a stringed instrument (*The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, Dan Randel).
2. There is one other reference to harpers in Revelation 18:22. This verse refers not to the harp accompanying praise and rejoicing, but to the sound of the harp being silenced.

"Hark! Ten Thousand Thousand Voices"

The music for Hymn 296, "Hark! Ten thousand thousand voices sing the song of Jubilee", was written by Bro. James Flint. He was born in 1813 and he and his wife, Selina, were baptized in 1864 in Birmingham, probably in a bathroom above a barber's shop.

"Brother Robert Roberts, in his magazine at that time, referred to 'the advent of a musical family who led us in our singing with a flute, violin and basso (probably a double bass).' The ecclesial orchestra included Brother Henry Flint (flute), Brother James Drew (cornet), Brethren Thomas Webster and Robert King (violins) and Brother Charles Jennings (harmonium).

"James Flint senior was appointed Leader of Song, and the ecclesia met every Wednesday evening for the cultivation of singing."

In our current Christadelphian Hymnbook (2002), six hymn tunes are included written by James Flint. They are:

Hymn 83	"Glory and blessing be"
Hymn 216	"Beyond where Kedron's waters flow"
Hymn 281	"Light of them that sit in darkness"
Hymn 296	"Hark! Ten thousand thousand voices"
Hymn 308	"Yahweh Elohim, When shall we see, The sign of Thy coming, When shall it be?"
Hymn 366	"Jesus! Thou Sun of Righteousness"

(Quotes and information extracted from the pamphlet by the late Bro. Stuart Cowlishaw, ***Some Past Christadelphian Hymn Writers and Composers,*** *1991, page 12.)*

CD Recordings of Hymns and Spiritual Songs

A selection of recordings on CDs of hymns from the Christadelphian Hymn Book and other spiritual songs composed by Christadelphian composers is available from the following website: www.speakingofhisglory.com

Current Events

A New Holocaust Archive

Reporter Arthur Max tells of a 21-year-old Russian, sitting before a clerk of the U.S. Army judge advocate's office, describing the furnaces at Auschwitz, the Nazi death camp where he had been a prisoner until a few weeks before.

"I saw with my own eyes how thousands of Jews were gassed daily and thrown by the hundreds into pits where Jews were burning," he said. "I saw how little children were killed with sticks and thrown into the fire."

After half a century, the International Tracing Service is beginning to give the public access to millions of documents — 16 miles of files housed in Bad Arolsen, Germany — that comprise the most complete record of Nazi persecutions in existence.

Today, the Holocaust is known in voluminous and painful detail. Yet the young Russian's words leap off the faded page with a rawness that transports the reader back to April 1945, when World War II was still raging and the world knew little about gas chambers, genocide and the Final Solution.

The two pages of testimony, in a file randomly plucked off a shelf, are among millions of documents held by the International Tracing Service, or ITS, an arm of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

This vast archive — many millions of files in six nondescript buildings in the small German town — contains the largest collection of records of Nazi persecutions in existence. But because of concerns about the victims' privacy, the ITS has kept the files closed to the public for half a century, doling out information in small bits, to survivors or their descendants, on a strict need-to-know basis.

This policy, which has generated considerable animosity among Holocaust survivors and researchers, is about to change.

In May, after years of pressure from the United States and survivors' groups, the 11 countries overseeing the archive agreed to unseal the files for scholars as well as victims and their families.

ITS has allowed Paul Shapiro of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington to look at the files. It has also given The Associated Press extensive access on condition that no names from the files are revealed unless they have been identified in other sources.

"This is powerful stuff," said Shapiro, leafing through the file containing the Russian's statement and some 200 other testimonies that take the reader into the very heart of Hitler's death machine: its camps, inmates, commandants, executioners and trusted inmates used as low-level guards.

"If you sat here for a day and read these files, you'd get a picture of what it was really like in the camps, how people were treated. Look — names and names of Jewish trustee guards — the 'little perpetrators'," he said.

Moved to Bad Arolsen in central Germany after the war, the files occupy a former barracks of the Waffen-SS, the Nazi Party's elite force. They are stored in long corridors of drab cabinets and neatly stenciled binders packed into floor-to-ceiling metal shelves. Their index cards alone fill three large rooms.

Mandated to trace missing people and help families reunite, ITS has allowed few people through its doors and has responded to requests for information on wartime victims with minimal data, even when its files could have told more.

It might take a year or more for the files to open fully. Until then, access remains tightly restricted.

"We will be ready any time. We would open them today, if we had the go-ahead," the ITS interim director, Jean-Luc Blondel, said.

When the archive is finally available, researchers will have their first chance to see a unique collection of documents on concentration camps, slave labor camps and displaced people.

"There is a great deal of very interesting material on a very large number of concentration camps that we really don't know much about," said Yehuda Bauer, professor of Holocaust Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. "It may contain surprises. We don't know. It has material that nobody's ever seen."

A visitor to the archive comes into direct contact with the bureaucracy of mass murder. In a bound ledger with frayed binding, a copy of a list of names appears of Jews rounded up in Holland and transported to the death camps.

Buried among the names is "Frank, Annelise M.," her date of birth (June 12, 1929), Amsterdam address before she went into hiding (Merwerdeplein 37) and the date she was sent to a concentration camp (Sept. 3, 1944). "Frank, Annelise M." was, of course, Anne Frank.

She was on one of the last trains to Germany before the Nazi occupation of Holland crumbled. Six months later, at age 15, she died an anonymous death, one of some 35,000 casualties of typhus that ravaged the Bergen-Belsen camp.

After the war, "The Diary of Anne Frank," written during her 25 months hiding in a tiny apartment with seven others, would become the most widely read book ever written on the Holocaust.

But most of the lives recorded in Bad Arolsen are known to none but their families. They are people such as Cornelis Brouwenstijn, a Dutchman who vanished into the Nazi gulag at age 22 for illegally possessing a radio. In a plain manila envelope are his photo, a wallet, and some snapshots.

After the war, his family repeatedly wrote to the Red Cross asking about him. In 1949, his parents received a terse form letter saying he died sometime between

April 19 and May 3, 1945, in the area of a German labor camp. The personal effects, however, remained in Bad Arolsen, and, with the family long deceased, there is no one left to apply for their return.

To critics who accuse them of being tightfisted with their information, the Red Cross and ITS counter that they have to abide by German privacy laws and protect the reputations of victims whether alive or dead. They say the files might contain unsubstantiated allegations against victims and that opening them up to researchers would distract ITS from its main task of providing documentation to survivors or victims' relatives.

One area of study that will benefit from the ITS files is the Lebensborn program, in which children deemed to have the "proper genes" were adopted or even kidnapped to propagate the Aryan master race of Hitler's dreams.

Another subject is the sheer scope of the Holocaust system. The files will support new research from other sources showing that the network of concentration camps, ghettos and labor camps was nearly three times more extensive than previously thought.

Postwar historians estimated about 5,000 to 7,000 detention sites. But after the Cold War ended, records began pouring out of the former communist nations of East Europe. More sites were disclosed in the past six years in claims by 1.6 million people for slave labor reparations from a $6.6 billion fund financed by the German government and some 3,000 industries.

"We have identified somewhere in the neighborhood of 20,000 camps and ghettos of various categories," said Geoffrey Megargee of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, who is compiling a seven-volume encyclopedia of these detention centers.

Over the years, the International Tracing Service has answered 11 million requests to locate family members or provide certificates supporting pension claims or reparations. It says it has a 56 percent rate of success in tracing the requested name. But the workload has been overwhelming. There is at present a massive backlog of hundreds of thousands of unanswered queries. There are worries that the process takes too long since aged survivors are dying every day.

"What victims of these crimes fear the most is that when they disappear — and it's happening very fast now — no one will remember the names of the families they lost," Shapiro said. "If we don't succeed in having this material public while there are still survivors, then we have failed."

Note: The foregoing was extracted from an Associated Press report, November 21, 2006.

Footnote: *What an extraordinary time we live in! On December 11 Iran hosted a conference of those, assembled from around the world, who deny the Nazi genocide and the Holocaust. (Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert called the whole affair "a sick phenomenon".)*

The two-day conference, with 67 participants from 30 countries, was initiated by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He once again called the Holocaust a "myth", and also called for Israel to be wiped off the map. Speakers asserted, among other things, that no more than a very few thousand people (including a very few Jews) were executed by the Nazis, but only for terrible crimes.

Other conference participants included two rabbis and four other members of Jews United Against Zionism. This delegation did not deny the generally recognized facts of the Holocaust, but stated that they oppose the creation of Israel on the grounds that its existence at this time violates Jewish law. (Many Orthodox Jews believe that God has exiled His people from His land until they repent, the Messiah returns, and the Temple of God is rebuilt. Thus they see a nationalist State of Israel at the present time as an affront to His Holy Name.)

Muslim "trash" is Israeli "treasure"!

Off an eastern Jerusalem side-street, between an olive orchard and an abandoned hotel, sit a few piles of stones and dirt that yield important insights into Jerusalem's history. They come from the world's most disputed "holy place": the square in the heart of Jerusalem that is known to Jews as the Temple Mount.

Some finds that have emerged from the rubble are: (1) a coin struck during the Jewish revolt against the Romans, (2) arrowheads shot by Babylonian archers, and (3) the imprint of a seal possibly linked to a priestly Jewish family mentioned in the Book of Jeremiah. This last item, uncovered in 2005, is perhaps the most valuable find so far. Its incomplete Hebrew lettering appears to name "Ge'aliyahu, son of Immer". (Immer is the name of an important family of temple officials mentioned in Jer. 20:1.)

The finds continue. On a drizzly November morning, Gabriel Barkay, the archaeologist who runs the dig, sits in a tent near the mounds examining some newly discovered coins from various occupiers of the Promised Land: the Hasmonean (i.e., Maccabean) dynasty of Jewish kings more than 2,000 years ago, a Roman procurator around the time of Pontius Pilate, the early Christians of the Byzantine Empire, two Islamic dynasties, and the British in the 20th century.

Considering the scope of findings, it is extraordinary that this is an excavation that was never supposed to happen. The Temple Mount is the frequent focal point of Israeli-Palestinian clashes, and the volatility of regional politics has largely prevented archaeologists from touching the site for the past 60 years. Wars have been started in the Middle East over far less!

Jews revere the Temple Mount as the site of their two ancient temples. But Muslims believe it's the place from which Prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven, as told in the Koran. Two mosques stand on the site, as do some of the temple's original retaining walls, including what Jews call the Western, or Wailing, Wall, but there is no visible trace of the ancient Jewish temple itself (even as Jesus prophesied in Matt. 24:2; Luke 19:44).

In November 1999, the Waqf [the Muslim organization that administers the site's Islamic holy places] opened an emergency exit to an ancient underground chamber of stone pillars and arches known to Jews as Solomon's Stables.

Ignoring fierce protests from Israeli archaeologists who said priceless artifacts were being destroyed to erase traces of Jewish history, the Waqf dug a large pit, removed tons of earth and rubble that had been used as landfill, and dumped much of it in the nearby Kidron Valley (immediately to the east of the Temple Mount: cf. 2 Sam. 15:23; Jer. 31:40; John 18:1). The Waqf takes the official position that the rubble is of recent vintage and without archaeological value.

Zachi Zweig, a 27-year-old archaeology undergraduate student from Tel Aviv, showed up at the dump a few days later. Though Israel's archaeological establishment had shown no interest in the rubble, Zweig was sure it was important, especially after a Waqf representative told him to leave.

Zweig returned quietly with friends, gathered samples of the rubble and discovered a high concentration of ancient pottery shards. The Israel Antiquities Authority charged him with stealing relics (these charges were later dropped). But Zweig finally convinced Barkay, his professor at Bar Ilan University, that the rubble needed to be studied.

In 2004, after spending five years obtaining a dig license and raising money, they had 75 truckloads of rubble moved to the slopes of Jerusalem's Mount Scopus. (Scopus is the northernmost of four mountains that comprise what is commonly called the Mount of Olives today.)

Barkay's dig is financed by the City of David Foundation, a group that spends most of its money settling Jewish families in Arab neighborhoods in eastern Jerusalem. This is part of an attempt to make the point that Jerusalem belongs to the Jews.

The Waqf says it wasn't destroying evidence of Jewish presence there — ***because there isn't any!*** "I have seen no evidence of a temple," said the Waqf's director, Adnan Husseini. He had heard "stories," he said, "but these are an attempt to change the situation here today, and any change would be very dangerous."

Such reactions don't surprise Israeli historian Gershom Gorenberg, whose book *The End of Days* documents the fight over the Temple site. "Dig a centimeter beneath the debate over antiquities," he said, "and you hit the debate over whom the Mount belongs to, and a centimeter beneath that is the war over whom the entire country belongs to."

[Some information is taken from an Associated Press report, by Matti Friedman, Nov. 18, 2006.]

* * * * *

"Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem" (Zech. 14:3,4).

"Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple" (Mal. 3:1).

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord' " (Matt. 23:37-39).

* * * * *

Editor's Postscript: I asked Bro. Leen Ritmeyer, recognized authority on the archaeology of the Temple Mount, to comment on the above. He wrote: *"I was just in Washington, DC, attending and speaking at conferences where I also met Gabriel Barkay again. Your article is a very good summary, but it does not include the latest find, which is an inscription on a stone mentioning the name of Silva, the Roman commander who took Masada. By the way, my work is also mentioned in Gershom Gorenberg's book."*

Signs of the Times

The Parable of the Fig Tree (Matthew 24)

The parable of the fig tree in Matthew 24:32-35 has been used many times in our public lectures to indicate approximately when Christ would return. It was especially popular in the late 1980s, as the fortieth anniversary of the re-emergence of Israel as a nation approached. In the author's experience, the use of this parable for this purpose declined as 1988 came and went, and the 40-year generation that had "seen" these things still had not seen the fulfilment of the rest of the Olivet prophecy. But the parable is still there — and it still has significance. Perhaps it is time to think about it again.

The parable reads as follows: *"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled"* (Matt. 24:32-34, KJV).

The first order of business is to determine what "all these things" are. They obviously refer to something Jesus has just said, but specifically what? The answer is found in the correct understanding of the disciples' questions in verse 3.

Their first question — "When shall these things be?" — must refer to the destruction of Jerusalem because that is the context *("There shall not be left here one stone upon another": v. 2).*

The last two questions, however, ask for signs, first of his coming and then of the end of the world. It is evident from Acts 1:6 that the apostles primarily associated

the return of Christ with the kingdom restored to Israel — not Israel's destruction by Rome. That was also what Jesus concentrated on in the verses preceding Acts 1:6, where he had spoken to them for 40 days about the kingdom to come. It is reasonable to assume that the kingdom was the subject of the apostles' last two questions in Matthew 24.

So their questions were:

1. What shall be the sign of thy coming (i.e., to set up the kingdom of God)?
2. What shall be the sign of the end of the world (i.e., the Gentile world)?

Jesus begins his answer at verse 23 where he speaks of his return for the first time. Before he returns, people will start saying that he's already here and some will even claim to be him! We are not to believe it because he's already told us of the sign of his coming ("*Behold, I have told you before": v. 25).* Verse 27 compares his coming to lightning. It will be sudden and, at least to the saints, unmistakable. But what is the sign?

Carcases and eagles

He tells them (and us) what that sign would be in verse 28. The word "For" is not in the original and the word "eagles" can mean either "eagles" or "vultures"; so what is the sign of his coming?

"Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matt. 24:28).

The sign of his coming is a carcase surrounded by vultures. This picture is identified in two clear passages:

1. Deuteronomy 28:26: *"And thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away."*
2. Jeremiah 19:7: *"And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their carcases will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth."*

Both of these passages are about God's punishment upon the nation of Israel because she has forsaken Him.

So the sign of Jesus' coming is the reappearance of the nation of Israel in the midst of "vultures" who want to consume her. She reappears as a carcase. This is a very apt description of Israel when she became a nation. Ezekiel 37 is the prophecy of dry bones; the chapter describes Israel as a dead body — a carcase — just before the spirit enters into her. She is there on earth again, but without the spirit of God or life in her. So the carcase is the nation of Israel at the stage when she has not yet put her trust in God and recognized her Messiah.

When does this sign appear? Verse 24 tells us that the sign comes immediately after a time of great tribulation in which ruling political powers of the earth are shaken. This could easily be seen as the first and second world wars — and it is a

fact that out of these troubled times the state of Israel was born. The prophecy is in harmony with history.

Tribes mourning

What happens next? The sign of the Son of man appears, and the next significant event is the mourning of the tribes of the earth. The Greek word translated "tribes" occurs 23 times in the New Testament. In all but three times it is, without doubt, describing the tribes of ***Israel.*** The three exceptions could apply to other peoples, but it would also make perfect sense if they are applied to Israel. Nowhere in the New Testament can it be proven that this word does ***not*** refer to the tribes of Israel; in fact, in 23 of 26 instances, it is obvious from the context that it does.

Why does Christ call Israel in the latter days "the tribes of the earth"? Because it fits perfectly with Israel's situation in those days. The tribes of Israel are scattered over the whole earth as prophecy suggests.

Why do they mourn? The mention of Israel mourning draws us immediately to Zechariah 12. There, in verse 10, the mourning of Israel accompanies their recognition of the one "whom they have pierced". Zechariah tells in some detail what Israel will go through (possibly from the invasion described in Ezekiel 38 and 39) to reach the stage where they will recognize Jesus.

Gathering of the "elect"

Matthew 24:31 continues with the gathering of the elect from all over the world. The word "elect" can mean either elect or chosen. We have the Greek word translated both ways in the New Testament (16 times as elect and 7 times as chosen). Normally it refers to the saints. If there is any chronological order to the events laid out here, however, this verse cannot refer to the saints because they will have already been raised, judged, and glorified with Christ. The recognition of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel comes after he, along with the saints, rescues Israel from the terrible invasion they are destined to experience.

If it is not the saints here, then who are the "chosen" who must be gathered from all over the world? God's chosen people are the obvious choice, and that too is a very important prophecy that suits these words of Jesus. This gathering is the "second exodus" of Jeremiah 23:7,8 — when God will bring Abraham's seed back to their land to begin the kingdom era. Here is the final and full return of which the state of Israel today is just a preliminary and partial fulfillment.

The parable of the fig tree

And finally we come to the parable of the fig tree. So far in Matthew 24 Jesus hasn't said much about the time of his coming — except that it will be after the ***sign*** of his coming. He then responds to the apostles' last question, "What shall be the sign of the end of the world?" The parable of the fig tree answers both of these questions perfectly, that is, if we know what the fig tree represents. Perhaps that is where we have run into trouble. The standard view has been that the fig tree represents Israel. This reasoning deduces that the fig tree with leaves and no fruit is the secular nation of Israel today, a nation that does not trust in God but

in the arm of flesh. It is the carcase or dead body of Ezekiel 37 before it receives the spirit (wind, word) of God. When we saw a secular Israel re-established as a nation, in the midst of other nations that wanted to devour her, then this was surely the "generation" that will also see Jesus' coming.

We have used Scripture to define how long a generation is, and generally taken it to signify 40 years — because of the generation that died in the wilderness. Israel was established as a nation in 1948, but of course Christ did not come in 1988. Where have we erred?

Some have said that perhaps, after all, Jesus was just making a comparison. When we see the sign of his coming then we should recognize that his coming is soon, just as the leaves of a fig tree indicate that summer is nigh at hand. And so we have a general reference to timing. Although not as definitive as we might like, this interpretation still provides a powerful boost to our faith. Israel was established 59 years ago. The coming of Christ must be near. Let us make ourselves ready each day — for there are surely not many days left!

But note that Jesus specifically says this is a parable. By definition the details in a parable represent something more than what they are on the surface. And we must not forget that the apostles asked for two signs. So we should not be too quick to mix up the sign of his *coming* and the sign of *the end of the world.* If the details in the parable are symbols, then it is reasonable to assume we are not dealing here with a simple lesson from nature. The fig tree must be a symbol of the sign of *the end of the world* that the apostles were looking for.

It is interesting to note that the Bible never states directly that the fig tree is a symbol for the nation of Israel. Hosea 9:10 perhaps comes closest: "*I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time.*" If the fathers of Israel were figs then surely Israel is a fig tree. But Israel is already defined as grapes. Some have taken Joel's words in 1:7 as a definitive statement on the issue. "*He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree.*" These two passages come closest to making a direct connection, but neither compare with the directness of what is said about the vineyard and the olive tree. Isaiah 5:7 says directly that "the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel." Hosea 10:1 says that "Israel is an empty vine." In Romans 11 Paul says that his brethren the Jews are the natural branches of the olive tree. There are no such direct statements about the fig tree.

How does Jesus use the fig tree? Jesus talks about fig trees four times, one of which is the parable in Matthew 24. In chronological order these are as follows:

1. First he says that he saw Nathaniel sitting under a fig tree when he was calling the apostles (John 1:48).
2. Next he gives the parable of the fig tree in the vineyard that was to be dug about and fertilized the third year before it was cut down (Luke 13:6-9).
3. Next Jesus curses the fig tree during the final week of his mortal life and at the end of his ministry (Matt. 21:19-21; Mark 11:13,20,21).

4. Finally we have the parable of the fig tree, which may have been given on the last day of Jesus' life (Matt. 24:32; Mark 13:28; Luke 21:29).

Except for the first mention of the fig tree (with Nathaniel) there is an obvious connection between the other uses of the fig tree. In all three cases the fig trees were without fruit. This is stated directly in references 2 and 3 above. In the parable of the fig tree, despite that fact that a natural fig tree produces its fruit before (or at least at the same time as) its leaves, there is no mention of the fruit. So we are justified in thinking that, in all three instances, the fig tree of which Jesus speaks represents the same thing.

The parable of the fig tree in the vineyard points us in the right direction. As already stated, Isaiah 5 makes it very clear that the primary symbol in the plant world for the nation of Israel is the vine. It is very significant that in the parable of Luke 13 the fig tree was growing in the vineyard. Isaiah says that the vineyard is the whole house of Israel. So Jesus is focusing on something that is in Israel and that is singled out to be cursed, to wither, and to be cut down, once his three-year ministry is over. Surely the focus of Jesus' condemnation is Jerusalem.

The fig tree of Jerusalem?

In Luke's account of the Olivet prophecy — right before Jesus begins to talk about his second coming — he says: *"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24).*

Compare this with Matthew 23:37,38: *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, [thou] that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under [her] wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."*

And in obvious fulfilment of the "fig tree in the vineyard" parable of Luke 13, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem when he finds and curses the fig tree because it has no fruit. He had tried to gather them under his wings to protect them from the evil that is coming, but they will not do so because they do not recognize the time of their visitation.

Is it not possible, then, that the fig tree is a better symbol for Jerusalem than for Israel? The fig tree putting forth leaves is Jerusalem coming out from under her long Gentile oppression — but still not turning to God. The people bear no fruit, despite being given the great blessing of possessing their beloved city once again after nearly 2,000 years.

A "generation"

Now we turn to the other variable in the parable. What is a "generation"? The "40-year" interpretation comes mainly from the "generation" that wandered and died in the wilderness throughout a 40-year period. It also finds some basis in Jesus' use of the term concerning the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in Matthew 23, in the verse that precedes his lamentation. Assuming that he spoke

this prophecy in about 33 AD, then 70 AD and the great destruction of the city was approximately 40 years later.

[Editor's note: But the crucifixion of Jesus was, from other historical accounts and comparisons, probably closer to 27 or 28 AD — since his birth was more likely 4 or 5 BC rather than 1 AD. Meanwhile, the great final war for Jerusalem began in 67 AD, and did not end until 70 AD. Clearly, "approximately" is about as close as we can get to a 40-year period using these historical analogies. For that matter, it may be said that Israel wandered in the wilderness for 38, not 40, years (Deut. 2:14). Any way we look at it, then, using 40 years as a fixed number based on these comparisons is something of a guess!]

Other than these there are no other numbers associated with the use of the term "generation" in the Bible. Most of the time the term refers simply to the people of the particular age being discussed. That is the way Jesus uses it almost exclusively.

But we do not need to remain fixed on an exact number of years. The Greek word can be a general term referring to a group. In this case it is the people who, during their lifetimes, see the fig tree putting forth leaves. In terms of this interpretation, they are the people who see Jerusalem finally delivered out of its "treading-down-by-the-Gentiles" period. So what can we say about the time of fulfilment from the parable of the fig tree?

If we interpret the fig tree to be the unification of Jerusalem after the Six Days' War, then the starting point of the "generation" prophecy would be 1967. Using the traditional period for a generation of 40 years brings us to 2007. To see the culmination of all things included in the Olivet Prophecy by the end of this year is questionable. But if the generation to which Jesus refers is the group of people who were old enough for this event to register in their memories (let's say about 12 years old), and assuming a 70-year lifespan (cp. Psa. 90:10), then we arrive at the year 2025 (1967 plus 70 minus 12).

Perhaps we may think, in the most general terms, of 2007 as the lower limit of a time period and 2025 as the upper limit of the time period. But we may conclude the parable of the fig tree is still a valid indicator of a general time period for the things Jesus discusses in Matthew 24.

In all of our expectations, however, we must always remember the warning in the very next verse of Matthew 24: *"But of that day and hour knoweth no [man], no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (v. 36).*

Jim Robinson
(Kitchener-Waterloo, ON)

"There are joys which long to be ours. God sends ten thousand joys, which come about us like birds seeking entrance; but we are shut up to them, and so they bring us nothing, but sit and sing awhile upon the roof, and then fly away" (Henry Ward Beecher).

Latin American Activities 2006 in Review

Baptisms in 2006

In all areas of CBMC (Canada) and CBMA (America) activities, God has truly blessed the efforts of many brothers and sisters. During 2006, there were 22 baptisms throughout the Caribbean (the CBMC's area of responsibility) and 25 in Latin America, which includes Mexico, Central and South America (the main area of the CBMA's efforts). In both cases a goodly number of fieldworkers — mainly from North America but also from other parts of the world — spent days, weeks and sometimes months supporting existing ecclesias and preaching initiatives. Resident missionary families were present in Ecuador and Bolivia for much of the year. Unfortunately, the CBMA began 2007 with no full-time missionaries in the field. But at the same time, our Heavenly Father has guided more Spanish-speaking workers to commit themselves to being part of the schedule of preaching/pastoral trips to Latin America. The combined preaching methods of advertising, correspondence work (postal or internet), and scheduled trips to specific countries — followed by the placement of full-time missionaries — has been blessed by God in recent years. These combined methods all start the process of establishing ecclesias. At present there are over 1,000 active correspondence contacts, with several thousand more who receive regular mailings of information and invitations to special talks and events.

Ecclesial and fieldworker support

Besides the scheduled visits mentioned above, there is a variety of support available for the fieldworkers and ecclesias. A wide array of Spanish language literature is now available — leaflets and booklets on many topics, including *Christendom Astray.* Weekly exhortations and study papers in Spanish are sent by email and post to many members in Latin America for ecclesial and personal use. Cassette tape recordings of Spanish talks are also distributed by mail, and are of particular benefit to those in isolation. Many brothers and sisters in Latin America now have email connections; this has enabled regular communication that was not even dreamed of just a few years ago. This in turn has helped to create a feeling of belonging to the worldwide brotherhood. Inexpensive and in some cases free long-distance phone services, plus cell phones where land-lines do not exist or are unreliable, have made a huge difference in our ability to communicate instantly with brethren in many countries.

The door of faith

God has blessed the work in so many ways, such as the response to advertising and course work, the attendance at advertised talks. But some of the most heart-warming aspects are the confessions of faith during baptismal interviews and, even more importantly, the changed lives! The baptisms during 2006 in Latin America included men and women of all ages and from all walks of life. A 23-year-old man in La Paz, Bolivia — **Victor Hugo Fernandez** — was baptized on November 12. He is a university student who also works almost full-time hours. He was introduced to the Truth by others already baptized in La Paz. He regularly attended meetings and had personal studies with the missionaries. In comparison, **Francisco Gilardoni**, an 88-year-old retired lawyer and judge, who also taught law at the university level, was baptized on November 21. He had completed correspondence courses with Sis. Jean Hunter from California and realized the only true justice will be at Christ's return. He answered the interview questions with "great fervour", in the words of the interviewing brother.

We thank our Heavenly Father for continuing to open *"the door of faith unto the Gentiles"* in these last days. The CBMA expresses gratitude to the brotherhood for the constant prayers, the generous financial support, and the loving interest in the CBMA's Latin American activities. Your brothers and sisters in Latin lands are truly grateful for the fellowship of the brotherhood!

Don Luff, CBMA Latin American Committee

Letter

"Crowned with glory and honor"

In "Before the World Was" (*Tidings*, Dec.), Bro. Jim Harper establishes that "*the foundation of the world*" refers to the creation of **man** recorded in Genesis 1:27. Based on this precise identification, he interprets "*the **glory** which [Jesus] had with [his Father] before the world was*" (John 17:5) as alluding back to Genesis 1:26. I'd like to add another line of reasoning to support his conclusions.

Psalm 8 is a psalm of David celebrating Genesis 1: *"What is **man**, that thou art mindful of him? and **the son of man**, that thou visitest him? For...*

(a) thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,

*(b) and **hast crowned him with glory and honour**.*

*(c) Thou madest **him to have dominion** over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas"* (Psa. 8:4-8).

In particular (as the highlighting shows) the psalm celebrates Genesis 1:26, God's giving **man** dominion over all creation.

Verses 4-6 of Psalm 8 are quoted in Hebrews 2:6-8 to prove that *"unto the angels hath [God] not put in subjection the world to come*" (Heb. 2:5). The inspired writer explains: "*For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, **crowned with glory and honour**; that he by the grace of God should taste death for **every man**. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing **many sons** unto **glory**, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings*" (vv. 8-10).

These verses show that Jesus was the **man** to whom dominion was given in Psalm 8, hence also prophetically the **man** in Genesis 1:26. Furthermore, they show that the sequence in Psalm 8 (identified as a, b, and c in the quotation above) corresponds to three stages of Jesus' career:

(a) his earthly ministry ending with his death,

(b) his **glorification** and heavenly ministry, which "*now... we see,*" and

(c) his return to rule as king over all things, which "*now we see not yet*."

In John 17:5 Jesus is declaring his willingness to lay down his life (a), and he is asking his Father to **crown him with glory and honor** (b), as promised before the foundation of the world.

The underlined phrases above indicate the strong tie between the **glorification** of Christ and his death. The importance of this correlation is indicated by the number of passages in which it is taught: e.g., Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34 (and their parallels in Matthew and Luke); Luke 24:26; John 12:23-26; 13:31,32; Acts 2:22-36; 13:26-39; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 10:12; 12:2; and Revelation 5:11-13.

Finally, these verses in Hebrews show that Jesus is the captain of **many sons** that are being brought unto **glory**. Through his suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus became "*the head of the body, the church: who is **the beginning**, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence*" (Col. 1:18), "*the Amen, the faithful and true witness, **the beginning** of the creation of God*" (Rev. 3:14; cf. Gen. 1:1). Thus, as Jesus is "***the image** of God*" (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; cf. Gen. 1:26), even so those "*whom [God] did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to **the image** of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren*" (Rom. 8:29; cf. Heb. 2:10-15).

In conclusion, I'd like to thank our brother for his insightful and stimulating thoughts.

Joe Hill
(Austin Leander, TX)

The overhead projector is a teaching aid that has become a great labor-saving device. It takes material that is clear and transparent and then ensures that it goes over everyone's head.

Theologians used to take years to learn to do this.

News & Notices

HAMILTON (GREENAWAY), ON

Our Sis. Diane Hewer has requested that her ecclesial membership be transferred to the Hamilton (MacNab) ecclesia. We commend her in love to the brethren and sisters at MacNab and thank her for her help and company over the many years she attended Greenaway.

We are pleased to welcome to Greenaway Bro. Bob and Sis. Joy Jennings, who have transferred from the Brantford ecclesia. We pray for our Heavenly Father's blessing on our time together, that it may bring glory to His great name.

Tom Thorp

JASONVILLE, IN

With great joy we report the baptism of Brian Ross Adams on September 30, 2006. Brian is the son of Bro. Dana and Sis. Rebecka Adams of Cincinnati, who are members of the Jasonville ecclesia. His grandparents are Bro. Ted and Sis. Lois Plew, and he is the great grandson of Sis. Mary Higham. Brian's paternal grandmother was Sis. Helen Adams of Boston who just recently passed away. May God bless and keep him on his walk to the Kingdom. Brian will be attending college in Chicago in January.

We wish to thank the following brethren from the Avon, IN, Ecclesia who have helped us with exhortations: Bre. Tom Gadberry and Dean Brown. These brethren have provided a valuable assistance to our small short-handed ecclesia.

Ted Plew

KAMLOOPS, BC

Bro. Jon Fletcher has taken over the duties of the recording brother, replacing Bro. Gregg Ferrie as of November 1, 2006. Address correspondence to: 2515 Partridge Cres., Kamloops, BC V2B 6W5. Contact by phone at 250-579-2291 or e-mail at jfletcher@kamloopsbiblestudy.info

We have received by transfer Bro. Nathaniel Massey, from the Prince George Ecclesia, in July 2006. We welcome our brother to this small ecclesia and greatly appreciate his assistance.

In addition, our Bro. Daniel Ferrie is currently living and working in North Battleford, SK, and is attending the ecclesia there. Sunday school student Joel Ferrie is living and working in Victoria and attending the ecclesia there. Bro. Nathan and Sis. Crystal Bartholomew are living and working in Kamloops and attending our ecclesia.

We were blessed with the birth of Zechariah Nathan Montgomery on July 8, 2005 — a firstborn son for Bro. Dean and Sis. Jennianne Montgomery.

Our gospel proclamation work over the past year and a half has included a Learn to Read the Bible Effectively seminar followed by studies of Genesis and prophecy. We

are almost finished with the Revelation seminar. We presently have two contacts, one of which is studying for baptism.

We have had many visiting speakers over the last year and a half and are very grateful for their fellowship. We thank Bre. Skip and Stephen Bartholomew, and Graeme, Tim and Paul Osborn (Okanagan); Bill Hlina, David Drysdale and Dean Bailey (Vernon); Wesley Butler (Vancouver); Rapheek Soolaman (Maple Ridge); Mark Higgs (Victoria); Ron Kidd (London, ON); Mike LeDuke (Kitchener-Waterloo); Wayne Osborne (Denver, CO); Colin Hollamby (Glenlock); John Sivior and John Knowles (Adelaide, Aust.); and Bernard Burt (Coventry, UK) for their adult Sunday school classes, exhortations and, in some cases, midweek Bible classes. We also would like to thank the sisters and families who accompanied these brethren in their labor of love. Bro. Jim Cowie (Brisbane) also led a study day for us on "Christ in the Wilderness", and Bro. Geoff Higgs led our 2006 fraternal in a study on "Peter".

We have had many visitors as well over the past year, too many to record them all here, as it seems Kamloops is geographically at the crossroads of the ecclesial world here in BC. We truly enjoy all the company and support we receive, particularly at our study days and fraternals; we encourage anyone passing through to give us a call and stop to visit.

Upcoming events, God willing, include our annual fraternal to be held March 31–April 1, 2006, led by Bro. Stephen Hornhardt.

Jon Fletcher

DETROIT (MILFORD ROAD), MI

We have been blessed with many brethren and sisters visiting our ecclesia over the past several months. We especially would like to thank Bro. Lee Livermore (Avon, IN) and Bro. George Booker (Austin South, TX) for their words of exhortation. Also, we would like to thank Bro. Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ) for leading our Sunday school class, and Bro. John Ramsden (London Forest Hill) for leading our midweek Bible class. We rejoiced in the marriage of Bro. Jonathan Perry to Sis. Katy Jarvela of the Ann Arbor, MI Ecclesia on October 14, 2006.

Once again, we plan to commence a series of monthly lectures starting in January entitled "The Visible Hand of God at Work". Our proclamation committee has also updated our website: www.milfordroad.net

John Betteley

PRINCE GEORGE, BC

As we begin a new year, we look forward to our annual Fraternal Gathering on May 19-20, 2007. Our speaker this year is Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC), who will speak on "Biblical Examples of Personal Sacrifice." We extend a warm welcome to any who are planning to attend.

Our thanks to brethren who have visited and spoken during the fall period: Jon Fletcher (Kamloops, BC); Gordon Dangerfield and Jonathan Lawrence (Victoria, BC); and Caleb Lawrence (Cambridge, ON). Their visits were much appreciated. To any who are traveling through northern BC, please stop for a visit.

Ken Loveridge

SUSSEX, NB

We are saddened to report the falling asleep of Sis. Violet (Vi) Harvey on Sunday, January 7, 2007, at the age of 81 years. Sis. Vi was a servant of our Lord both in Ontario and New Brunswick for 60 years. We admire her excellent example to all of us. We eagerly look forward to the day of reuniting with our dear sister at our Lord's return.

By transfer we lose our Bro. Philip and Sis. Janice Baines, as well as their daughter Sis. Amanda. We commend them to the brethren and sisters in Cambridge, ON. We will miss them dearly here, but rejoice to see them embrace their new spiritual family in Ontario.

Brad Goodwin

WORCESTER, MA

We are very pleased to announce the baptism, in November 2006, of KAYLA ADAMS into the saving body of Christ. Sis. Kayla is the daughter of Bro. David and Sis. Monica Adams, and granddaughter of Sis. Beryl Adams. Sis. Kayla is a devoted Sunday school scholar and CYC student. Her excellent statement of faith showed her knowledge and commitment to our Heavenly Father. We look forward to our walk together to the kingdom with Sis. Kayla; may God bless her.

We are also pleased to report the birth of Robert John Wells to Bro. John and Sis. Elisabeth Wells. Baby Robert is the grandson of Bro. Les and Sis. Suzanne Wilkinson and Bro. Roger and Sis. Jan Wells. He was born approximately one month prematurely but is home now and doing fine. Our prayers for baby Robert are that he may grow up strong in the one hope that we all hold so dear.

Mark Fulmer

Adult Study Week

During the week of September 9-14, 2007, there will be an "Adult Study Week — The Bible School with a Difference", at Wildwood Manor, Ballinafad, ON. The topic of study will be Zechariah 1-7. For information about the workbook or to register please contact Bro. Bob and Sis. Joy Jennings by e-mail at bobnjoy@vif.com or by phone at 519-754-0902; or Bro. Martin and Sis. Lois Webster by e-mail at mjwebster@vif.com, or by phone at 519-442-0544.

Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School

God willing the Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School will be held June 30-July 8, 2007 at Shippensburg, PA. Our theme this year is "Thou Wilt Shew Me the Path of Life" (Psa. 16:11). Our youth program theme will be "Old Testament Types of Christ — Joseph, Moses, and David."

Bro. Nigel Patterson (Newquay, UK) will speak on "The Letter to the Christadelphians (Studies in Colossians)" to the adults and "Daring to be Different" to the teens. Bro. Mark O'Grady (Tawa, NZ) will speak on "All the Tithe is Holy" to the adults and "Genesis 1" to the teens. Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC) will speak on "Exodus — Escape from Bondage" to the adults and "Preparing to Preach" to the teens.

Early registration rates, before May 1, 2007, are: Adults: $395; 12-19 years: $330; 3-11 years: $200; and 0-2 years: $25. Prices include room and board for the first Saturday

dinner through the second Sunday breakfast. Early registration is critical because we have limited housing facilities. First preference will be given to full-time registrations. Roommate preferences are accommodated whenever possible, although not guaranteed, and late registrants should understand such accommodation is less likely.

Part-time registrants will be conditionally accepted until the full-time deadline of June 15, 2006. All persons planning to attend the Bible School, either full-time or part-time, are requested to contact the registrar prior to the Bible school. For those not staying at the school, a daily facility fee of $18 the first day and $10 per day for subsequent days will be charged to those coming in for a day's classes. Upon arrival please check in with the registrar to settle accounts.

Limited financial assistance is available for those experiencing severe need. All requests will be coordinated with the home ecclesia. Financial assistance requests should be mailed to Bro. Gordon Macfarlane, 462 Evergreen Ave., Ancaster, ON, Canada L9G 2P8; telephone 905-648-1161 or e-mail gordee@lara.on.ca

Checks should be made payable to MACBS. Canadian registrations and deposits are: $20 CDN per person with a $50 CDN family maximum, or $20 US per person with a $50 US family maximum. Mail deposit and registration to Jeff Livermore, PO Box 135, Novi, MI 48376; telephone 248-349-8793. For additional information and forms send a request to MACBSRegistrar@hotmail.com or check http://www.christadelphians.net/MACBS

Robert C. Kling

New York Metropolitan Sisters' Retreat

During the weekend of May 5-7, 2006, the New York Metropolitan Sisters' Retreat was held in Pennsylvania. On Friday, blessed with perfect spring weather and filled with anticipation, a group of 45 like-minded sisters and friends from ecclesias in the metro New York area, New Jersey, Baltimore and California, retreated to the Pocono Manor Resort in Pennsylvania for a weekend of renewal and growth in the Lord.

With Sis. Carol Link (Baltimore, MD) and Sis. Gabriela Kilburn (Brooklyn, NY), we were absorbed in their presentations on the theme: "Is Your Relationship Right with God?"

Sis. Gabriela stimulated our minds by posing pertinent questions about interdependence of relationships in the ecclesia and the world. Sis. Carol likened us to "Sisters in Nature". Using bees as examples, she ably demonstrated how as sisters in Christ we can function effectively in our natural as well as spiritual relationships. Each talk was followed by lively and sometimes spirited discussion, which dealt with real-life issues affecting our lives in the truth.

After lunch on Saturday, we made use of the free time to shop in the nearby town, hike along the trail or engage in sports activities, while others simply relaxed or explored the beautiful historic manor built by the Quakers.

The quizzes, hymn sing, ice cream social, and indoor pool games were all part of our Saturday evening program and presentation.

Our most touching moments came from a prayer session on Sunday morning, where everyone joined in remembering our brethren and families before the Lord in special prayer requests.

As the two speakers concluded the weekend with the Memorial Service, Sis. Gabby stressed that we should truly love each other and genuinely strive to have the best interest of our ecclesia at heart. We must resist the temptations of the world by drawing close to the word of God.

Sis. Carol took us back in time where we observed some of the women with whom Jesus shared relationships. We saw Martha and Mary in their home, and then Mary Magdalene anointing the Master's feet, demonstrating her understanding of his imminent death.

You won't want to miss the next upcoming retreat on May 25-27, 2007, God willing.

Pacific Coast Christadelphian Bible School

God willing, the Pacific Coast Christadelphian Bible School will be held in Idyllwild, CA, July 22-28, 2007. The speakers and subjects at this year's school will be:

1. Bro. Matthew Blewett (Durban, South Africa): "Finding Faith";
2. Bro. Kitson Reid (Birmingham, UK): "The Hand of God in our Lives"; and
3. Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco, CA): "That I Might Know Him."

The school offers a wonderful environment for the whole family to study God's word and enjoy the fellowship of other brethren and sisters. For further information, please contact Jeff Gelineau at: 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065 or by e-mail at mail@gelineau.org; Bro. Gary Patterson, by e-mail at garympatterson@hotmail.com; or visit our website at www.californiabibleschool.org

Gary M. Patterson

Simi Hills Preaching Fund

The Simi Hills Preaching Fund continues to be available to assist with funding for ecclesial-sponsored preaching efforts and other ecclesial activities. The Fund normally provides assistance on a dollar-for-dollar matching basis with the ecclesial budget. The percentage can be higher depending on the nature of the project and the need. The goal is to enable ecclesias to increase their ability to present Bible seminars and other outreach programs, both in frequency and in the amount of advertising. The fixed costs — both in physical effort on the part of the presenters in preparation, and the hall rental expense — do not increase with the number of people who attend. That factor, coupled with the natural falloff in attendance as the series progresses, means the more advertising we can do, the more attendance we will have, and therefore the better use we will make of the time and money that goes into each program.

To request funds, send a brief e-mail outline of your program, budget, and need to both of the following addresses: kenandbonnie@simihills.org and ksommerville@unitedagencies.com.

Ken Sommerville

Sis. Eunice Coy

We regret the failure to report the falling asleep in the hope of the resurrection of our Sis. Eunice Coy on March 13, 2006, at the age of 92. She had been baptized for over 70 years; most of those years were spent, along with her late husband Bro. Walter

Coy, as steadfast workers in the Detroit area ecclesias, where Sis. Eunice served as organist and Sunday school teacher. At one time or another, "Aunt Eunie" taught many of the brothers and sisters who are now members of the four area ecclesias. She earnestly looked forward to the coming of God's Kingdom.

Rose Madge

Even as her health deteriorated in the last year, Sis. Eunice would dwell on the wonderful promises we shared in Christ Jesus. Psalm 72 was a favorite of hers, and she would recite it as it was read to her. On one such occasion, remembering her childhood and the faith passed on to her by her parents, she smiled and said, "I have a rich heritage." And so do we all.

Barbara Booker

Taipei Ecclesia, Taiwan

Two and a half years after Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Dianne Burke arrived in Taiwan, there is now a small ecclesia of nine brethren and sisters, seven of whom are local Taiwanese. We are blessed by regular visits from brethren and sisters from various parts of the world, and welcome any brother or sister who wishes to visit for a short time, or to stay for an extended duration.

Those visiting Taiwan can make direct contact with the local secretary, Bro. Jonathan Burke, by email at: jb@thechristadelphians.org, or by mobile phone at: 09-3966-77690. Memorial meetings are held every Sunday afternoon after lunch, around 2 pm, and there are weekly public Bible studies. Contact Bro. Jonathan for details.

Also, Bro. Abraham Wang can be contacted in either English or Chinese by email at: chih_wang@hotmail.com

All meetings are in English with Chinese translation. Alternatively, contact ACBM Secretary Bro. David Evans by e-mail at: taiwan@acbm.org.au or by phone at: 61-8-8431-4310.

Youth Leader Seminar

During 2005, 446 young people, of CYC age and older, completed an online survey. The purpose of the survey was, first, to identify and assess the prevalence of moral issues facing our youth in these last days; and second, to better understand how effective help might be offered by the brotherhood. The results of the survey have been presented to arranging brethren, parents, and youth leaders internationally. In discussions arising from these presentations there has been much encouragement to reach out to youth leadership.

To this end a Youth Leader Seminar is being held, God willing, on February 24, 2007, in Garfield, NJ. Bre. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON) and Ralph DiLiberto (Finger Lakes, NY) will be co-leading the day. The goal of the seminar is to promote discussion amongst youth leaders regarding these issues, and to better equip them with Bible-based tools and strategies to address these moral challenges with the young people in their home ecclesias.

For additional information, please visit www.letusrise.com, and/or contact Bro. David Perry (Manhattan, NY) at dperry1@gmail.com

Minute Meditation

We Must Decide

"He who created us without our help, will not save us without our consent."

We certainly did not ask to be born, but God knew when we would be born and what we would be like before our parents ever met. In speaking to Jeremiah, God told him, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

As with Jeremiah, when God created us, he knew our character beforehand, and He made us without our knowledge or assistance. This fact does not guarantee that He will save us. God may not even hear us when we ask Him for help if we have not made the right choice to serve Him. The Psalmist tells us, "The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry." But he continues, "The face of the LORD *is* against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." If we choose not to acknowledge God or obey His commandments, then we put ourselves in the class of those who do evil, and we cannot expect God to protect us. We want to be able to say, as David did, "As for me, I shall call upon God, and the Lord will save me."

The choice is ours. God does the calling, but we must do the responding. Christ tells us, "For many are called, but few are chosen," and the reason is that — tragically — many who are called do not respond to that call.

God gives us free will. He wants to save us. The prophet Ezekiel tells us, " 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die?' " The time of judgment is fast approaching, these are the last days of a degenerate world, and we long for the fulfillment of the promises when the earth will be renewed — and the peace and contentment of the kingdom age will begin. But God is merciful, and He is providing a time of opportunity, a last chance for men to repent before the return of Christ. Peter said, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Even though the Lord is not willing that any should perish, the sad fact is that most *will* perish. The reason is not because God has not given men the opportunity to be saved, but because most choose to 'do their own thing' rather than obey His commandments.

Moses challenged the chosen people of his day to make the right choice. He said, "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse — the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; the curse

if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you." History attests to the fact that most did turn away and perish.

Joshua said to the people of Israel just before he died, "If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

The people gave a good answer but later turned away from their good intentions. We read, "And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua." But, unfortunately, soon afterwards every man was doing whatever was right in his own eyes, which turned out to be a bad decision because they chose not to be faithful to their God.

Elijah threw down a challenge to the Jews of his day: "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, 'How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.' And the people answered him not a word." The people would not acknowledge God until after fire came down from heaven and burned up the offering on the altar of God; then they chanted, "The Lord, He is God, the Lord, He is God." Nevertheless, soon after, Jezebel was out to kill Elijah — causing him to flee for his life.

God gives us tests to see if we will follow Him or not. He tested Adam and Eve in the garden and they failed; there was only one thing they were told not to do, and they did it. He tested King Hezekiah: "But when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask Hezekiah about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart." Sadly, he failed this test in showing off all his wealth, and then learned that every item he had proudly displayed would be carried off to Babylon.

God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, and he passed the test; God mercifully provided a ram once Abraham demonstrated his intention to obey exactly what God required.

We will be tested. Hebrews tells us, "For the Lord disciplines him whom He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives." God promises us these challenges for a good reason. We need to learn: to learn obedience, to learn to trust God, and to understand how much we need forgiveness and the salvation God offers. Even the Lord Jesus needed testing, as we can see from when he was tempted in the wilderness — as well as the comment in Hebrews, "Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered."

God knows us and what we need, and every trial He sends us is for our good. Paul tells us, "No [trial] has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be [tried] beyond your strength, but with the [trial] will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." God tests us because He loves us and wants to improve our character and prepare us for future glory. It is comforting to know that God will not send us a trial we cannot handle,

and that God helps us to endure the trials He sends if only we will trust in Him. Jesus tells us to cheer up when we are being tested. "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

We too can overcome, and there is a special blessing upon those who do. "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations."

God created us and He wants us in His kingdom, but it must be our decision to say along with Joshua of old, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." If we do, we can join David in saying, "As for me, I shall call upon God, and the Lord will save me."

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

FEBRUARY

3,4 Camp Ladore Young people's gathering. Bro. James DiLiberto: "Spiritual Welfare: Spirit vs. Flesh". Contact Bro. Ryan Mutter rmutte1@umbc.edu 202-437-0641

17,18 Saanich Peninsula, BC Fraternal gathering. Bro. John Mannell (Toronto West, ON): "Behaviour in the House of God: A Study of 1 Timothy". Contact Bro. Richard Morgan richest@telus.net

24 Youth Leader Seminar Garfield, NJ. Bre. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON) and Ralph DiLiberto (Finger Lakes, NY). For additional information, please visit www.letusrise.com, and/or contact Bro. David Perry (Manhattan, NY) at dperry1@gmail.com

MARCH

3 Worcester, MA Sisters' study day: "Women at the Well". Contact Sis. Beth MacAdams 978-870-0492 beth.macadams@gmail.com or Sis. Linda Reding 508-769-9003 lreding@charter.net

3,4 Baltimore, MD Study weekend. Bro. Allen Laben (Norfolk, VA): "Meet the First Century Ecclesia". Starting Sat. 2 pm. Supper will be served. Sunday 9:45 am; 11 am. Lunch will be served. Contact Bro. Andy Bilello 410-692-9855 andrewcbilello@yahoo.com

10,11 Victoria, BC Study weekend. Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "Road to Atonement". Contact Sis. Pat Williamson 250-721-4938 pwilliamson@telus.net

24 Toronto East Ecclesia study day. Saturday 1 to 6 pm. Bro. Jim Styles (Livonia, MI): three talks plus dinner. Contact Bro. David Willoughby 905-427-3756

31-April 1 New Westminster, BC Fraternal gathering. Bro. Steven Hornhardt (Australia).

APRIL

6-8 Wichita Falls, TX Annual Spring Gathering. Texas Christadelphian Camp and Conference Center, Freestone, TX (near Buffalo, TX). Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA). Contact Bre. Larry Beutel 940-592-9418 or John Clubb jclubb4081@aol.com

6-9 Kilcoy, Guyana Bible School Bre. Ted Hodge: "The Only Thing that Counts"; Bro. Clive Drepaul: "The Truth of the Fourth Beast". The school will incorporate a preaching campaign, extending to April 12. Contact Bro. Ted Sleeper tsleeper@rcn.com

7-14 Florida Bible School, Bradenton, FL. Bre. Jeff Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA), Tec Morgan (Birmingham, UK), John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). Contact Bro. Norm Luff 579-754-1251 normluff@yahoo.ca. Registration Sis. Diane Jennings 727-528-1886 mikejenn@ffn.com

14,15 Richmond, VA Petersburg Fraternal Gathering, Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON). Contact Bro. Dave Kerr gr8eats@comcast.net 804-360-5299

28,29 Washington, DC Study Day, and Baltimore/Washington Gathering. Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA): "What's the point? (The message of Ecclesiastes)". Contact Bro. Bob Kling rkling@computer.org

MAY

11-13 Nanaimo, BC Vancouver Island Sisters' Weekend, Beach Acres Resort, Parksville, Vancouver Island, BC. Sis. Yvonne Rosenau (Nanaimo, BC): "My Strength is Made Perfect in Weakness". Contact Sis. Beth Dangerfield, 1155 Ranger Place, Victoria, BC V8X 3P5 gdanger@shaw.ca 250-479-8422

18-20 Hartford City, IN Fraternal gathering, Lake Placid Retreat. Bro. Paul Billington (Brantford, ON): "Signs of the Times". Contact Bro. Jerry Asbury 618-288-5023 JerryandDot1@cs.com

19,20 Prince George, BC Fraternal gathering. Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC): "Biblical Examples of Personal Sacrifice". Contact Bro. Ken Loveridge loveridgeken@shaw.ca

25-27 New York Metropolitan Sisters' Retreat. Pocono Manor, Pocono, PA. Sis. Gerry Ann Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA): "Facing Today's Challenges / Dilemmas". For complete information and registration contact Sis. Averil Ferguson 718-881-8705 averilpsm23@juno.com

26,27 Sussex, NB Study Weekend. Bro. George Jackson (Toronto East, ON): "God's Striking Revelation of His Son: A Study in Hebrews". Contact Bro. Brad Goodwin 506-433-6681 braddeb@nb.sympatico.ca

JUNE

16,17 New York Fraternal South Ozone Park . Contact Bro. Gideon Drepaul yerubbaal@yahoo.com

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

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

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

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
P.O. Box 530696 • Livonia, MI 48153-0696
Periodicals Postage Paid at San Dimas, California

JULY

8-14 Southwest Bible School, Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. Bro. Tec Morgan (Birmingham, UK): "Romans: The Gospel of Salvation"; Bro. Nigel Patterson (Newquay, UK): "David: From Sheepfold to Palace"; Bro. David Styles (Shelburne, ON): "The Ecclesia of the Living God: The Pillar and Ground of the Truth". Contact Bro. Joe Hill, 11110 South Bay Lane, Austin, TX 78739-1580; joehill@io.com www.planofgod.org

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

22-28 Pacific Coast Bible School, Idyllwild, CA. Bro. Matthew Blewett (Durban, South Africa): "Finding Faith"; Bro. Kitson Reid (Birmingham, UK): "The Hand of God in our Lives"; and Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "That I Might Know Him". Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065 mail@gelineau.org or Bro. Gary Patterson garympatterson@hotmail.com or visit our website at www.californiabibleschool.org

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

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 Wisnieswski (Ontario, Canada) kidscampcalifornia.com or Bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com

SEPTEMBER

9-14 Adult Study Weekend 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

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 70 **March-April, 2007** **No. 3**

Editorial — The Parable of April 15th **107**
Exhortation —When Donkeys Talk, *Ken Sommerville* **109**
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:
(3) Paul sends his greetings, *Tom Barling* **113**
Apologetics — The Hard Questions:
(24) Which God? The Exclusivity Issue:
(8) A Lesson from Idolatry, *David Levin* **118**
Bible Study — Rightly Dividing the Word:
(2) Respecting the Actual Words, *Bob Green* **124**
Letters — Global warming; Lake Victoria; 40-year generation; Dignified farewell; Flash flood **128**
Reflection — Famous Last Words: (9) Melchizedek, *Chris Sales* **135**
Bible Mission News — Guadalajara, Guatemala, CBMA website **136**
First Year Results for the "This is your Bible" Website **139**
News & Notices **142**
Minute Meditation — Are We Willing?, *Robert J. Lloyd* **151**
Coming Events **153**

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060) is published monthly by The Christadelphian Tidings, 42076 Hartford Dr., Canton, MI 48187-3360. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID at San Dimas, California. POSTMASTER: Address Service Requested at The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696.

The Tidings Publishing Corporation: Joe Hill (Chairman), John C. Bilello, Peter A. Bilello, Steve Cheetham, Ken Curry, Clive Drepaul, Mark Giordano, Tony Isaacs, Ted Sleeper, Phil Snobelen, Ken Sommerville, and Jeff Wallace.

The Tidings is published on the 25th of the preceding month. Correspondence to the editor: George Booker, 2500 Berwyn Cir., Austin, TX 78745-3559. E-mail: editor@tidings.org. Administrator: Rose Madge. E-mail: rm_madge@yahoo.com. Home page: www.tidings.org.

Subscriptions

The current subscription rate is $20 in the United States, $28 in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and £14 in the United Kingdom. Subscribers in UK please send checks to: Malcolm Cross, Grange Farm, East Cottingwith, York YO42 4TB; in New Zealand & Australia to: John Beer, P.O. Box 559, Te Awamutu, Waikato, New Zealand 2400. Otherwise checks should be made payable to: The Tidings, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF.

Items for publication MUST be received by the 10th of the month.

Editor: George Booker; Assistant Editor: Donald H. Styles

A Mighty Flame: Love in the Bible
Book Publishing Location Clarification

This book was published in 2006 and indicates on the inside of the first page that it is published by The Caribbean Pioneer located in several locations, one of them being Brantford, Canada. We wish to clarify that the Brantford Ecclesia, in Ontario, Canada, had nothing to do with the publishing of this book; nor is it promoting, distributing or selling this book.

The Brantford Arranging Brethren

Announcement

Furthermore, *The Christadelphian Tidings*, Tidings Books, the Tidings Publishing Committee, the editor, and the Austin, Texas, ecclesias have no responsibility for, and are not involved in the production or distribution of the above-mentioned book.

George Booker

Editorial

The Parable of April 15th

Our government long ago devised a method of collecting revenues from its citizens that involved their voluntary reporting of annual income. The date selected by law by which this reporting is to be completed is the 15th day of the fourth month of the following year.

Shortly after the end of every year, all across the land, millions of businesses and individuals who have paid out moneys to their workers or landlords or business associates begin to file information reports. Copies of these reports go to the central government itself, while other copies go to the recipients of the income.

It then becomes the responsibility of individuals to compile their own reports, from the information provided, of the income they have received during the previous year.

Other figures, called "deductions", are provided to or compiled by taxpayers.

These deductions may be subtracted from the total income, so as to produce a new number, called "taxable income". After further calculations, the individual is able to determine and to render to the government an amount of "income tax".

Throughout the year, when money changes hands, the government (by various means) is able to appropriate portions of that money. This is called "withholding". It is far-sighted in that the government, through the remainder of the year, is able to use this money that technically still belongs to the individual "taxpayer". It is also clever in that the amount "withheld" during the year usually exceeds the amount actually owed by the taxpayer at the end of the year.

Thus, when the taxpayer files his report with the government, he can usually expect to receive back some paid-in surplus as a "refund". And so the government — by a sort of enforced savings plan — guards against the taxpayer earning a lot of money during a year, owing a lot of taxes at the end of the same year, and having little or nothing left with which to pay.

But, invariably, every year many taxpayers wait until the 14th or even the 15th day of April to begin compiling their income and expenses for their annual report. This, despite the fact that — for most people — all the necessary information is available by the end of January, and when the tax return is filed they may expect to receive a refund check.

Just as Jesus took many of his parables from daily life, as he observed it all around him, so we also may find "parables" in our daily lives.

What is there about people that, having 75 days to perform a relatively simple task, they will wait 74 days, or even 74 days and 21 hours, and then try to perform

the same task under great pressure of time? The consequences: foolish errors that could have been easily avoided; frayed nerves; sleepless nights; late-evening rushes to the post office to beat the deadline; and delays in receiving refunds. Why do we so often make life more difficult than it need be?

The professional tax preparer sees such senseless procrastination close at hand, and multiplied a hundredfold. And he learns something about human nature: It is not pleasant to think about certain things, and many people do not think about them until they are absolutely forced to. This is silly, imprudent, and wasteful. And it happens all the time.

A "Peanuts" cartoon touches on this point. Linus — the thoughtful one! — is talking to Charlie Brown: "I seem to think too much about hard things! What do you do about that, Charlie?"

"When things are hard, I try not to think about them!"

Linus gives this a bit of thought: "That's good. But what if you can't help yourself?"

"Then I try harder not to think about them!"

Now Linus is baffled: "Okay, but what if you REALLY can't stop thinking about REALLY hard things?"

Now it's Charlie's turn, for a moment at least, to think really hard (illustrated in the cartoon by seriously wrinkled eyebrows): "Well... when things are really, really hard to think about... well, then, I try really, really hard not to think about them!"

Linus finally throws his hands in the air and walks off: "I give up!"

It is a favorite fantasy of the little child that, if he closes his eyes, difficult or uncomfortable facts or circumstances will disappear. The adult knows that reality is not changed simply by his refusal to contemplate it. But sometimes, somewhere deep in his subconscious, he deludes himself into thinking like that "little child".

There will be a time, a day, of ultimate reckoning, at the return of Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31). We do not know (in fact, we are told that we cannot know) the actual day. But we do know it is coming. It is coming as surely as next April 15th. (And, when it comes, it will negate the effect of all subsequent April 15ths!) Shall we wait until the very day itself and then rush around frantically, trying to tie up the loose ends of our lives? Or shall we use the available time... now... to prepare ourselves for the inevitable? And the right preparation... now... will make the inevitable so much more pleasant.

May the little "deadlines" of our lives remind us, as they roll around one by one, of the great "deadline" somewhere over the horizon.

Don't wait until the last minute to prepare for the most important "accounting"

you will ever know.

Exhortation

When Donkeys Talk

When donkeys talk... it may pay to listen. Things are not always as they appear.

Who would have thought to give anyone that advice? And yet, in hindsight, we all know now what Balaam learned then... extremely important advice can come from a donkey.

But that was a unique incident in the history of the world and has never happened before or since, right? You and I are not likely to have a talking donkey in our experience.

Or are we?

The broader subject, of which Balaam's ass is just a specific example, is the matter of God communicating with us. God has not always found us to be an open, ready audience for His advice. He has used every method imaginable, and some practically unimaginable, to communicate with us. He has a reputation among us for working in mysterious ways. When He might have been expected in an earthquake, He spoke in a still, small voice. When He sent His Son to lead us back to Him — and to become the king of the world — He did so in a way devoid of all pomp and circumstance. Actually, He sent him to us in circumstances of poverty and relative obscurity: the baby destined to be king was born in a barn, and raised in a poor out-of-the-way village.

Just how difficult it is to reach us may be seen in Jesus' words:

> *"Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like? They are like children sitting in the market place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you and you have not danced; we mourned to you and you have not wept" (Luke 7:31).*

In other words, nothing seems to work!

And God has been persistent. In fact, if He were not God, He might even be accused of nagging! The pages of the Bible are full of God's efforts to reach us: "Howbeit, I sent unto you all my prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate" (Jer. 44:4). Finally He sent His Son, and we know how we reacted to that. Many ordinary people agreed to murder him.

But not everyone in Jerusalem was a murderer, and we may think that, had we lived then, we would have been of that small number who listened to Jesus with open minds and open hearts. Even if we share the same nature as those who rejected him, we need not share the same fate. Nevertheless, we are susceptible to the same human tendency: refusing to listen, especially to what we do not want to hear.

The donkeys God sends us

At first Balaam's donkey said nothing (Num. 22:24). It just stopped and refused to move forward. We can certainly understand how this would have been very frustrating. When our car won't start, we can understand how Balaam must have felt. Beating one's donkey — like slamming down the hood of the car — almost makes sense.

Should he have understood his donkey's actions as a warning from God not to proceed? Had not the angel just told him the night before to rise up and go with Balak's men this morning? But then, the night before that, God had told Balaam, "Thou shalt not go with them." On the surface it does seem like Balaam was getting some mixed signals.

But when we ask the next question we begin to understand Balaam's motive in this sad story, and we may be on the way to self-examination.

The question is: Having received a clear, unequivocal answer from God (Num. 22:12) that he should not go with Balak's men to curse Israel... why did Balaam ask the same question again?

Was it because he did not like the first answer? Was it because, deep down, Balaam really wanted to do what God did not want him to do?

Have you ever wanted to do something so much that you kept asking one person after another for "advice"... until you finally found someone who agreed with you? Then, of course, you followed ***his*** "advice"!

And of course we do not have to speculate about what was motivating Balaam. He was greedy (Jude 11). He wanted more than what he had. He wanted what Balak was offering. He was covetous — in effect, he worshiped the "idol" of money (Col. 3:5)!

What is the best way to reach you... or me?

Whether we covet what we should not have, or want to do what we should not do, or persist in a self-destructive habit... how can God reach us to help us change? How can anyone reach us? Are we reachable?

Jesus' words —"We have piped unto you and you have not danced; we mourned to you and you have not wept" — suggest that God has tried, tries, and will continue to try every way possible to break through our natural resistance and reach us.

There are three principal ways in which God speaks to us (though He is not limited to these, as we know):

1. the Bible,
2. answered prayer, and
3. the brotherhood.

The Bible is the clearest voice because its words are fixed in print and act as a reliable guide, to which we can refer and which we can discuss with others. We can

reason logically about its message; we can consider all the evidence it provides. In doing so we may overcome our personal biases and tendencies, and get closer to what God is actually saying to us.

Answered prayer is extremely powerful to the one whose prayer has been answered, but another person might feel it is too subjective to be a useful indicator in his or her own life.

And now we come to the point of this message: God may speak to us through our brethren... through others... through our friends... our wives and husbands... our children.

We can agree wholeheartedly when Jesus speaks critically to his brethren, and when the New Testament writers write critically to the first-century ecclesias. But we have great difficulty when someone takes ***us*** aside and criticizes ***our*** actions.

The idea that God might be speaking to us through our brother (or our wife) is the furthest thing from our minds when we are being criticized. We jump so quickly into our knee-jerk defensive reactions. In fact, we may respond just like Balaam did: beating the messenger!

Sometimes we "kill the messenger" with a hot, angry outburst: "Who are ***you*** to tell me anything?"

Sometimes we "kill the messenger" with a cool, calculating, carefully-worded argument composed hours, or days, later — an attorney's brief, sprinkled with sarcasm, and veiled attacks upon our "opponent".

The question still remains: "How ***can*** we be reached?" If we are honest, we may say, "Well, please don't criticize me in front of others." Or, "don't criticize me when I've just come home from a hard day at the office." Or, "please wait until I'm feeling better."

But the question is: "How ***can*** you be reached?"... not "How should you ***not*** be reached?" And the fact must be faced: some of us (many of us?) find it just about impossible to receive any constructive criticism whatsoever. That should tell us something about ourselves.

Perhaps, after careful, honest consideration we may come up with the way that we would find the least upsetting. (There will be almost no way to avoid all upset.) And in the self-examination we may realize two things:

(1) that the problem is ours, that we have erected too many barriers, too many defense mechanisms, around ourselves; and
(2) that the next time we are criticized, we should work just that much harder to soften our hearts, and to open our minds, and really ***listen*** to our critic.

This is not to suggest that 100% of all criticism is valid, nor that one should suspend one's own judgment and be led here and there by every piece of advice one receives. But we should realize that most criticism has something of benefit in it.

Sometimes we act as if the world revolves around us. Very few people are staying up late at night trying to think of something to say just to upset us. When criticism does come, most likely the "messenger" has a point — whether well articulated or not, and whether he is the "best" to make it or not — and we do well to take heed.

Even if the critic ***is*** a ***"donkey"*** — and he well may be, one way or another — there may be merit in his "message". And God may be using him to reach you... when all other "better" means have failed!

Besides, what does it hurt to listen patiently, and then think about it?

On giving criticism

So far we have thought about how to receive criticism. Jesus says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). But criticism may be one of the few things that it is ***not*** more blessed to give than to receive!

Still, sometimes we do have the obligation to be critical... not overly much... but it must be done. Remembering the many "beams" in our own eyes should affect our attitude, but that alone should not be used to avoid our reasonable duties. There is an ancient principle in Leviticus 19:17 that actually equates failure to give criticism with hatred of one's brother: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbor, and not allow sin upon him."

Common sense tells us that we should warn someone when we see him or her going down a dangerous path. Once when I was in Panama, I took a wrong turn down a street, and, fortunately, a merchant ran out of his store and told me not to go that way. I took his advice. But of course that was easy advice to take, and it contained no personal criticism. I had no burning desire to go down that particular street; and the danger was real, present, and fairly certain. I was not being told to change the direction of my life — away from a goal into which I had made large investments of time, money, and emotion.

How much more important is it to warn our brother or sister that the "road" they are traveling down may lead into spiritual danger, or even spiritual death! Better to speak up and be thought an "ass" for a while, than to feel — far longer — the guilt of knowing you should have said something but said nothing because it was easier.

> *"The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and* ***easy to be entreated****, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17).*
>
> *Ken Sommerville (Simi Hills, CA)*

* * * * *

About Balaam's ass (Num 22:28) Robert Roberts wrote: "It was just as easy for God to impart the gift of utterance temporarily to a four-footed creature, as to endow some other creatures with it permanently who show no special aptitude

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (3) Paul sends his greetings

In our contemporary world, it is usual for the writer of a letter to start with some such formula as "Dear...", and to append his or her name at the end. This was not the custom in Paul's time. The writer then introduced himself immediately; thus, at the beginning of the letter to the Ephesians, we read: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus..." While this introduction served to authenticate the letter, the fact that it was normally borne by a trusted emissary, in this case Tychicus (6:21), meant the origin of the letter was known before it was read to the assembled ecclesia, for this appears to have been the practice (cf. Col. 4:16, 1 Thes. 5:27). The salutations which stand at the beginning of Paul's letters possess a special interest for they are in a sense a distillation, an epitome of his theology, and this we shall discover as we examine the first two verses of the letter.

Paul writes as an accredited apostle of Christ Jesus, "through the will of God" (v.1). It is accordingly not as an ordinary person that Paul is now communicating with his readers. In our studies of John 13-17 *["The Way to the Father", May 2004 -Dec. 2005]*. we saw how the Lord Jesus was careful to stress the fact he was also an apostle, "one sent". His authority derived from the fact his Father had ***sent*** him into the world: "...I came forth and come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me" (John 8:42). Our Lord is thus supremely God's apostle, a fact recognized in Hebrews 3:1, where we are called upon to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus". It was this fact, of being sent and commissioned by God, which established Jesus of Nazareth as God's apostle.

Now the Lord knew he would go to the Father and that others would be his accredited representatives after his ascent into heaven. It is for this reason that in those final words to the faithful eleven the Lord emphasises the role to be played by them during his absence with the Father: "As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world" (John 17:18). The record in the Book of Acts shows how faithfully they discharged their apostleship. However, to the ranks of the Twelve one was added who was to be the apostle, the one sent to the Gentiles; it was he who received a special revelation on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1-19). Years later, in his defence before Agrippa, Paul refers to his experience, and quotes the words addressed to him by the Lord who would deliver his apostle from the people of Israel, and from the Gentiles to whom he was ***sending*** him (Acts 26:17). Earlier, in his words from the stairs of the tower of Antonia, he had referred to a subsequent and confirmatory revelation when the Lord Jesus had given him the reassurance: "Depart: for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles" (Acts 22:21).

At the opening of Ephesians, a letter which we know to have been intended for a number of ecclesias, we can understand why Paul would invoke the authority invested in him as a specially commissioned apostle to the Gentiles. He did not invariably mention his status as apostle in all his letters. Thus, in addressing himself to the Philippians, with whom he had the most cordial of relations, he is content to refer to himself and Timothy as "servants of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:1).[1]

We note in the salutation in the Ephesian letter, Paul mentions that, while he is indeed in a special sense the apostle of Jesus Christ, this is through the will of God. He thus brings himself in line, as he so often does, with the teaching of the Lord Jesus who, as we have reminded ourselves above, could commission the apostles with an authority he himself had received from his Father. None had greater love and reverence for the Lord Jesus than Paul himself, and yet he knew the Lord God was sovereign. Worthy of notice in this connection is the lyrical outburst at the end of Romans 11: "For of him, and through him, and unto him are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen."

All is ultimately subject to God's will, a truth which explains everything relating to the Lord Jesus. His mission is epitomised in the quotation of Psalm 40, quoted in Hebrews 10:7: "Then said I, Lo, I am come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God" (v. 7). The moving evidence of this lies in the anguished prayer of Gethsemane: "O my Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Matt. 26:42). The prayer he has taught all his followers contains these words: "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Matt. 6:10).

We come now to consider the recipients of the letter; they are the saints who are also "the faithful in Christ Jesus" (NIV, NRSV, REB). The description of the believers as "saints" indicates the status conferred on all who, by faith and baptism, become members of God's new society in Christ Jesus. Before the promulgation of the terms of the covenant God made with the Israelites in the wilderness,[2] the Lord God informed them that if they observed the conditions He was laying down they would be a special people.

These conditions need to be quoted in full, for they have a special bearing upon the nature of the new covenant and the conditions attaching to it:

> *"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exod. 19:5,6).*

Underlying this passage is the basic notion of holiness, a people set apart for the express object of doing God's will.

The echo of this fundamental passage is clear in Peter's words as he addresses the followers of the Lord Jesus:

> *"But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God's own possession, that ye may shew forth the excellencies of him who called you out of*

darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

It is thus that those who embrace the offer of salvation in the Lord Jesus inherit the privileges and responsibilities forfeited by Israel as the result of disobedience. Thereby the great prophecy of our Lord uttered shortly before his death was fulfilled:

"Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43).

All this is implied in the use of the term "saints" in the New Testament; it means that every follower of the Lord Jesus is not only to be separate from the world with its practices: he must also show forth God's "excellencies", producing the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22). This calls for submission to God's will in all circumstances. The promises inherent in the new covenant exceed by far those available to the Israelites in the wilderness. This requires total faithfulness, and Paul's estimate of those he was addressing was that they were "faithful".

We have two words in English — "belief" and "faith" — and while we have a verb corresponding to the first, "to believe", we talk of "having faith" instead of "to faith" (as a verb). The Greek is simpler: ***pistis*** (faith), ***pisteuo*** (to have faith) and ***pistos*** (faithful); the relationship between the three is evident. When Paul describes his readers as "faithful" he is recognizing that their faith is active and productive. In our consideration of faith, we are encountering the first fundamental necessity in man's relationship with God, and none was more convinced of this than the Apostle. As he declares: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation... as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16,17), a fundamental truth endorsed in resounding terms in Hebrews 11:6: "And without faith it is impossible to please God..." (RSV). [*See the Digression below: "The structure of the early section of Romans".*]

It is this grace which Paul mentions in the second verse of his salutation: "Grace to you and peace from God and the Lord Jesus" (Eph. 1:2). The reflections in which we have already engaged in our brief consideration of the letter to the Romans have reminded us of the importance of grace. Here, in this second verse, grace is coupled with peace but this connection, too, has been anticipated in the earlier letter to the Romans: at the beginning of chapter 5 faith, peace with God and the access to divine grace through our faith are all brought before us (see vv. 1,2). "Peace" (Hebrew "shalom") we know to be the conventional Jewish greeting; to this is now added the mention of God's grace.

The associations of Biblical peace are rich and varied. The Old Testament had spoken of one who would be "the prince of peace" (Isa. 9:6), whose government would inaugurate an endless peace upon the throne of David (v. 7); Micah also speaks of the man of Bethlehem Ephrathah who would be the peace (5:5). While such passages prophesy the future benefits of the righteous reign of the Lord Jesus, his task at his first coming was to conquer sin, man's deadliest enemy, thus removing in his person the enmity between God and man. About this we hope to write at greater length when we come to Ephesians 2. It must suffice for the

present to note that there Paul speaks of the one who is "our peace".

When we ponder the blessings brought to the believer by the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus, we can see how appropriate was the salutation: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Some of the lovely features of Paul's letters are the terms he occasionally employs to describe the God he served and whose he was (cf. Acts 27:23). Thus in the letter to the Romans, he speaks of "the God of patience and comfort" (15:5), "the God of peace" (v. 33, and again in 16:20).

While our new life in the Lord can bring us peace, this experience does not come automatically. It is in the contemplation and cultivation of certain qualities that this peace can be found. So much Paul taught his beloved Philippians: first, he mentions the need for us to be free from anxiety, by using the resources of prayer with thankfulness (4:6,7). Then he rehearses the lovely things on which the mind should dwell; when this is done, and only then, will the God of peace be with us (vv. 8,9). Paul was doubtless familiar with his Lord's words, with their invitation to come to him in order to find freedom from our anxieties (Matt. 11:28-30).

(Next: God's gracious purpose of redemption preceded the foundation of the world)

Tom Barling
(Teignmouth, England)

Footnotes:

1. The variations in Paul's salutations are significant. We have noted that in addressing the Philippians he does not refer to his apostleship. This is the case also at the beginning of 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians and is an evidence of the affectionate relationship he had with these Macedonian believers. Likewise, in addressing Philemon, doubtless a convert of his, he does not invoke his apostleship. Where it is appropriate, and this is a token of Paul's courtesy, he associates with himself others familiar to his readers: (a) 1 Corinthians 1:1, Sosthenes (see Acts 18:17); (b) 1 Thessalonians 1:1, Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy (see Acts 17:15); (c) 2 Thessalonians 1:1, Silvanus; and (d) Philemon 1, Timothy. It may surprise us that in his two letters to Timothy and Titus, two close associates, he introduces himself as an apostle; it is, however, his apostleship which establishes the authority of these instructions.
2. The book of the covenant must not be confused with the book of the law. The former is expressly mentioned in Exodus 24:7; the terms are set out in chapters 20-24. It was ratified by blood (see Exod. 24:4-7) and was thus a precursor of the new covenant in the blood of the Lord Jesus. The book of the law was more comprehensive, and a copy was lodged by the Levites at the side of the ark (Deut. 31:25,26). It was doubtless this ancient copy which was found in the renovation of the Temple in the days of Josiah, the reading of which had such a profound effect upon the king (2 Chron. 34:15-19).

Digression: The structure of the early section of Romans

The structure of the early section of the letter to the Romans is worthy of at least brief examination. After reminding the Jew he is no better than the Gentile (ch. 2:23,24), Paul establishes the universality of sin in 3:23: "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." But in the context of the same verse, Paul reminds his readers of "the righteousness of faith in Christ Jesus", and in verse 24 he speaks of the believer "being justified freely by the grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus". The association of faith and grace is worked out first in chapter 4 where the faith of Abraham (the spiritual father of all those who have faith — v.

11 — is highlighted), and then in chapter 5 the efficacy of God's grace for the penitent sinner is declared. To the subject of grace we must presently return.

If the recipients of the letter are faithful, it is "in Christ Jesus". As in the case of our studies on John 13-17 we discovered the fundamental importance of that short word "in" (***en*** in Greek), so now. The new life is no longer in Adam, our natural heritage, but in the Lord Jesus. So Paul reminded the Corinthians, many of whom had lost sight of the great truth: "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature (creation: NIV, NRSV): the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). There is a passage of great elevation (the appropriate word surely) to describe the new life in the Lord Jesus in Colossians 3; verses 1-5 should resonate in our mind and heart constantly, for they remind us that our new life "is hid with Christ in God" (v. 3; see also Phil. 3:20).

So it was that Paul's readers were faithful in Christ Jesus, and it is this tribute

OPPORTUNITY TO TEACH

The Christadelphian Heritage School (CHS), held in the Simi Hills Ecclesia in the greater Los Angeles area, California, is recruiting teachers and an administrative assistant. The school term is September 2007 through June 2008. This is an ideal opportunity for retired school teachers and young brothers and sisters just out of college — who would like to dedicate a portion of their lives to providing a spiritual and academic educational experience for our children.

Grades are kindergarten through middle school. The school meets on a four-day week, with occasional field trips on Fridays. Curriculum materials are provided. Some financial assistance is available.

The governing principle of CHS is to provide quality education within a Biblical context. It is of the utmost importance that our children be in a safe learning environment, where their best interests and their individual progress are paramount. The small student-to-teacher ratio ensures that our children receive personal attention and an education of the highest caliber. With such a personalized education, we are able to accommodate those with special needs to help them achieve their individual potential. The results have been most positive both in spiritual and secular areas.

If you would like additional information please contact Bro. Greg Robinson at (805) 491-3923. E-mail: greg@bigbrand.com

With love in Christ,

Bro. Greg Robinson, CHS Board

Apologetics

The Hard Questions: (24) Which God? The Exclusivity Issue: (8) A Lesson from Idolatry

Early one August morning a man walked out into the tepid Atlantic waters. The low cloud cover merged horizonlessly into the ocean; in the pre-dawn dimness the man felt enveloped in a gray, damp, warm cocoon of nature. Low tide on a flat, shallow beach afforded him enough distance from the shoreline civilization that he could, if but briefly, experience the isolation of the sea. The man stood waist-deep in the water, leaning back slightly against the slow outward tide and the salt air breeze. He sensed only a murkiness of sight and sound, yet the movement of air and water testified to a presence of power and energy. The man considered how easily one could worship the created rather than the Creator, and then he prayed.

In this article, I am going to make the unlikely apologetic move of explaining why idolatry makes sense. No, I do not recommend idolatry, but I do want us to understand that it isn't abject madness. Idolatry in the context of ancient Israel made perfect sense, and the Israelites incorporated idolatry into their worship. In so doing they violated their own needs for religious exclusivity, and they suffered accordingly. We do not have classical idolatry as a major issue in our day, and I don't think that anyone of our body who struggles with the exclusivity issue would extend their scope to include an idolater if one did come among us. We might have some doubts or questions at times as to just how much we need to know to delineate gospel truth, but no one would find themselves so open as to include a worshiper of a lifeless image.

What's the point, then, in including a rationale of idolatry in our series? I would cite a general and a specific reason. The general reason is that when we investigate the development of religious thought of any kind, we can better evaluate our position relative to other religious perspectives. Specifically, the case of idolatry provides an excellent contextual example of the way in which similar competing religious traditions (for so the Jews considered them) could be justified and incorporated into their worship. Today it is the variety of orthodox Christian denominations that can look similar to our form of worship, using largely the same vocabulary and forms of worship.

Isn't Isaiah 44 clear and pointed?

Let's look at our primary text for this article, Isaiah 44:9-20. Isaiah recounts with disbelief how a man cuts down a tree, uses some of the wood to grill his meat, fashions an idol from the remainder of the wood, and then worships the idol. "Is

there not a lie in his right hand?" gasps the prophet (v. 20), scarcely able to believe what he has observed. The account takes the idolatry at face value, challenging us to believe people could be so naive, so primitive as to worship an object of their own artifice. The depiction of the idolater is not flattering. Adapting a phrase from Mark Twain, it is as if Isaiah wrote, "in matters of intellect, the difference between the idolater and the idol is not spacious."[1]

Idolaters weren't thick-browed primitives, however, despite the hubris of modern humanity to depict any prior civilization as mentally lacking, unsophisticated, and naive. Shall we say that the ancient Mediterranean world was intellectually wanting? Egypt? Greece? Rome? Assyria? Babylon? Advanced cultures all, full of art and invention. Ancient civilizations, far from being primitive and ignorant, were sophisticated seekers of religion. They differ from the modern world only in accumulated technology, not inherent civility or mental prowess. Idolatry existed alongside the monotheism that Isaiah preached.

People who lived in relatively non-technological societies also had much more intimate contact with nature than we do today. Their sensitivity to the power of nature was not dulled by technologies that made flight ordinary, turned night into day, stopped rivers, and eliminated plagues.[2] Today we live so isolated from nature that we often aren't even aware of our distance from it. We have climate control, 24-hour schedules, worldwide instantaneous communication. We can go for weeks without seeing birds by day or the stars at night. We don't know where our food comes from. Living with nature and using its bounties had a reality in ancient times that escapes us "civilized moderns."

The ancients had sophisticated intelligence, a close contact with nature, and the same human passions as we do. How did idolatry develop from this? We will see that idolatry really isn't very unbelievable at all; it's just another extension of natural human thinking. That's what Isaiah was really preaching against.

How idolatry arises

As did the man in the opening vignette of this article, people have always observed power, energy, motion, and vastness in the natural world. The first step to idolatry is ***observation,*** specifically the awareness of the powers and regulative activities of nature. Observation, however, can also be the first step to appreciation of Deity as creator (Rom. 1:19,20; Psa. 19:1-6). Observation itself is neither idolatry nor faith; what we do with our observation makes the difference between worship and idolatry.

What powers do people observe in nature? Ocean waves and flowing rivers, weather features, volcanoes, earthquakes, migration and other animal instinct behavior, plant growth, the expanse of the firmament, reproduction, and seasonal changes might cover most of the list (consider God's witness to Job in chapters 38-40). All these activities of nature inform observant minds that some power greater than themselves exists around them.

Continuing the exploration

When one observes power in the natural world, it would be natural to want to have some personal connection to the power. Questions such as "How can I identify with this power? How can I make it part of my life?" would arise in the observer's mind, especially in the past. When we today see the power of nature, we don't covet it, as we have much of our own. Who needs the wind and the birds when you've got a 747? It does change our perspective. Societies in contact with nature would value nature's powers much more than we do. People would observe forces far beyond human capabilities, forces that they depended on for life, forces that completely dominated their existence. They had meager ability to counter the forces of nature, so they had great incentive to want to get in on the power, to identify with it, to have a possibility of altering it for one's good through worship of the God responsible for it.

The next step is the desire to identify with or participate in the power; we can call this personalization.

A critical step

Once a person has observed nature, categorized the great powers and decided he or she "wants in," the next step is "***How*** do I get in?" This becomes a watershed question, because the first two steps are equally the pathway to faith as idolatry. Now we have come to the fork in the road, with a signpost that identifies the two ways of "faith" and "idolatry." What is at stake is how we decide to seek identification with the powers around us. Will one seek the Creator or the created?

The need for the concrete

Faith deals with the abstract and the ambiguous, but human nature desires the tangible and defined. In the great faith discourse in Hebrews we read that Moses endured by "seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). This oxymoron perfectly describes the mind of faith: it sees the unseen. In contrast, the mind of flesh desires to make seen the unseen, to remove the ambiguity, to make it tangible and concrete. Thus, the next step to idolatry is **concretization:** making a concrete representation of the power.

A tangible depiction of an unseen power seemed appropriate. An incipient idolater could proclaim that a "depiction of the harvest" was merely a tribute to the god who made the seasons and gave power to the plants to grow and mature. But human nature quickly focuses on the tangible, and then the problems begin.

We have a Bible illustration of how human nature perverts even God's blessings: the bronze serpent (Num. 21:9). It was the tool Moses used to heal the plague upon Israel when they sinned by becoming impatient with God. God sent fiery serpents, but when the people of Israel looked upon the bronze serpent, they received healing. What became of the bronze serpent? Did the people take it merely as a token or representation of God's great mercy? No, it eventually took on a life of its own. It became the object of worship, so much so that Hezekiah had to destroy it (2 Kings

18:4)! Because it was tangible, identifying with it was easy. Mercy is intangible; a bronze serpent is for real. In their desire for concretization, Israel lost the truth about mercy and forgiveness.

The need for something tangible — something visible, and concrete — turned the bronze serpent from a healer to a destroyer. It took on a life of its own and it became an object of worship. The attribution of power had made the fatal shift from Creator to created. The image became the means of access to the power itself: no symbol, no power. With this step, ritualization has occurred. Ultimately, belief in the tangible became the operative norm — not that the image itself had inherent power, but that it was the access to the power it represented.

The process concludes

Thus, finally we have true idolatry: ritual worship of inanimate objects. Power observed became power desired. Power desired became power represented in concrete images. The images then became objects of worship in their own right. Power had fully shifted from the God of creation to the tangible representation of some aspect of the Creator's power. Now we have idolatry in the sense of Isaiah 44. The carver didn't worship the wood per se. He wasn't so stupid as to think the wood had power. He was following the human process of trying vainly to access the power of nature by making a representation of it. As bad as this is, however, the history of idolatry gets much worse.

Human attributes accrue

Two more steps remain to explain the evils of idolatry: self-determination and immorality. We can use the golden calf incident (Exodus 32). With Moses apparently gone, the congregation lacked authoritative leadership and direction. They knew that they needed direction, and they chose to access it by building a golden calf, an image of some power they sensed. It, of course, lacked inherent power; therefore it became an ideal vehicle for self-determination. The Israelites were bent on returning to Egypt, so they made an image that would easily fit their own projections. They could hoist the image to their shoulders, and like the planchette on a Ouija board, "magically" direct their course back to Egypt. "The calf leads us back to Egypt," they would say, with the calf going nowhere but where they carried it! An inanimate object makes a perfect medium for self-determination. You can make it do what you want.

The other human attribute is the projection of fleshly vices into the object of worship. People easily decided that to have fertility, the ritual worship must include fornication. To have a great harvest, you had to have a great feast. To have the power on your side in war, you sacrificed humans. People simply enacted the attributes they desired, projecting upon the inanimate image the desires of their flesh. Rituals became orgies and who was going to dare stop this? Didn't it make perfect sense to ensure fertility and plentiful harvests by celebrating those activities with sex and food? And why not have an orgy even if your business is just getting back to Egypt? (Exod. 32:6,18).

The ultimate human projection upon idols came in the characters of the idols themselves. The idols came to stand for individual deities with human characteristics, including anger, vengeance, and lust, hence the human and semi-human forms of idols (Psa. 135:15-18). Appeasement became necessary, and ritual worship became the obvious way to appease an irascible God. People projected their worst characteristics onto blocks of wood and stone, both to revel in the debauchery and to satisfy the false deities with ritual human and animal sacrifice. What began as an observance of nature's power descended into projecting the basest of human characteristics onto images of wood and stone.

The sequence in summary

The path to idolatry in the sense of psychosocial steps, not necessarily as a historical model, is summarized below (compare Paul's derision of idolatry in Romans 1:20-27):

1. Observance of power in nature.
2. Desire to identify with that power.
3. Desire to access that power.
4. Making material representations of that power.
5. Developing a ritual to access the power.
6. The images, having been ritualized, take on a life of their own.
7. Images become idols, inanimate objects that readily absorb human projections.
8. The idols take on human characteristics.
9. Ritual worship comes to include debauchery.
10. Debauchery being fun, the idols become gods who demanded such behavior for their ritual appeasement.

Reasonable, but inexcusable!

Did Ancient Israel incorporate idolatry?

Of course they did; they had a huge exclusivity problem vis-à-vis idolatry. However, we need to put into context their lapses into idolatry. They lived under the terms of the old covenant, the Mosaic ritual system. Let's remind ourselves how easy it was for them to fail to distinguish idolatry from Mosaic worship. Both relied heavily on sacrifices, special days, feasts, material objects that represented God, sacred places, and a priesthood. However, the prophets and historians of Israel weren't buying any excuses; they only saw the bottom line, that idolatry meant worshiping another God.[3] They saw what lay behind the innocuous images, and they decried the abominable debauchery and reprehensibly immoral behavior that often accompanied idolatry. The prophets repeatedly warned against intrusions of idolatry; the warning of Isaiah 44 is hardly unique. Idols found their way into the temple (2 Chron. 33:7), as well as on the high places. Clearly, even the sophisticated monotheistic Israelite culture could look at an idolatrous worship scheme and regard it as compatible with the Mosaic program.

Can we guess some rationalizations that the Israelites used in order to accept Baal

or some totem in their midst? Religious discussion in Old Testament times might have sounded like this:

> *"Baal, YHWH, what's the difference? There's only one God, regardless of what we call him. It doesn't make any difference what people call God as long as they're sincere in their worship."*
>
> *"The idol represents the powers of nature and detracts not from our worship of YHWH."*
>
> *"Who are we to say that YHWH is the only God? What if I was born in Assyria? I'd just worship whatever God I grew up with. We can't claim to have the only avenue to God."*
>
> *"It is inconceivable that God should give us such great capability for sexual pleasure as a means of reproduction if he didn't intend it also for ritual use."*
>
> *"I know some idol worshippers who are just as good people, if not better, than anyone in our city. They're always nice, they wouldn't hurt anyone, and they give to widows and the poor."*

Does this have any bearing on today's ecclesia? Idolaters don't have much of a presence on the contemporary religious map, and even if a formally idolatrous organization were to appear in town, we wouldn't likely consider them of "like precious faith." Dispensing for now with the various applications of idolatry in the sense of the false gods of money, career, belongings, status, etc. — which are important exhortations but don't bear directly on the question of exclusivity — we can still learn something. We learn that idolatry as a process led Israel to rationalize religious practices that ultimately destroyed their relationship to the one true God. Unless we can step into passages such as Isaiah 44 and see that *fleshly rationalization,* not *primitive stupidity,* created the idol, we will miss much of the dangers of false religion in our generation. A contemporary Christadelphian who doesn't see much of a difference between the Truth and orthodox Christianity differs little from a non-discriminating Israelite who felt at ease with idol worship.

Ancient Israel had something very special: the revelation of a living God. Surrounding nations lived in the same creation and wanted to access the same God because they saw His power manifested in the natural world that surrounded them. They had forms of worship that seemed close enough to fit into the scheme of Israel's religion. Because the Israelites didn't know their own religion well enough, another one looked just the same.

Is spiritual Israel listening to the sad tale of idolatry?

(Next: Christianity and mythology, and other concluding ideas on the exclusivity issue.)

David Levin (Baltimore, MD)

Footnotes:

1. From a caustic essay criticizing James Fenimore Cooper's writing, especially his characterization of Indians. Twain wrote, "...in matters of intellect, the difference between a Cooper Indian and the Indian that stands in front of the cigar-shop is not spacious." "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses", in *The Essays and Sketches of Mark Twain.* New York: Barnes & Noble, 1995.
2. Perhaps it was not until Rome, with its vast public works systems, that any society had some measure

Rightly Dividing the Word: (2) Respecting the Actual Words

of control against the vagaries of nature.

3. Joshua 23:6-8; 24:23; 1 Kings 18:18; 2 Chronicles 28:2,3; Jeremiah 5:19; Amos 8:14; and Micah 1:7.

Appreciating the Scriptures means more than simply believing they are true and inspired by the LORD. It means (Hos. 12:4) realizing that in the Bible God is speaking to us. These are not just words spoken to Abraham, to Moses, to Israel, and to the disciples of the Lord Jesus. They are God's words to us, "written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).

The Apostle Paul quotes the law: "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Then, he asks, "Is it oxen God is concerned about, or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope" (1 Cor. 9:8-10).

It changes profoundly the way we think about the words of the Bible when we realize that it is not merely a source of facts and truths and rebuttals of errors, but that it was written "altogether for our sakes". In the Bible, God is speaking to us to touch our hearts with the knowledge of His caring about us. With what reverence and care, then, must we read and explain His words. Our goal must not be just to acquire knowledge, for knowledge alone "puffs up" (1 Cor. 8:1-3).

Rather, we must read the Bible carefully in order to know Him and His Son, so that we are drawn to the light of their love, and so that their love may be in us.

As noted in Article 1, we must ask, "What is the Bible actually saying?", and "What does the Bible mean by what it is saying?" That requires us to pay careful attention to the context in which the words are spoken. Individual Hebrew and Greek words in the Bible may have many shades of meaning. The proper meaning ought to be determined by the context in which the word is used. Furthermore, we must read sayings, verses, and longer passages — as well as individual words —with attention to their context, in order to know what God is saying to us and what He means.

Understanding the Bible's words to us in harmony with the context involves a number of considerations, depending on the particular passage. We need to know who is speaking, to whom the words were spoken, under what circumstances they were spoken, and why they were spoken. We need to understand the flow of thought in the whole passage in which a particular verse occurs, ignoring the chapter and verse divisions (which were added many centuries after the words were written).

Our understanding and explanations of a particular passage must be in harmony with teaching on that subject in the Bible as a whole. False teaching is often based on a single passage taken out of its immediate context, and interpreted in a manner contrary to plain teaching on the same subject elsewhere in the Bible.

In reading Old Testament passages and prophecies, we must take into account the way in which their meanings are enlarged and illuminated by the Lord Jesus and his apostles. Consider that:

(a) Though it was often intimated, it was not fully revealed in the Old Testament that Gentiles would be fellow heirs of the promises with faithful Jews (Eph. 3:4-6).
(b) The ten commandments spoken directly to Israel by God, Himself, are fully part of the teaching of the Lord Jesus. However, Jesus sets a higher standard of behaviour, a standard appropriate to a Lord who knows our hearts. This standard was higher than was possible in the civil law given to Israel through Moses, with its allowances for human hardness of heart and its human judges.

"Search the Scriptures"

An illustration of the importance of knowing to whom words are being spoken is found in John 5:38-40. We sometimes quote the words of Jesus in John 5:39 to prove that we can obtain eternal life simply by searching the Old Testament scriptures. But there is so much more to this passage.

These words are part of a discourse by Jesus to Jews (in John, "the Jews" usually means the religious leaders, particularly the Pharisees and scribes). Jesus actually said to them, "You search the scriptures, for in ***them*** you ***think*** you have eternal life."

In Jesus' day, the Pharisees and scribes were a religious elite of about 5,000. Their elite status — along with their great knowledge of the Old Testament, and their traditions — assured them, wrongly, that they had eternal life. Yet Jesus says to them, in verse 38, "you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe." Jesus is saying to ***them*** that, despite their prodigious Bible knowledge, God's word was not in their hearts. For, they did not believe Jesus, whom God had sent, and thus were not willing to come to him — despite the fact that these scriptures testified of him (v. 39).

These words of the Lord Jesus warn us that it is possible to search the scriptures, but — sadly — to remain unchanged in heart. Sadder yet, we may become proud of our knowledge and even arrogant toward others.

The Apostle Paul wrote (2 Tim. 3:15-17) of "the holy scriptures which are able to make [us] wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus". These were the Old Testament scriptures that Timothy had known from childhood. Their purpose, their only real purpose, was (and is) to produce, in reader and listener, "faith which is in Christ Jesus".

We should not be surprised by this, as we have been privileged to see so much of

God's revelation. But sometimes, as we read the Bible, we may act or speak arrogantly, proudly, or hatefully — as though, in all the time we have been reading, such a fundamental point has never dawned upon us! When this is so, then we have become "brothers" to the Pharisees.

Which son was "lost"?

In Luke 15, Jesus tells the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son (or sons). The context of these parables is very important in understanding them: "Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to him (Jesus)... and the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.' So, he told them this parable" (vv. 1-3).

This demonstrates that, especially in the third parable (with its fullness of detail), Jesus is speaking (and appealing) to the Pharisees and scribes. Clearly, these religious zealots did not consider themselves to be "sinners" (as — to their minds — the tax collectors were).

In the third parable, the older of the two sons counted himself superior to his younger brother who had wandered away from the father. Wanting no association with him, the older son remained aloof and refused to share a meal with his younger brother even when he repented and returned to their father.

The older son corresponds to the Pharisees and scribes, who wanted no association with the tax collectors and other "sinners". Furthermore, they thought that Jesus was contaminating himself by associating with them in any way. However, the Lord did not seek to join these men in sinful talk and activities. Rather, it was they who came to him — to hear him. Jesus' words and inspiring company were what they wanted. Like a good shepherd to all his people whom he had come to save from their sins, Jesus spoke to them words of grace and truth that changed many of their lives.

Jesus didn't worry about being contaminated by these sinners, any more than the thankful father worried about being contaminated by his wayward son who returned to him.

In the Luke 15 parables, Jesus was teaching the Pharisees (and us!) to make every effort to bring back those who fall away, and even to run to meet them when they seek to come back. And he is issuing a warning to those who cannot bring themselves to act in a welcoming way toward sinners who repent: he is warning them that they run the risk — like the older brother — of being "outside the house" when the "sinners" enjoy the meal of welcome and fellowship with the Father!

Certain "rich men"

The parable about a "certain man [who] had two sons" in Luke 15 is followed in Luke 16 by parables about "a certain rich man who had a steward" and about a "certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen". In Luke 16, we are told that Jesus spoke the parable about the first rich man to his disciples. This parable teaches important lessons about how disciples must use their money now to

ensure that their future with their Lord is certain. Then Jesus taught his disciples principles of faithfulness in the use of money, and he warned them against allowing desire for money to be their master instead of God.

Although the parable was spoken to Jesus' disciples, it was overheard by the Pharisees. Because they were lovers of money, they derided Jesus for this teaching (v. 14). So, after the first parable, Jesus spoke directly to them. He first rebuked them for seeking to justify their selfish, money-loving ways (v. 15). Then he showed how they broke the law shamefully by divorcing their wives in order to marry others (v. 18). He followed these blunt words by telling these Pharisees the parable about a certain rich man (who was, to put it bluntly, what they were already, or what they were striving to be) and a certain beggar.

This parable (Luke 16:19-31) gives a devastating picture of the future faced by these rich men because of their utter selfishness and disregard for the poor. It is helpful to know that the great majority of people in Galilee and Judea at that time were poor, that Greek ideas about an afterlife had infected Jewish thought, and the story of Lazarus was a well-known fable. A good Bible dictionary or commentary will provide this historical context. However, if we just explain away the misuse of the parable, we may miss the application of it to ourselves.

In the more highly developed countries of the world, many (but definitely not all) disciples of the Lord today are comfortably well-off — a little like the "certain rich man". However, the great majority of their brothers and sisters in the undeveloped countries of the world (although not all) are very poor — something like Lazarus. Unlike the "certain rich man" of Jesus' parable, we must be sensitive to the needs of our poor brethren; in our generosity we must be the Lord's answer to their cries.

These illustrations show the importance of the context in which Bible words are spoken, particularly who is being spoken to, and why, and in what circumstances.

The context is vitally important to our hearing what God and His Son are actually saying to us, and to understanding what their words mean in all their beauty and depth and power.

*****

In the next article, God willing, we shall see how the flow of thought and reasoning in a Bible passage as a whole (ignoring chapter breaks) is essential to full understanding.

Bob Green (Brantford, ON)

* * * * *

Let the stable still astonish: straw — dirt floor, dull eyes,
Dusty flanks of donkeys, oxen; crumbling, crooked walls;
No bed to carry that pain, and then, the child,
Cloth-wrapped, laid to cry
In a trough.

Who would have chosen this?
Who would have said: "Yes,
Let the King of all the earth be born here, in this place"?
Who but the same God

Letters

Global warming

Bro. David Ward has written, regarding "Global Warming, Commercialism, and Armageddon" (Jan., pp. 23-27) *(my interspersed comments are in italics: GB)*: To take the current controversy about "global warming" as a fact is very misleading. It is not supported by all, even among scientists. It has happened before, and no one is certain whether the current "change" is permanent or just another cycle. To take the alarmist stance is not helpful...

George replies (in italics): First of all, as to "global warming" being a "fact", Bro. Owen did acknowledge in the article that "Some feel the scientific data is flawed, or at least incomplete at this time."

Yours is an interesting implication, however: that we ought to wait until some idea or proposal is "supported by all" — whether scientists or politicians (or Bible students, for that matter) — before we can feel safe in considering it. However, I will say — at the very least — that the "theory" of global warming has received a considerable boost very recently, from the joining of leading U.S. corporations with environmental groups, together calling upon the federal government for improved emissions standards and controls. The corporations in the coalition include giants in mining, manufacturing, energy, and utilities.

This was followed, in short order, by President George W. Bush, long known as a friend to the oil industry, asking — in his State of the Union address — for a cut in gasoline use by 20 percent over the next decade, as well as tighter vehicle fuel efficiency standards.

Looking at this, it begins very much to look as though what might have been considered "alarmist" two years ago has now moved well into the mainstream, no matter the political party or the area of economic interest.

If there is a change it could be that it is God who is doing it. He has always used the weather as a means of controlling man (e.g., Deut. 28:12,23; Lev. 26:4,19)...

True enough. There are many Bible examples of mankind abusing or misusing God's blessings in ways that bring down God's judgments upon themselves: (a) those who neglected God's rules about cleanliness and diet (even under the Law of Moses) suffered ill health; (b) those who flouted God's standards of celibacy and monogamy often "received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion" (Rom. 1:27); and (c) those who, because of greed, would not let their fields lie fallow one year out of seven (Lev. 25:2-5) suffered poor crops and depleted soil.

*Moreover, there are Bible precedents, as well, of man disregarding God's laws and principles in such ways that — eventually — even **climatic** consequences resulted. Such consequences were seen, after the fact, as God's punishments. One example — commonly cited by Christadelphians and other Bible students — is that the Ro-*

man legions, in their war against the Jews, decimated the countryside of Palestine in the first century, actually deforesting whole regions (in the process disobeying Deut. 20:19). This led to grievous erosion of the soil, and was followed by actual climatic change in the region. As a result, the land of Israel became a desolation — as God had warned through His prophets that it would.

There has to come a time when men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming. This may be it. But let us not get into a tizzy about driving cars and having electric power...

It seems to me that Bro. Owen is not particularly interested in persuading all of us to join environmental activist groups. Rather, he points out: "The global warming crisis is another sign of the times that presages the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Fortunately, we know that Jesus will return before the earth is destroyed, and he will resolve the problem. He will restore this beautiful planet, in which God has placed His glory, to its former pristine condition."

Regarding the references to spoiling the planet by extracting minerals and such: when God gave Canaan to Israel, one of the advantages He pointed out to them was that they could dig brass out of the hills, and the stones were iron (Deut. 8:9)...

Yes, God commanded mankind to be fruitful and multiply, and to subdue the earth and rule over it (Gen. 1:28). But He surely intended that, in doing so, man would take reasonable precautions not to destroy the earth and its natural resources, but rather to preserve, protect, and develop them. This is at least implicit in all the Bible passages about "stewardship". Surely everyone will agree (just to pick one area) that some methods of mining and utilizing natural resources are healthier, safer, and generally better than others.

These signs may well be a warning from God to the people of the world that He has had enough, and that those who recognise it may be willing to turn to Him. Such things do happen in times of great trouble.

I couldn't agree more — no matter what we think about "global warming" per se.

It is surely not our place to reiterate so-called scientific theories, but to see the signs of the times and try to interpret them in the light of our Bible knowledge. We may get them wrong (we have in the past), but it keeps our attention on the remedy instead of on the disaster.

I agree: we may find, in the next few years, that the threat of "global warming" has been overstated by some. (For that matter, we may find that it has been understated by others!) Either way, we may see, in these matters, reason as well as opportunity to remind ourselves —and others — that our hope is not in man's proposed remedies, but that the only true remedy for the world's woes is the return of Christ.

George

Lake Victoria

I like the bit about Lake Victoria ["Global Warming", Jan., p. 27]. I have been

there four times while on CBM work in Uganda. From a natural — and engineering — point of view, I found it fascinating. It was a moving time standing at the "source" of the Nile (i.e., where it leaves the lake) and going back in time to Israel in Egypt. I got some amazing photos too. Man is going to suffer a lot more for his greed; collectively as well as individually! The window of opportunity to preach, and to offer salvation, is closing.

Malcolm Cross (East Cottingwith, York, UK)

The 40-year generation?

In his article "The Parable of the Fig Tree" (Feb., p. 85), Bro. Jim Robinson explores the generally accepted idea that a generation is represented by a timeframe of 40 years, based on (1) the time the Jews wandered in the desert and (2) Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem. He then says, "Other than these, there are no other numbers associated with the use of the term 'generation' in the Bible."

I did come across a numerical reference associated with the term "generation" in Genesis 15:13-16. In verse 13, the Lord tells Abraham that his descendants will be enslaved in Egypt for a period of four hundred years. In verse 16, the Lord restates that they will return to the land in the fourth generation. I wonder if this should cause us to question the length of a generation.

Looking back at Numbers 14, I notice that God's punishment — dying in the desert during the 40-year period — was restricted to those over 20 years old who had been unwilling to enter the Promised Land. Wouldn't that mean that the generation of those who died in the wilderness was closer to 60 years (at least 20 years, plus the further period, up to 40 years, allowed to each individual). Also, since this is a punishment, wouldn't it be likely to mean that their life spans were being cut short, and thus their "generations" artificially shortened?

In the Matthew account, Jesus seems to be telling the people that Jerusalem will be destroyed within their lifetimes, rather than defining a specific year. I wonder then if it is possible that a generation really refers to something like the collective lifetime of a people, which could stretch closer to a hundred years or so, rather than a specific number of 40?

Sis. Jodee Webb (Toronto West, ON)

At the very end of his article Bro. Jim quoted Matthew 24:36: "But of that day and hour knoweth no [man], no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." In doing so, he left us with a very important point: any scheme of prophetic interpretation that relies primarily on adding numbers and counting years to "predict" the future is flawed.

Our Saviour also said, in Acts 1:7, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."

It may well be that, in certain instances, adding years to come to a possible termina-

*tion point has some merit — but only in the most general sense. Such a method, at best, can only confirm other, more meaningful "signs". It can only suggest a period — **but not a particular year** — during which momentous events may occur.*

And therein is our true exhortation: whether the "generation" of which Jesus spoke is of 40 years duration, or 60, or 100... and whether it commenced in 1948 or 1967 or some other relevant date... it does us absolutely no good to circle a date on the calendar. For surely, when we do so, we will find ourselves looking for an eraser! Or a new calendar!

*Analyzing possible time periods may help us to realize that we are living **near** the time of the end. That is enough, and assuming anything more than that is presumption. Fixing dates on a calendar can be a snare: it can so easily imply that we are free to live our lives more or less as we please — and then scramble about and get ourselves "ready" at the last possible moment — as the clock approaches midnight!*

*But: (a) how can we know that the divine timetable might not be "sped up" (that's exactly the point of "those days will be **shortened**" in Matt. 24:22), and catch us by surprise us just before we begin our final preparations? "Therefore keep watch, because you do **not** know the day or the hour" (Matt. 25:13).*

*And (b) how can any of us think we are guaranteed a life that extends to our planned "start-getting-ready" date, much less to the "date circled on the calendar"? "You fool! **This very night** your life will be demanded from you" (Luke 12:20)!*

George

A dignified farewell

Dear Brother George,

Your readers might be interested in this correspondence involving my paternal grandfather, William Jones, shortly before his death. For forty years, he had served the Cardiff Ecclesia in South Wales in key roles. With grace, dignity, conviction and restraint, he brought that service to a close.

(Bro. S. G. Davies was the Chairman of the Arranging Board. Bro. Alf Smith was the Assistant Recording Brother.)

Philip Jones

*****

September 8, 1939

My dear Brother Davies:

Am not a little grateful for the assistance you and others have given to my fellow helper Brother A. Smith during the period of my incapacity.

As it has not been our Father's good pleasure to bring to fruition the hope nursed three months ago for my recovery, I feel after much prayerful reflection that I must ask you to place before the brethren my resignation of the various offices

I hold.

You will appreciate that it is with a sorrowful heart and sincere regret that I take this course. My doctor's continued serious view of my condition leaves me with no alternative.

It may please our Father that I may yet be of some little service, though manifestly it is too much to expect that in this state it shall be anything calling for a measure of mental or physical vigour. So with gentle resignation I submit to His all-wise arrangement and say, "Thy will be done."

With earnest prayer that the work in Cardiff shall continue to prosper in the hands of His servants, I remain your companion in joyful anticipation of participating in the glories of the "morning without clouds."

W. Jones

*****

September 12, 1939

My dear Brother Jones:

I received your letter with the greatest sorrow, which was shared by all the brethren, not only because of your indisposition, but also the sad prospect of losing your co-operation, for the time being, in those activities you love so much. Good men are scarce today and pillars of Truth rarer.

We felt last night we could not receive your resignation in the usual formal way, and [hope] that you will be willing to let it rest on the table for the time being, as an indication that you will not wish your name to go forward at the tri-annual ballot in respect of the offices you have filled so acceptably for so many years.

In this matter we are not unmindful of your dear sister-wife who we all know has been such a source of blessing to you and yours. What more can I say than to use your own familiar phrase that the Father will bless you both with "the love that He to His does bear."

In these times more than ever I join in your joyful anticipation of the glories that are in store for all those who have loved and served the Master well.

With brotherly love, S. G. Davies

*****

September 19, 1939

My dear Brother Davies:

Thanks for yours of the 12th instant. Sister Jones and Self are deeply touched by its sweet message of love and goodwill and also by the thoughtful, considerate attitude adopted towards my resignation. These precious tokens of brotherly love and true fellowship will ever remain with us a treasured possession.

With every good wish, Your fellow labourer, W. Jones

Dear Bro. Philip,

Thank you for sharing that. The exchange of letters reminds me of an old song: "Doesn't anybody stay together any more?" Forty years of service to the same ecclesia, in various capacities, is a testimonial all by itself. Then the resolution to continue with that service so long as there is ability, and health — along with the regret that there is not more that one might do — is an exhortation to us all.

The "morning without clouds" will surely reveal many such stories, but it is well for us all to think of them now.

"Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them' " (Rev. 14:13).

George

Flash flood in a "wadi"

In Israel, as you might know, they have what is called a "wadi". That's a dry riverbed, and once in a while, when there is a lot of rain "upstream", these dry riverbeds become the scene of flash floods. I think here in Texas it's called an "arroyo" — I'm not sure there's a specific name for it in Australia.

*[Editor: In the Texas hill country, where I come from, nobody calls it an "arroyo" — it's quite simply "a dry creek bed" (or, with **proper** Texas pronunciation, "a drah crick bad").]*

This phenomenon of the flash flood in the wadi is referenced in the Bible in places like the following verses:

"The torrents of destruction overwhelmed me" (Psa. 18:4).

"If the LORD had not been on our side... when men attacked us, when their anger flared against us, they would have swallowed us alive; the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us, the raging waters would have swept us away" (Psa. 124:1-5).

"The Name of the LORD comes from afar... His breath is like a rushing torrent, rising up to the neck" (Isa. 30:27,28).

Another similar reference may be Judges 5:21, where the Kishon River is the scene of a flash flood.

The question is: although the Bible speaks of this, have you ever seen it actually happening? Now you can. Check out this link on the internet: http://tinyurl.com/22j3f7

The link should take you to a video of a flash flood on the Nahal Zin, about 35 miles south of Beersheba in the Negev. The video was recorded on a camera phone, so the quality is rather poor.

Michael McAllister (Austin South, TX)

*For those who can't get access to the video, it is **really impressive**. In the space of one minute, an essentially dry creek bed becomes a thundering, rushing, full-flowing torrent — while onlookers scream and scramble for higher ground.*

The word for "torrent" in the passages above is "nachal" — the same word as used in the name for the modern wadi, "Nahal Zin".

I have not seen such a flood come surging down a dry creek bed — usually because it has been raining "cats and dogs" where I was at the same time, and like any sensible person, I was staying indoors. But I have seen the results of that phenomenon shortly thereafter. Once, at a crossing of the Pedernales River near the old Christadelphian campground in Texas, I observed such a torrent. A river — really a stream — that was usually 10 to 20 feet wide... and could be crossed dry-footed by stepping across on small rocks... had become a raging flood more than 100 feet wide, sweeping along uprooted trees, brush, debris, and drowned livestock. After a few minutes, Barbara and I were urged by park rangers to retreat, because the road we had come in on was about to be swallowed up by the onrushing river.

Also, notice that Job 6:15-20 describes the wadi the other way around: Job compares his "friends" to such a "wadi", but from the point of view of expecting water there, and then — during the dry season — finding none. In other words, Job looked for comfort and encouragement from his "friends", but disappointingly... there was nothing.

Special Invitation

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

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

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

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

Famous Last Words: (9) Melchizedek

Our last article looked at Abraham's last words to Lot. "Let there be no strife... for we are brethren" reminds us of the importance of unity in the brotherhood today. Anything less causes problems for individuals separated from the body of believers by division, and diminishes our effectiveness in witnessing to the public.

In Melchizedek we have one of the most intriguing Old Testament characters. Who was he? We are not told exactly; speculating would be inappropriate. Scripturally speaking he had no mother or father, and no beginning or ending. Commenting on his identity beyond this would spoil this beautiful type of the Messiah. The type goes even further when we realize that Melchizedek was the King of Salem (or peace), as well as the King of Righteousness (by the meaning of his name) and also the priest of the Most High God (Heb. 7:1-3).

Melchizedek's last (and in fact only) recorded words are: "Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand" (Gen. 14:19,20).

We see that Melchizedek "blessed" Abraham, and was therefore his superior (Heb. 7:7). Since Christ was to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psa. 110:4), he could rightfully say, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58), not because he was chronologically before Abraham, but because he was his superior!

Then Scripture goes on to say that Melchizedek's (and thus Christ's) priesthood is superior to Aaron's Levitical priesthood. How could this be? Because:

1. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, and
2. Aaron, being in the loins of Abraham at that time, may also be said to have paid tithes to Melchizedek (see Heb. 7:4-11).

The Messiah was to be a "King-Priest" like Melchizedek, and therefore could not come from the tribe of Levi (Heb. 7:14). Jesus, of the tribe of Judah, will be king on David's throne, but also a priest after the order of Melchizedek. In him we can partake of bread and wine, receive blessings, and find opportunity to pay tithes (i.e., to give a sacrifice of praise).

In Melchizedek's last words, he uses the title "Most High God", a rare title of God. This emphasizes his belief in the One True God, in contrast to pagan deities.

We see in Melchizedek's "Famous Last Words" a wonderful foreshadowing of Jesus Christ and his work on our behalf. Jesus is truly our King-Priest, able to reconcile us to the Most High God, and grant that we should reign with him in truth, peace and righteousness, in the Kingdom.

> *"Thou art worthy... and hast made us kings and priests (literally, kingly priests) unto our God, and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9,10).*

(Next: Lot)

Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON)

Guadalajara, Mexico

It has become what one might call a ritual while we pack our cases for a mission visit. We need room for Bibles, books and papers. Carol will always remind me to make sure that the tie I select coordinates with my change of shirt. I dutifully attempt to make the match. Our time in Mexico was to be for seven weeks, from December through January.

These three were all baptized the same day:
Lorena Hernandez, Luis Ramirez and Mary Mejia.

There is a young ecclesia of ten members in Guadalajara, Mexico. We have been blessed with the opportunity of making short visits and witnessing its growth, and we have some knowledge of the background to its formation. We easily think of tremendous dedication and sustained commitment when we consider gospel proclamation in this city. Our Heavenly Father is fully aware of the developments in Guadalajara and will bless their work according to His will.

Most of us have been members of established ecclesias from the day of our baptism. Everything is in place ensuring that all is done decently and in order. We know where we meet, and the day and the time. The meeting room doors will be open and someone there to greet us when we enter. We even know the names of the speakers and their subjects for this week, next week and possibly up to a year's time. We have

in hand planning for outreach programmes, pamphlets, publicity, venues and much more. Sometimes we do not even realize the amount of organization this takes. But we can be willing and prayerful participants.

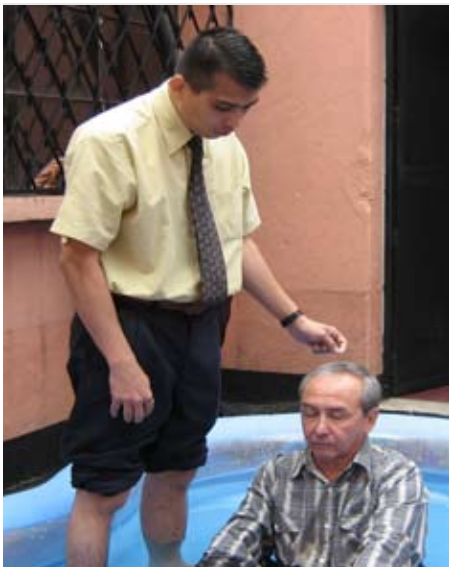
This small ecclesia in Guadalajara is feeling its way through all these things, learning to communicate with each other, working together and growing as the body of Christ. Five hundred contacts are on the correspondence course. (What a boost another mature Spanish-speaking couple would make.) The ecclesia's responsibilities are great, but the labourers are few. Now they have been asked to vacate their meeting room because the owner wishes to sell the property. They need our prayers as they open up a Bible center in another part of the city, and begin the process of reorganisation this involves.

And why mention the tie? A local sister noticed the tie and innocently commented: "Bill always wears the same tie! We'd like to buy him a new one." We dearly treasure moments like this. Our sister's concern was yet another expression of the love of the Guadalajara ecclesia towards us. In our life in Christ, even the smallest details in the ecclesia matter.

Brother Bill and Sister Carol Rawson
Guadalajara linkman: Don Luff

Guatemala

In November, Bro. Mike Moore and I traveled from Brantford (ON) to the beautiful country of Guatemala ("the land of eternal spring") to visit the small ecclesia in Guatemala City, the capital. We intended to encourage our brethren, who live in relative isolation, by supporting their preaching effort and sharing with them fellowship and exhortation. In the end, we were the ones who were encouraged and uplifted!



The baptism of Bro. Jorge Lemus by Bro. Rene Castillo, from El Salvador

The preaching activities consisted of a series of public lectures on both Saturday and Sunday afternoons. The topics covered were a summary of our great hope — the return of Christ, the resurrection, and the establishment of the kingdom of God. Two young couples traveled by bus (over 5 hours) from El Salvador to help in the conversations with the interested friends who were invited. As it turned out, it was good that they came — their presence and assistance were invaluable, since on the Sunday every Christadelphian in attendance was needed to speak with those that had come out to hear the gospel message.

The highlight of the trip was a baptismal interview with a contact who had been a regular attendee for over a year and a half. Jorge Lemus had encountered the truth through the Bible correspondence course and had first attended the ecclesia during a previous visit in 2005. From our first conversation on the Saturday, it was clear that he had spent the last year and a half studying the Scriptures and had developed a sincere desire to be baptized. The interview took place on Sunday afternoon after the public lectures. It was thrilling to listen for over two hours while Jorge explained with confidence and enthusiasm his beliefs to four Christadelphian brethren (one Guatemalan, two El Salvadorians and a Canadian). Bro. Jorge was baptized on December 17 by two brethren from El Salvador.

After four wonderful days with our brothers and sisters in Guatemala, Bro. Mike and I left feeling greatly uplifted by the events of the weekend. Though small in number, our brethren there are a great example of what ecclesial life is all about. Please remember to keep small isolated ecclesias, like the one in Guatemala, in your prayers.

Dan Robinson
Linkman for Guatemala

A new website www.cbma.net

CBMA / CBMC is pleased to announce a new website available, with up-to-date information on all our activities. Each month there will be a new article featuring a recent visit or activity just completed in the mission field.

There are sections on each of these topics:

1. A description of what is happening in each of the 42 ecclesias in 35 countries which are supported by the CBMA / CBMC.
2. What the "Faith at Work" program is all about, and how you can get involved.
3. A list of related resources, including links to the website for CBMA / CBMC photos of visits to mission fields and other activities, and to the "This is your Bible" website sponsored by CBM and CBMA / CBMC.
4. Information about the CBMA / CBMC organization itself, including: whom to contact if you are interested in short-term or long-term missionary work, or Truth Corps.
5. A section on the many ways you can become involved in various activities, and describing how to make online donations by either electronic check or credit card.

Please locate the website at www.cbma.net and mark it as one of your favorites.

First Year Results for the "This Is Your Bible" Website

The website www.thisisyourbible.com is the worldwide internet presence of the CBM (UK) and the CBMA (CBM of the Americas). The site was activated fully in February of 2006. Over the course of the year we have been excited to see the positive response generated among our new students, and the wonderful support and assistance of our brothers and sisters. Indeed, the Lord has richly blessed this work.

By the end of December, 1058 individuals from 65 different countries established an account on the system. Of these, 704 are taking the Bible study courses available online or by post. The courses vary, depending on the area in which a student lives, and we also have links on our homepage to courses in French, Spanish, and Portuguese.

The remaining 354 students who created an account on the system downloaded material or ordered the free DVD advertised on the site, but did not sign up for a course.

During 2006, the site had 1.9 million "hits", but that number is not as significant as the fact that 17,945 separate individuals accessed our site and downloaded 26.8 gigabytes of material. Imagine: close to 18,000 people have read our literature or signed up for courses over the past year! No other means of preaching has allowed us to reach so many over so short a time!

Since May, 421 DVDs have been distributed with two titles being offered: "The Middle East and Your Future" and "God's Land of Promises For You". These excellent DVDs have been made available to us at a very low cost. In 2007 we plan to offer two new titles currently in production, "Introducing Jesus" and "I Once Was Blind".

We keep track of the number of times literature on the site is read or downloaded. Our primary sources of literature for online viewing are the CMPA pamphlet series and the CBM Basic Bible Teaching series. These booklets were accessed 12,782 times over the course of the year. This information might be of use to you if you are planning for your upcoming ecclesial lecture titles. The top five titles in 2006 were:

- The Middle East and Bible Prophecy (650 readers)
- The Kingdom of God on Earth (602 readers)
- The Sabbath (543 readers)
- After Death What? (539 readers)
- Baptism Matters (497 readers)

Another heavily used feature of the website was "Ask a Question About the Bible". In total, 384 questions were submitted in 2006. Of these, 160 dealt with technical Bible study issues such as: "What date was Jesus born?" and "What information can you give me about the nameless woman of Shunem?" Another 111 questions focused on first-principle questions, while 101 asked about life issues such as marriage, sexuality, depression, etc. The remainder asked about Christadelphians in general.

Two features added in December were "Minute Meditations" — our first foray into

video and audio presentations on the site — and "Answers from the Question Box". In that one month "Minute Meditations" was accessed 399 times and the "Answers..." feature 1,763 times. Clearly it was a good decision to implement these features!

We currently have 168 tutors volunteering their time to care for our many students around the world. However, we will be requiring the services of many more in the coming year, as we have plans to greatly enhance the profile of the system on the Internet.

Tutors are not involved in mailing out the site's free offers such as DVDs, nor do they have to tackle the multitude of questions from the "Ask a Question" feature. The site coordinators, Bro. Peter Forbes (CBM UK) and Bro. Mike LeDuke (CBMA), manage those portions of the site. Tutors are asked only to manage the students in their care. Timely assistance from the site coordinators is available to tutors in regard to information about the system, or advice in dealing with students and their questions. Their contact information is provided at the end of this article.

So, why not sign up to be a "This Is Your Bible" tutor yourself? If you have even a minimal knowledge of how to navigate the internet, you can manage students on this system. One of our most active tutors is a 78-year-old grandmother who has taken on 17 students — some of whom are already close to finishing their course of studies online. One of her students is currently studying for baptism with his wife at an ecclesia close to his home. This hard-working grandmother is fond of saying, "If I can do it, anyone can do it!"

The key portion of the website is what we call the Student Management System (SMS). This allows the tutor to track students' activities automatically as they either download materials or progress through their courses. There are two other unique features of the SMS. The system can be used by ecclesias as their own local database of students, and it can be easily instructed to assign automatically all students generated in a specific area to a particular set of tutors. An ecclesial coordinator has the ability to list all students and their tutors in the local area. Email lists can also be automatically generated both for students and tutors in a given area.

Lord willing, we plan to release many more upgrades in 2007, including individual ecclesial "websites" as sub-sites of "This Is Your Bible" and a much more modern "look and feel" to the site. We also plan to add more video content as well as "podcasts" of Bible talks and flash presentations of first-principle lectures.

The "This Is Your Bible" Project Director is Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA) (CBMA Council). The site manager and the coordinator of CBMA site activity is Bro. Mike LeDuke (Kitchener/Waterloo, ON). The CBM (UK) site activity coordinator is Bro. Peter Forbes (Glenfield, Leicester). The technical guru, behind the scenes, is Bro. Andrew Culver (Norfolk, VA).

For further information about the website or information on tutoring on the site, please contact Bro. Mike LeDuke at mduke@gto.net or Bro. Peter Forbes at peter@forbes31.freeserve.co.uk.

Do give the website a once-over at www.thisisyourbible.com and then write to either of the addresses above or to the site's generic email ID, yourbible@gto.net. We welcome your questions, comments, and suggestions — and especially your prayers — as we take every opportunity to witness to the world, on the eve of God's impending judg-

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

for tax ID numbers please contact the editor

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

News & Notices

BRANTFORD, ON

It is with great joy we announce the baptisms of AUBREY RIDDLE and HANNAH RIDDLE, brother and sister in the flesh and now brother and sister in Christ, on January 3, 2007. Bro. Aubrey and Sis. Hannah are the children of Bro. Paul and Sis. Pauline of the Brantford ecclesia and have been Sunday school students for many years.

We lovingly commend Sis. Lisamarie Cromie who transfers to Hamilton Greenaway (ON), and pray she will be happy in her new ecclesia. Bro. Bob and Sis. Joy Jennings are now also members of Greenaway.

We are saddened to report that Sis. Melody Myers in no longer in fellowship.

Jonathan Bowen

DETROIT LIVONIA, MI

Our ecclesia rejoiced in the baptism of SHAWN VANDENBERG on October 29, 2006, and we pray for God's blessing on his walk to the kingdom.

Bro. Curtis Brittle has transferred his membership to Norfolk (VA), and we commend him to the care of the brethren and sisters at Norfolk.

Jeff Adams

EAST TEXAS, TX

By the grace of our Heavenly Father we are pleased to inform the brotherhood of the establishment of a new ecclesia in Texas.

With the blessing and support of our home ecclesias, Tulsa (OK) and Austin Leander (TX), members of this new lampstand will meet on the basis of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith. All who fellowship consistently on this basis are welcome.

This new lampstand will be known as the East Texas Christadelphian Ecclesia, meeting in various homes of brethren in our region. We encourage brethren visiting our area to join us in study of the Scriptures and in meeting around the table of our absent Lord.

God willing, our desire is to continue working in the truth with the fraternal community in Texas and worldwide.

Please address any correspondence to me at the following address: Garth Maier, P.O. Box 423, Tyler, TX 75710.

Garth Maier

GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA

It is with great joy that we report the baptism of JORGE LEMUS on December 17, 2006. Jorge came into contact with the truth through the Bible correspondence course

and has been a regular attendee at the ecclesia for the last year and a half. Bre. Manuel Fernández and René Castillo from neighboring El Salvador came to help perform the baptism and to provide words of exhortation. We pray for the Father's blessing upon Bro. Jorge as he journeys towards the kingdom, and we thank our God for another worker in the ecclesia.

Dan Robinson

KITCHENER/WATERLOO, ON

We thank the following visiting brethren for their ministrations to us in the gospel in the past months: Steve Petrou and Kostya Krassavin (Toronto West, ON), and Dan Robinson (Brantford, ON).

We are happy to report that two new members have joined us recently. In February, Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Beth Abel transferred from Shelburne (ON) and Tulsa (OK) respectively. We thank God for this lovely young couple and we hope and pray that the fellowship we share, as we await the coming of our king, will be mutually edifying.

We are very sad to report that because of long absence from the table of the Lord, Sis. Jennifer Puim is no longer in fellowship. We pray that Sis. Jennifer will reconsider her position before the Master's return.

Preaching continues at a busy pace. Our monthly lecture at the local library continued to attract several visitors until the biting winter weather descended upon us. We have two follow-up classes underway on Genesis and the Acts. A total of six interested contacts are being led through these studies by Bre. Jonathan Abel, Mike LeDuke, Steve McKay and Jim Robinson. Several of our members are also becoming increasingly busy with internet students from the "This is Your Bible" website.

Jim Robinson

LONDON, ON

Over the past several months we have had our share of joys and sorrows. On May 28, 2006, we rejoiced to witness the baptism of DENETTE ST. JULES, who came into contact with the truth through our Bro. Roger Walker. On September 16, 2006, they were united in marriage and we pray for God's rich blessing on their new life together.

With sadness we report the falling asleep of two of our longstanding elderly members: Sis. Frieda Donald on August 31, 2006, and Bro. Ray Butler on September 14, 2006. Bro. Ray and his wife, Sis. Beryl, who passed away in 2005, were founding members of our ecclesia. While ill health prevented Sis. Frieda and Bro. Ray from attending the meeting in recent times, they will nevertheless be sadly missed.

We thank Bro. Paul Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI) for his studies at our annual CYC gathering in May. In September, we held our annual fraternal gathering and are indebted to Bro. Peter King (Worcester, UK) for his ministrations and fellowship, along with his wife, Sis. Carole.

We welcome by transfer from St. John's (NF) Sis. Melissa Short; we look forward to her help and fellowship as we journey toward the kingdom. We shall, however, miss the fellowship of our Bro. John and Sis. Heather Scott who have transferred to Cambridge (ON); we pray that they will be happy in their new surroundings.

We are presently running two sets of seminars, one in London and the other in Sarnia;

the response has been very encouraging. On January 21, 2007, we rejoiced to witness the baptism of FRANK ANGUS. Frank originally came into contact with the truth through the "Learn to Read the Bible Effectively" seminars in Hamilton, and when work necessitated his move to London he continued his studies here.

Please note that the undersigned is now Recording Brother. Communications should be sent to him c/o P.O. Box 25651, London, ON N6C 6B3. He may also be reached by telephone at 519-666-1534 or by e-mail at colinmeaker@hotmail.com.

Colin Meaker

MAY PEN, JAMAICA

It is with joy that we report the baptisms on May 28, 2006, of DWIGHT and ZEPORIA BRYAN at Salt River in Clarendon. We pray that they may continue in their journey to the Kingdom of God.

Melvin Gordon

MOULTON, AL

Within the last six months, we have enjoyed the visits of the following: Bro. David and Sis. Joanne Haltom (Detroit Royal Oak, MI); Bro. Terry and Sis. Tammy Bell, Bro. Paul and Sis. Belinda Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI); and Bro. Troy and Sis. Annette Haltom (Grand Rapids, MI). We thank Bre. David, Terry, Paul, and Troy for their Bible studies and exhortations.

Also, we appreciated the devotion and work of the 2006 Truth Corps team, and other help provided by Detroit-area brethren and sisters. The primary work involved canvassing for the "Learn to Read the Bible Effectively" seminar and a follow-up seminar that lasted 12 sessions. There are two good prospects from those efforts.

Relatively close to our ecclesia there is a new sister in Christ, DEANNA REAGAN, who is an inmate in the Tennessee State Prison in Memphis. I was informed of her interest and correspondence course studies by Sis. Marilyn Seagoe (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). When I went to visit her the first time, I found Deanna to be very interested in God's word, as well as quite knowledgeable of the first principles. After subsequent visits and discussions, she was baptized into Christ. I continue to see her about once a month for Bible studies. Deanna also has a cellmate that seems quite interested in hearing of the truths that Deanna is finding as her studies continue.

Our ecclesia was blessed with a baptism recently. JUNIOR KELLEY, a resident of a Florence, AL, nursing home and husband of Sis. Nell Kelley, was baptized into our Lord on January 16, 2007. We pray that he and Sis. Nell will walk that path that leads them into God's kingdom. Due to physical disabilities they usually are unable to get to our meeting in Moulton, but I have been able to go to see them on a weekly basis for studies and breaking of bread. The first Sunday after Bro. Kelley's baptism, the whole ecclesia met together in their room at the nursing home for Bible readings, talks, and the breaking of bread. We encourage any of you who are traveling in the area to come and see us. My phone number is 256-905-6592.

Wes Booker

NANAIMO, BC

Our thoughts, love and concern are with our Bro. Eric and Sis. Peggy Hoult, and their daughter Maggie, on the passing of Eric's mother, our Sis. Joyce Margaret Hoult,

on December 30, 2006. Joyce had spent many years in the service of her Lord and Master. She was quietly diligent in the support of not only her own family, but the children of others. She always had a ready supply of goodies for the young ones who beat a path to her door between Sunday school and meeting when she and her late husband, Bro. George Hoult, lived in Simon Manor, the seniors' residence attached to the MacKenzie Road Hall in Victoria. Her character was forged in the cold, hard Canadian prairie, raised on a farm where winter temperatures frequently reached minus 30 degrees Celsius. Also grieving the loss of Joyce is Ivan McArthur of Vernon, BC, her twin brother in the flesh and her brother in the truth. Our Sis. Joyce suffered severe deterioration of her health in her final years, but after her trial she now awaits the resurrection and election to life eternal in the kingdom of our Lord.

We thank the many visiting brethren who support our ecclesia in exhortation and proclamation.

Tom Alexander

NEW WESTMINSTER, BC

As a correction to our previous news, our fraternal gathering, for 2007 only, has been brought forward two weeks from our usual Easter weekend, and is planned for the weekend of March 24-25, 2007. We look forward to having Bro. Steven Hornhardt (Aust.) to lead the sessions on the theme "Come and See," an illustrated study of the seals of Revelation.

Sis. Yvonne Teel has relocated to the Vernon area, and we commend her to the love and fellowship of the Vernon Ecclesia.

Art Bull

OAHU, HAWAII

A new sister, DIANA HAYES, was born into Christ at Kailua Beach, Oahu, Hawaii, at 11 am on February 4, 2007. She is the wife of the resident manager of our condominium project. I never really knew her until last August when she showed up at the hospital to deliver a plant to my hospitalized husband. For the past year, I have been sending out monthly "preaching letters" to about 50 non-Christadelphian friends and family. I added Diana's name to my "letter" list, and she began to ask questions. I invited her to sit in on our little memorial meetings, and she accepted and stayed on after the meetings to study with me. She was raised Roman Catholic and says that she never could believe the things they taught. She was so excited about the truth and absorbed it like a sponge. Ultimately she asked to be baptized.

Bro. Frank Musonda, stationed in Guam for his work, was coming through last weekend and agreed to hold her interview, baptize her as she was ready, and give the exhortation at our meeting of four. Diana's interview was thorough, beautiful and successful. You have never seen anyone so happy and excited about the Truth. Sis. Diana's address is: 1020 Aoloa Place, #101A, Kailua, HI 96734.

Connie Wiedeman

PORTLAND, OR

We have been greatly blessed by our Heavenly Father since our last news. On October 22, 2005, we rejoiced in witnessing the baptisms of RAQUEL LEATHERS and JAMES LEATHERS, children of Bro. Dave and Sis. Marina. At the same time, TAYLOR

SPENCER of Jackson County Ecclesia was also baptized. His parents, Bro. Jon and Sis. Carrie, along with aunts, uncles and grandparents of Raquel, James and Taylor shared the special day with us.

More recently, we joyfully witnessed the baptism of ZOE LAUNCHBURY on January 6, 2007. Zoe's parents, Bro. John and Sis. Rachel, and all their extended family in the UK welcomed the news — along with all of us who rejoiced at Zoe's commitment.

We have welcomed by way of transfer Sis. Rhonda Miller and her children Michael and Stephanie (Verdugo Hills, CA), Bro. Luke Barratt and Sis. April Phillips (San Luis Obispo, CA), and Sis. Stacy Sue Stewart (Reseda, CA).

Along with many family members and friends we celebrated the marriage of Bro. Luke Barratt and Sis. April Phillips on September 9, 2006.

We thank all who have offered prayerful and financial support in the building of our ecclesial hall. We began meeting there late August, 2006, and now have permanent occupancy. The address is 8970 SW Murray Blvd, Beaverton, OR 97008. Memorial service is at 10 am and Sunday school at 11:30 am. We hope and pray that we can be a lightstand to our neighbors in this new location. Lord willing, we plan to host Truth Corps for two weeks during the summer of 2007 to help us meet and preach to our new neighbors.

Jay Phillips

SANTA BARBARA, CA

Recently, Bro. Gail Trent was hospitalized with heart troubles and is now at home on oxygen with a caregiver and hospice. Our prayers are with our brother, that he may be comforted in his time of need. Our Sis. Janell Walker continues her battle against liver and lung cancer; please keep her and Bro. Fred in your prayers. Our Sis. Beverly Woods also continues her trials with cancer. May God be with all our brethren and sisters and comfort them. We long for that day when there will be no more sickness or death, when all of these things will be swallowed up in victory at the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After a good confession of his faith, we are pleased to announce the baptism of BRET McDONALD on May 25, 2006. Bret was introduced to the truth by our Sis. Julie Gibson. He has been coming to Sunday school and meeting for a number of years. May Yahweh bless our new brother as he walks with us toward our Father's kingdom.

Once again this year, we had our annual Labor Day Picnic with many brethren, sisters and friends attending at the home of our Bro. John Seagoe. The presence of our Sis. Thelma Phillips and her family was a very special treat for this special occasion. It was our sister's last outing. The activities began with a talk by Bro. Tom Madsen (San Luis Obispo), and continued with great food and fellowship around the word.

We also thank the following brethren for ministering to our ecclesia with Bible classes and exhortations: Bre. Ron Stewart (Lompoc, CA); Chris Stickney, Jeff Gelineau, and Matt Walker (Simi Hills, CA); Michael Stickney, Max Wickham, and Owen Tunnell (San Diego, CA); Nathan Blanchard and Richard Brinkerhoff (Verdugo Hills, CA); Martin Norris (Yorkshire, UK); and Chris Atwood (Orange County, CA).

Craig Stickney

SEATTLE, WA

We are very pleased to announce another baptism at our ecclesia. WENDY MINCHEZ was baptized into the saving name of Jesus on November 26, 2006. We pray for God's blessing on our new sister as she begins her journey to His kingdom.

We rejoice also with our Bro. Pete and Sis. Jo Jones in the birth of their third child, Edward Frank Jones, on October 2, 2006. We pray for God's blessing on the youngest member of our ecclesial family as we seek to raise him up in the way of the Lord.

God willing, our annual fraternal gathering will be held May 26-27, 2007 at the Edmonds Home School Center, Edmonds, WA. Our speaker is our Bro. Bob Lloyd, Verdugo Hills, CA, and he will be leading our study on the theme, "The Way of Life." We extend a very warm welcome to any who are able to join us. To the extent possible, accommodation will be with brethren and sisters. Contact Bro. Tony Ball at: 425-397-6344 or by e-mail at: ball@hotmail.com.

Tony Ball

SIMI HILLS, CA

It has been two years since our last correspondence and we have much to share.

Most importantly, we are happy to welcome three more to the saving grace of God. VIRGINIA SISCO, daughter of Bro. Rick and Sis. Denise Sisco, was baptized on January 1, 2005; KENDRA SMITH, daughter of Bro. Geoff and Sis. Brenda Lee Smith, was baptized on March 18, 2005; and JAN HUTAK was baptized on March 5, 2006. In addition to the baptisms, we are happy to welcome by way of transfer: Sis. Heather Kelso (Verdugo Hills, CA); Bro. James Brown (Seattle, WA); Bro. Tom Vlachos (Thousand Oaks, CA); and Sis. Colleen Uiga (San Diego, CA). Our prayers are with all our new brethren and sisters for a profitable walk together with us.

Sadly, we had to say goodbye to several members who transferred to other ecclesias: Bro. Kelly and Sis. Kristy Robinson and family (Verdugo Hills, CA); Bro. David and Sis. Judy Gadberry, Bro. Carmelo and Sis. Amy Montalbo and family, and Sis. Elanie Jennings (West Houston, TX); Bro. Dave and Sis. Mert de Caussin and Bro. Brad de Caussin (Glendale, AZ); and Sis. Donna Jennings (Toronto, ON). We pray for the best for them in their new homes.

In March, 2005, we were saddened by the death of Bro. Arthur Greene, husband of our Sis. Doreen Greene. As Arthur joined our ecclesia late in life, and in the throes of Alzheimer's, many of us did not get to know him well, but Sis. Doreen's love and devotion was a testament to all of us. We look forward to truly meeting him in the kingdom of our Lord.

We have had many visiting brothers and sisters in the past two years, and have enjoyed the words of exhortation shared by the following brethren: Tim Young (Brantford, ON); David Jennings (Pomona, CA); John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA); Jeff Ramirez, Josh Sommerville, and David Collister (Verdugo Hills, CA); Craig Stickney (Santa Barbara, CA); Steve Stewart (San Diego, CA); Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA); Harley Young (Seattle, WA); Gary Cousens (Cambridge, ON); and John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI). In addition we thank Bro. Gary Cousens for his ecclesial seminar on "Conflict Resolution" and Bro. John Bilello for his seminar on "Christadelphian Traditions."

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 Sis. Lisa McCorrie (Birmingham, UK); Bro. Lou Pokol (Williamsville, NY); Bro. Dave and Sis. Nicole Wisniewski (Brantford, ON); Bro. Steve Pursell (Rogue Valley, OR); Sis. Suzy Mason (San Francisco Peninsula, CA); Bro. Alan Harrison (Rockhampton, Queensland, Aust.); Bro. Chris and Sis. Martha Sales (Shelburne, ON); and Bro. Jared and Sis. Kim Vetkos and Sis. Pam Cipriotti (S. Yosemite).

Our thanks go out to Bre. Dave Wisniewski and Paul Norwood (Reseda, CA); Brad Styles (Simi Valley, CA); Richard Yung (Reseda, CA); and Lou Pokol (Williamsville, NY) for their exhortations and afternoon classes.

Our special thanks go to Bro. Chris Sales for leading us in our annual study weekend, January 13-14, 2007, with a study of "Idols in the 21st Century" as well as the following Sunday exhortation. We had another great weekend and a wonderful day around God's word.

We also thank our Bro. Alan Harrison for coming and spending some time in helping with many items at our Heritage School which continues on now into its third year.

We are pleased to announce that our Bro. Jimmy and Sis. Katie Glover had their second healthy little boy, Austin William, who was born on October 4, 2006.

Tom Graham

TORONTO EAST, ON

With thankful hearts we come to the end of 2006 having, individually and ecclesially, experienced many blessings throughout the year. This year the ecclesial hall marked 50 years of service to the brotherhood and outreach in the neighborhood. We thank our Heavenly Father and the many members, now asleep in Christ, for their foresight and labors to build and maintain this lightstand.

We rejoice in the baptisms of three of our Sunday school scholars, KATIE DAWES, on April 23, 2006, JULIE DAWES and BETHANY CARRICK, on November 5, 2006. We pray for God's blessing on our three new sisters as we walk together toward the kingdom.

The ecclesia was greatly saddened by the loss of Sis. Ruby Holland on February 19, 2006. Sis. Ruby had been a wonderful sister in Christ both in Toronto, ON, and her country of birth, Guyana. May her sleep in Christ be a short one.

Along with Bro. Steve and Sis. Marie-Lynn Curry, we are thankful for the safe arrival of another son, Alex Curry, born April 5, 2006.

Along with many visitors, we enjoyed a study day led by Bro. Ron Kidd, London, ON, on March 25-26, 2006 Bro. Ron's subject was "Melchizedek —King of Salem and Priest of God".

On September 30, 2006, we sponsored a seminar on "Moral Challenges Facing Our Young People, and How We Can Help", led by Bro. David Perry (Manhattan, NY). Bro. David took 40 brethren and sisters through the results of the CYC Survey Project,

concluding with a panel discussion.

We hosted the annual "Run for the Everlasting Cure" on November 25, 2006, in which more than 80 brethren, sisters, teens and children from numerous ecclesias across the Toronto area joined us. Bro. Alex Browning spoke on "Suffering and the Divine Perspective". The highlight of the day was the specific prayers offered by various brethren on behalf of those suffering with cancer and other serious illnesses. After the five-kilometre run/walk, we signed T-shirts and prepared four scrapbooks. We continued to enjoy fellowship over a pizza dinner, and then concluded the day's activities with bowling.

We enjoyed the fellowship of Bro. David Kershaw who visited with us for ten months. He has now returned to his home in Adelaide, Aust.

We also enjoyed the fellowship of many brethren and sisters throughout the year, and especially thank the following brethren for their encouraging words of exhortation: Jim Barton (Elgin, ON); Rhe Desjardins and Matt Trowell (Mississauga West, ON); Jim Robinson and Mike LeDuke (Kitchener/Waterloo, ON); Colin Badger and Tom Wilson (Cambridge, ON); Tom Thorp (Hamilton Greenaway, ON); Mark Carr (Toronto West. ON); Al Hussey (Niagara, ON); Ian Macfarlane (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON); Wayne Coutu (Orangeville, ON); and Jonathan Bowen (Brantford, ON).

Ken Curry

TORONTO WEST, ON

We have two years worth of news to report, the most important of which is to announce with great joy the following eleven baptisms which have taken place in this period. In 2005: on February 6, SARAH WATERS, the daughter of Bro. Bill and Sis. Jane Waters; on July 10, NICK ELLIOTT, the son of Bro. Lee and Sis. Jody Elliott; and on August 28, LEANNE FIDAN the daughter of Bro. Gordon and Sis. Beth Dangerfield, Victoria, BC. In 2006: on January 22, ABIGAIL RAYNER, the daughter of Bro. George and Sis. Lori Rayner; on August 13, LAURA DULIS, the daughter of Bro. Peter and Sis. Susan Dulis, and GRACE RAMCHARAN, the daughter of Bro. Dev and Sis. Rose Ramcharan; on August 20, DOLLY URGELLES, an attendee at the "Learn to Read Your Bible" seminars; on September 3, WILLIAM NEWTON; on November 1, HANNAH ELLIOTT, the daughter of Bro. Lee and Sis. Jody Elliott; on November 5, ANTONIO BECKFORD; and on December 11, MEL DELISA. We thank our Father for these many blessings and pray that God will guide their service to Him.

We welcome by transfer Bro. Christopher Damaso (Mailag, Philippines); Bro. Bob and Sis. Edna Mae Dunford, Bro. Martin and Sis. Connie Rose, Bro. Darryl Rose and Bro. Daniel Rose (Brampton, ON); Bro. Al Hack, and Bro. David and Sis. Trudy Perks (Barrie, ON); Sis. Elmira and Sis. Armita Maali, Bro. Babak and Sis. Mona Pakdel (Iran); Bro. Dan and Sis. Susan Norman (Sussex, NB); and Sis. Jodee Bailey (Austin South, TX) — who was joined to Bro. Robert Webb in marriage on May 6, 2006. We commend Sis. Karin Wu to the care of the Toronto (Church Street), ON Ecclesia following her marriage on August 12, 2006 to Bro. Kevin Hill.

Mark Carr

Correction, East Coast Directory

The East Coast directory has an error on page 61. The mailing address of the Hamilton Ancaster Ecclesia should be: Hamilton Ancaster Christadelphian Ecclesia, 289 E. 31st St., Hamilton, ON L8V 3P9.

If anyone needs more copies of this directory, they can contact me at my e-mail address: paul@brokaw.ca.

Paul Brokaw

Holiday Unit in Victoria, BC

Available year-round, a one-bedroom unit fully furnished, that can accommodate up to four. It is located in the seniors' housing behind the ecclesial hall. Rents are from $30 to $45 per night with special rates for two weeks or longer. We are also accepting applications for future permanent residents, 55 years and older. All units are unfurnished and residents must be able to care for themselves. Contact Sis. Pat Williamson at 250-721-4938 or by e-mail at pwilliamson@telus.net.

Manitoulin Bible Camp

God willing, the Christadelphian Bible Camp on Manitoulin Island will be held July 28-August 4, 2007. This year's theme is, "I am the Light of the World" and the speakers will be Bro. Jeff Johnson (Glenlock, Aust.), speaking on the subject, "We Are All One in Christ Jesus"; and Bro. Martin Webster (Kitchener/Waterloo, ON), speaking on "Discourses in the Gospel of John". Anyone wishing more information should contact Bro. Alex Browning, registrar, at jabrowning@rogers.com or by phone at 416-284-0290.

Alex Browning

North American Sunday School Association

God willing, in September, 2007, the CSSA in North America will commence its twenty-seventh year of operation. All Sunday schools or those in isolation are invited to participate in this program. We will be studying Stage 5, considering the Acts of the Apostles. The CSSA provides study notes, projects and worksheets. All are invited to participate in whole or in part. We contemplate our privilege and responsibility to raise our children, the heritage of the LORD, to fear Him, to love Him, and to walk according to His ways. For further information, contact Bro Phil Wilton, 57 Woodfern Dr., Scarborough, ON, MlK 2L4 or by e-mail at cssabooks@yahoo.ca.

Thank you for your support in this matter. Take care and God bless.

Phil and Barb Wilton

Vancouver Island Bible Camp

God willing, the annual Vancouver Island Bible Camp will be held August 25-31, 2007.

For this 25th anniversary of our annual VIBC, the Saanich Peninsula, BC Ecclesia invites you all to Camp Pringle, Shawnigan Lake, Vancouver Island. If God wills, and the Lord remains away, we hope to have a week of fellowship around God's word, building spiritual family bonds and being strengthened in faith, hope and love.

Our speakers are: Bro. Peter King, speaking on "Studies in John's Gospel"; Bro. John Launchbury, speaking on "Principles of Salvation"; Bro. John Pople, speaking on "In

the Beginning"; and Bro. Peter Niven, speaking on "Singing and Praise". Teen classes will be led by Bro. Peter King on "Parables and Miracles"; Bro. John Launchbury on "Principles of Salvation"; and Bro. John Pople on "In the Beginning".

There will be classes, concurrent with the adult and teen classes, for the children. The classes are held in the mornings, the afternoons being free for fellowship and recreational activities. A Bible reading session is scheduled before supper. After supper, the evening sessions, Sunday to Wednesday, will be Bro. Peter Niven's interactive series. Thursday evening is usually the Talent Night. A devotional for the teens is held every evening before lights out. Delicious meals are served buffet style in the dining room or at the BBQ.

As this is the 25th anniversary of VIBC, if anyone has photos or reminiscences they would like to share, please let me know in advance.

Camp Pringle is situated on a property on Shawnigan Lake, just north of Victoria, BC. The accommodations are rustic: huts, and rooms in older, as well as more modern, buildings. There is also limited space for RVs without hookup, but with power if you bring an extension cord. There is a campfire spot and water activities at the lake in the afternoon. Other activities include volleyball, games, and walks. The camp's website is www.camppringle.com. A map is available on the website.

To find B&Bs in the area, view the following websites:

www.vancouverislandaccommodations.com/scowichan/accom.htm#hotels,
www.southcowichanchamber.org/touristinfo2.html or
www.southvanislebnb.com/members.php.

As it is summer holiday season, these may book up early. The registrar is Sis. Wendy Johnsen at wendyjohnsen@yahoo.ca; or by mail at #7-3855-9th Ave, Port Alberni, BC, V9Y 4T9; or by telephone 250-724-0501, or fax 250-723-9321.

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefa-

Minute Meditation

Are We Willing?

Someone once said, "When it comes to helping others, some people stop at nothing."

Do we jump in to help when needed? Doing nothing can never be right. James tells us, "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." Jesus commends the actions of those who, "when I was hungry, ...gave me food." We need to do more than just think of others, we need to act, to do them

good, to be known for our kindness to others, as Solomon reminds us, "Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right." Nehemiah over and over asked God to remember him for good.

Although nothing is impossible with God, even God cannot remember the good things that we have not done. Just what is it that we are doing that God is going to remember? Do we get up every day and serve our Lord by going about doing for others, or are we so wrapped up with ourselves that we never think to help anyone else?

Many years ago a dear brother giving a fraternal address said, "One characteristic of Christadelphians is that they are all most willing." After a pause, while the audience recovered from this unexpected accolade, he explained, "Some are willing to do all the work, and the rest are willing to let them."

Into which of these two groups do we belong? Do we serve, or are we among those who wait around for someone to serve us? Peter tells us to "gird ourselves with humility, to serve one another." Paul tells us, "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love."

Serving involves doing. If even a little child is known by his actions, what actions are we known for doing? Wayne Dyer once said, "If you are what you do, then when you don't, you aren't." Using this definition, there are a lot of people who simply aren't because they are not doing anything.

We dare not be idle. We have to be doers of the word and not hearers only. We have to work out our salvation, and that means doing things. What are we doing for the Lord? We show our love for our Lord by the things we do for some of His other children.

We all remember what Jesus did just before he went to be crucified. After the supper was ended we are told that he washed his disciple's feet. The record goes on to say, "When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them. 'You call me "Teacher" and "Lord," and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.' "

What he did involved no money, but it was a powerful demonstration of how our Lord was willing to serve by getting down on his own hands and knees to wash the disciples' feet. He must have meant what he said, yet how many of us take the lesson to heart and actually look for ways we can serve each other in the simple things of life? It is the Lord Jesus who tells us, "And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

Every day we have the opportunity to do something for others. At the end of the day can we recall what things we have done for someone else simply because we love Jesus and are trying to follow his example? If at the end of each day we cannot recall a single act we did for others, we need to realize that the Lord also will not remember us for all those good things we did not do.

It is not complicated. We simply show love by doing. The word love means nothing in tennis, but it means everything to us. Love is the greatest thing in the world, but it must be active, as John exhorts us, "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."

Robert J. Lloyd

Bro. Bob Lloyd (Verdugo Hills, CA) had surgery in early February, which successfully removed a tumor from his left femur. Thankfully, the tumor has proven to be benign. However, tests at the time revealed a blockage in Bro. Bob's heart. He was then transferred to an ICU, after which preparations were made for surgery: a triple bypass. The surgery has proven successful again, but there will of course be some significant rest and recovery time. Bro. Bob is 80 years old.

We pray for God's blessing upon our brother.

We look forward to Bro. Bob continuing to provide to The Tidings his trademark "Minute Meditations". In the meantime, assuming he is away for a little while, we are accepting requests (first come, first served) for potential "reruns" of past favorites of "Minute Meditations" each month.

We wish you all the best, Bro. Bob!

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

MARCH

24,25 New Westminster, BC Fraternal gathering. Bro. Steven Hornhardt (Australia): "Come and See: The Seals of Revelation". Contact Bro. Art Bull quantum-space@shaw.ca

24 Toronto East, ON Ecclesial study day. Saturday 1 to 6 pm. Bro. Jim Styles (Livonia, MI): three talks plus dinner. Contact Bro. David Willoughby 905-427-3756

APRIL

6-8 Wichita Falls, TX Annual Spring Gathering. Texas Christadelphian Camp and Conference Center, Freestone, TX (near Buffalo, TX). Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA). Contact Bre. Larry Beutel 940-592-9418 or John Clubb jclubb4081@aol.com

6-9 Kilcoy, Guyana Bible School. Bre. Ted Hodge: "The Only Thing that Counts"; Bro. Clive Drepaul: "The Truth of the Fourth Beast". The school will incorporate a preaching campaign, extending to April 12. Contact Bro. Ted Sleeper tsleeper@rcn.com

7-14 Florida Bible School, Bradenton, FL. Bre. Jeff Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA), Tec Morgan (UK), John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). Contact Bro. Norm Luff 579-754-1251 normluff@yahoo.ca. Registration Sis. Diane Jennings 727-528-1886 mikejenn@ffn.com

14,15 Victoria, BC Study weekend. Bro. Steven Hornhardt (Australia): "In Expectation of Messiah". Contact Sis. Pat Williamson 250-721-4938 pwilliamson@telus.net

14,15 Richmond, VA Petersburg Fraternal Gathering, Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): "Nehemiah: The People had a Mind to Work". Contact Bro. Dave Kerr gr8eats@comcast.net 804-360-5299

28 Shelburne, ON Spring Study day. Bro. Matt Trowell (Mississauga, ON): "One Day in the Kingdom of God". 11:15 am. Lunch and dinner provided. Contact Bro. James or Sis. Laura Pearce 519-925-1075 jlpearce@sympatico.ca

28,29 Washington, DC Study day and Baltimore/Washington gathering. Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA): "What's the point? (The message of Ecclesiastes)". Contact Bro. Bob Kling rkling@computer.org

MAY

5 Brantford, ON Great Lakes Christadelphian Young People gathering and Adult Study day. Adult classes: "The Seven Seals, Trumpets, Vials and Thunders of the Apocalypse". Beginning 10:15 am; supper at 5 pm. Contact Bro. Gary and Sis. Janet Suntz 905-573-3539 or garyjanet@cogeco.ca

11-13 Nanaimo, BC Vancouver Island Sisters' weekend, Beach Acres Resort, Parksville, Vancouver Island, BC. Sis. Yvonne Rosenau (Nanaimo, BC): "My Strength is Made Perfect in Weakness". Contact Sis. Beth Dangerfield, 1155 Ranger Place, Victoria, BC V8X 3P5 gdanger@shaw.ca 250-479-8422

18-20 Cachuma Lake, CA Men's weekend. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord: Making your home a spiritual retreat". Contact Bro. David Lloyd 818-352-6486 davidrlloyd@earthlink.net

18-20 Hartford City, IN Fraternal gathering, Lake Placid Retreat. Bro. Paul Billington (Brantford, ON): "Signs of the Times". Contact Bro. Jerry Asbury 618-288-5023 JerryandDot1@cs.com

19,20 Prince George, BC Fraternal gathering. Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC): "Biblical Examples of Personal Sacrifice". Contact Bro. Ken Loveridge loveridgeken@shaw.ca

19,20 Echo Lake, NJ Mid-Atlantic gathering, Cherry Hill, NJ. Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "Road to Atonement". Contact Bro. Jonathan Link 973-633-8534 jonlink@optonline.net

25-27 New York Metropolitan Sisters' retreat. Pocono Manor, Pocono, PA. Sis. Gerry Ann Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA): "Facing Today's Challenges / Dilemmas". For complete information and registration contact Sis. Averil Ferguson 718-881-8705 averilpsm23@juno.com

26,27 Baltimore, MD Study day. Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): "The Life of Jacob". Saturday classes begin 1 pm; supper served. Sunday 5th class at 9:45, and memorial service at 11. Lunch served. Afternoon lecture 2 pm. Contact Bro. Andy Bilello 410-692-9855

26,27 Seattle, WA Fraternal gathering and study weekend. Edmonds Home School Center, Edmonds, WA. Bro. Bob Lloyd (Verdugo Hills, CA): "The Way of Life". Contact Bro. Tony Ball 425-397-6344 at_ball@hotmail.com

26,27 Sussex, NB Study weekend. Bro. George Jackson (Toronto East, ON): "God's Striking Revelation of His Son: A Study in Hebrews". Contact Bro. Brad Goodwin 506-433-6681 braddeb@nb.sympatico.ca

JUNE

16,17 New York Fraternal. South Ozone Park Hall. Contact Bro. Gideon Drepaul yerubbaal@yahoo.com

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

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

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

JULY

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

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

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

22-28 Pacific Coast Bible School, Idyllwild, CA. Bro. Matthew Blewett (Durban, South Africa): "Finding Faith"; Bro. Kitson Reid (Birmingham, UK): "The Hand of God in our Lives"; and Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco, CA): "That I Might Know Him". Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065 mail@gelineau.org or Bro. Gary Patterson garympatterson@hotmail.com or visit our website at www.californiabibleschool.org

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
P.O. Box 530696 • Livonia, MI 48153-0696
Periodicals Postage Paid at San Dimas, California

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

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

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 Wisnieswski (Ontario, Canada). kidscampcalifornia.com or Bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com

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

SEPTEMBER

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

OCTOBER

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

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 70 **May, 2007** **No. 4**

Editorial — "Decently and in order" **159**
Exhortation — "Tohu bohu", *George Booker* **163**
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:
(4) God's gracious purpose of redemption preceded the foundation of the world, *Tom Barling* **170**
Apologetics — The Hard Questions:
(25) Which God? The Exclusivity Issue:
(9) Idolatry, Mythology, and Orthodoxy, *David Levin* **175**
Bible Study — Rightly Dividing the Word:
(3) Recognizing the Flow of Thought, *Bob Green* **180**
Bible Study — Stones, *Eileen Henthorn* **183**
Letters — More on global warming; RR's preface to Bible Companion; Christadelphian books; Joseph and his brothers? **189**
Bible Mission News — Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala **193**
News & Notices **198**
Minute Meditation — Learning Obedience, *Robert J. Lloyd* **204**
Coming Events **205**

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060) is published monthly by The Christadelphian Tidings, 42076 Hartford Dr., Canton, MI 48187-3360. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID at San Dimas, California. POSTMASTER: Address Service Requested at The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696.

The Tidings Publishing Corporation: Joe Hill (Chairman), John C. Bilello, Peter A. Bilello, Steve Cheetham, Ken Curry, Clive Drepaul, Mark Giordano, Tony Isaacs, Ted Sleeper, Phil Snobelen, Ken Sommerville, and Jeff Wallace.

The Tidings is published on the 25th of the preceding month. Correspondence to the editor: George Booker, 2500 Berwyn Cir., Austin, TX 78745-3559. E-mail: editor@tidings.org. Administrator: Rose Madge. E-mail: rm_madge@yahoo.com. Home page: www.tidings.org.

Subscriptions

The current subscription rate is $20 in the United States, $28 in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and £14 in the United Kingdom. Subscribers in UK please send checks to: Malcolm Cross, Grange Farm, East Cottingwith, York YO42 4TB; in New Zealand & Australia to: John Beer, P.O. Box 559, Te Awamutu, Waikato, New Zealand 3840. Otherwise checks should be made payable to: The Tidings, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF.

Items for publication MUST be received by the 10th of the month.

Editor: George Booker; Assistant Editor: Donald H. Styles

Superior Judgment Avoids Trouble

"A superior pilot is one who stays out of trouble by using his superior judgment to avoid situations which might require the use of his superior skill." This saying is on a poster for the Canadian Aviation Safety Bureau.

The wise pilot avoids having to use his superior ability by steering clear of the dangers that would require him to use it.

Would that all of us showed this wisdom in our lives! So often we walk where angels fear to tread, confident we will be able to extricate ourselves from the dangers we are courting.

Young drivers so often rely on their driving skills to get them out of a jam that they should have avoided in the first place.

Scripture teaches us that we ought not tempt the Lord our God. Jesus refused to. When Joseph was being tempted by the wife of Potiphar, "he hearkened not unto her." When she grabbed his garment and tried to seduce him, he quickly pulled himself right out of the garment he was wearing and "fled and got him out."

Paul told the Corinthians, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."

Robert J. Lloyd

Editorial

"Decently and in order"

Paul writes to the Corinthians that "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints... Wherefore... Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:33,39,40, KJV).

Or, "God is not a God of disorder but of peace... in all the congregations of the saints... Therefore... everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (NIV).

Confusion and disorder

In Corinth — as the context suggests — there was confusion and disorder, manifesting itself in the conduct of some believers...

1. "exercising their freedoms", no matter the effect on others (1 Cor. 8:7-13);
2. indulging in idolatry and sexual immorality (10:7,8,14);
3. "pushing the limits" (10:9);
4. grumbling against God's appointed leaders (10:10);
5. switching back and forth between two "worlds" (10:14-22);
6. emphasizing, at every opportunity, what is "permissible" — to the downgrading of what is "beneficial" and "constructive" (10:23);
7. being "contentious" about brothers' and sisters' respective hair lengths and head coverings (11:1-16);
8. exhibiting gluttony and drunkenness at the memorial meetings (11:17-22);
9. expressing to other members of the One Body, by action or even words, that "we are independent", or "we don't need you!" (ch. 12); and
10. exercising their special "gifts" whenever they please — even if disruptive of routine or inappropriate or unedifying to others (ch. 14).

It is this last item that leads, most directly, to Paul's command that everything be done in a fitting and orderly way (14:40). But it may be seen that the first nine items are of one piece with the tenth item. They all have to do with selfishness, indulgence, and independence. And they all seemingly ignore Paul's exhortations to build up the One Body in love.

Peace and order

"Peace" and "a fitting and orderly way" (the KJV's "decently and in order") can seem so vague, so general. It's all too easy to make light of the very words themselves, or the brothers and sisters who cite them: "They're so old-fashioned!" "A narrow-minded conservatism, and a pointless dependence on tradition!" "I feel so much more spiritual with new and lively music!" "We need changes that appeal to young people today!" "We should be free to express our own feelings!" "God doesn't care about outward appearance — only the heart!"

Therefore it may help to go over the list above, and to consider the opposites of what is listed there. Since those are the manifestations of confusion and disorder, then their opposites ought to be the manifestations of peace and order:

(1) being careful not to use one's freedom in such a way that it becomes a "stumbling block" to others (1 Cor. 8:9);
(2) "fleeing from idolatry" and immorality (10:14);
(3) being mature enough to refrain from 'testing the limits' — or 'pushing the envelope' — just to prove ***your*** point (10:9);
(4) accepting the wishes — even the 'rules' — of ecclesial elders without whining or complaining (10:10);
(5) staying as far away as possible from a worldly lifestyle (10:14-22);
(6) always thinking first of what is "beneficial" and "constructive" for one's brothers and sisters (10:23);
(7) holding to the "teachings" (NIV), "ordinances" (KJV) — and, yes, even the "traditions" (NIV margin) — that have been passed along from older believers (11:2);
(8) "waiting for each other" (11:33); i.e., curbing one's own indulgences and sharing generously with all others;
(9) realizing that every member of the One Body has worth, and that we all need one another, and should care for one another (especially those who are "weak"); and
(10) behaving like adults (14:20), "weighing carefully what is said" before speaking (v. 29), and "keeping quiet" so as to "speak to [oneself] and to God" (v. 28) (the last of these, says Paul, being especially applicable to women: v. 34).

The larger context can only take us so far; then we ought to look closely at the words themselves...

"Fitting", or "decent"

These are the translations of the Greek "euschemonos" — which denotes "graceful", or "in a seemly or pleasant manner". The word literally means "good [*eu*] form [*schema*]" — which in itself gives the lie to the idea that "outward appearance means nothing". The same word occurs in Romans 13:13 ("decently" in NIV, "honestly" in KJV), where it stands in contrast to the shameful Gentile social life of "orgies and drunkenness... immorality and debauchery... dissension and jealousy".

Just as there is protocol, or 'good form', for meeting monarchs and heads of state, or even governmental officials and judges and generals — so there ought to be 'good form' for meeting ***the*** King and ***the*** Judge, and for attending a service in his honor that is equal parts funeral and wedding!

"Orderly"

This word translates the Greek "taxis", derived from the root "tasso", which signifies an orderly arrangement. It is used of the fixed succession of the priestly courses

in Luke 1:8. There is, in other places, practically a military sense to the word; thus Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 3:6, commands avoidance of every brother who "walks disorderly" and "not after the tradition received from us." There "disorderly" is the related "ataktous" — demonstrably a military term, signifying to be out of step, to break ranks, or to be insubordinate. The disorderly tendencies of the Thessalonians find a parallel in those of the Corinthians.

More generally, the equivalent Hebrew expressions for "setting in order" describe significant features in the service of God:

a. Abraham carefully "set in order" the wood on the altar where Isaac was to be sacrificed (Gen. 22:9; cp. Lev. 1:7).
b. God gave very meticulous directions to Moses to "set in order" the construction of the Tabernacle (Exod. 26:17), including the "ordering" of the lampstands (Exod. 39:37) and the table of the Bread of God's Presence, and even the bread upon it (Exod. 40:4,23; Lev. 24:8). Did it make a difference how this was done? Evidently it did to God!
c. The pieces of the sacrifices were to be "set in order", by a very careful, explained-in-advance arrangement (Lev. 1:8,12; 6:12) — not haphazardly tossed on the altar like so much meat on a grill!
d. On Mount Carmel, the prophet Elijah carefully "set the wood in order" for the sacrifice of the bull (1 Kings 18:33).
e. As late as Hezekiah's day the temple service — after being ignored for some time — was renewed and "set in order" again, much to the LORD's satisfaction (2 Chr. 29:35; also cp. Josiah in 2 Chr. 34; 35).

For our purposes it is worth noting that, in the Old Testament, the "setting in order" pertained to the arranging of the lamps, the offering of sacrifices, and the laying out of the holy bread. In our service, this is approximated by the reading of the Word of God ("Your word is a lamp... and a light": Psa. 119:105), and the preparing and partaking of the commemorative bread and the wine! These observations have serious implications for us, in how we ought to approach our Memorial Service.

"The voice speaking to us"

The New Testament concept that in worship all should be done in an orderly and fitting manner (i.e., 1 Cor. 14:40) finds its basis in the Book of Numbers. Notice, in Numbers 7, how the lengthy and repetitive lists of the dedication offerings of the elders of each tribe — exactly the same offerings, presented in exactly the same order, time after time — emphasize the importance and the solemnity of the occasion. Plainly, it could have been done (and described) much more simply. But what a 'payoff' there is:

> "*When Moses entered the Tent of Meeting to speak with the LORD,* ***he heard the voice speaking to him*** *from between the two cherubim above the mercy seat on the ark of the Testimony" (Num. 7:89).*

The 88 verses that precede this final verse make Numbers 7, in the opinion of many, the most 'boring' chapter in the entire Bible! But notice how this final verse

'redeems' all the rest. When all the tribes have meticulously brought all their offerings and sacrifices, in perfect order, and when they have all been accounted for and catalogued, carefully and even tediously... only then does the LORD God Almighty speak to Moses from His own special place above the mercy seat. How could a chapter in the Bible qualify for 'boring' when it culminates with the voice of God speaking to man? What price would we pay, and what effort would we go to, in order that God would speak directly to us?

But, sadly, we may fritter away all the power, and majesty, and beauty, of our sacrifice and dedication to the LORD God. We may arrive at the Memorial Meeting late, tired, distracted, haphazardly dressed, and ill-prepared for our assigned tasks, or even to pray and sing with the entire congregation. Of course we know this is an appointment that we really ***ought*** to make — and so we come. But our minds may still be at the 'unseemly' places we frequented on Saturday evening (whether physically or merely in our minds), or occupied with plans for meals and activities immediately following the 'service', or with upcoming business matters of the following day.

If this is our attitude and our approach, then we may discover that the LORD God — who still sits enthroned above the mercy seat — may not 'speak' to us at all in the Memorial Meeting! Is there any greater tragedy?

"What's love got to do with it?"

We have scanned parts of 1 Corinthians (particularly chapters 8 through 14). What we have left untouched until now is 1 Corinthians 13 (the 'love chapter'). The question naturally arises, "What does ***love*** have to do with decent and orderly worship? Isn't love by itself enough?"

But a moment's reflection will show that the 'love chapter' is very aptly placed, right in the middle of a whole section about ecclesial order. To Paul, 'love' was not just an emotion — it was an action. Not just a noun, but a verb! We don't just ***feel*** 'love'; we ***do*** 'love'... in our actions, or in our restraint of actions:

- Problems arose in Corinth with those who desired to do 'their own thing', with no regard for the stumbling blocks they might be putting in the way of others. But in the 'love chapter', Paul reminds the Corinthians that "love is not proud... and not rude."
- Problems arose when some indulged their own appetites. But Paul reminds them that "love is not self-seeking."
- Problems arose when some acted as though they did not need anyone else. But Paul said that "love is patient and kind... love does not boast... love protects."
- Problems arose when some insisted on acting like children, who must be heard, and who must have their own way. But in the 'love chapter' Paul said, "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me" (1 Cor. 13:11).

We don't baptize children; we baptize responsible adults! Worshiping the LORD,

and remembering His Son, is not a game for children. Nor is it an arena for self-expression, or an opportunity for self-indulgence. It is the serious calling of adults, who have put away childish things.

John Thomas wrote, "The doctrine Paul taught, and the customs he established, afforded no scope for the gratification of personal ambition and democratic turbulence. He required that all things should be done decently and in order: and to the edification, or the building up, of the body of Christ in its most holy faith."

In the right sort of service, there is more than enough scope for the experiencing

Exhortation

"Tohu bohu"

"Tohu bohu"... Actually, in Hebrew, the full expression would have a connective: "tohu w'bohu" might be the closest transliteration in English.

It is one of those phrases that sticks with you. The first time I heard it, from Sis. Marie Banta in a Bible class, I laughed. But once you've heard it and thought about it for a few seconds, it is practically impossible to forget it, and what it means. The closest English equivalent might be "topsy-turvy"... or "helter-skelter"... or "upside-down".

"Tohu w'bohu" occurs in Genesis 1:2: "The earth was without form and void" (KJV), or "The earth was formless and empty" (NIV). "Without form" or "formless" translates "tohu", and "void" or "empty" translates "bohu".

"Tohu" occurs about 20 times in the Old Testament. It describes chaos, confusion, disorder — a state of randomness or formlessness.

"Bohu" occurs only three times in the Old Testament, and only in close proximity to "tohu". It means that which is empty. It describes a vacuum, or an uninhabited area. You'll understand what the word means if you have ever watched *Lawrence of Arabia*, in which T.E. Lawrence, with a couple of Arab companions, makes a thousand-mile trek across the Rub' al Khali of Arabia, what the Bedouin call — to this day — the "Empty Quarter". In the "Empty Quarter" one will find wave upon wave of sand dunes, constantly changing size and shape, but never changing character: sand, all sand, and nothing but sand — blown about ceaselessly by the brutally hot desert winds. Anyone attempting to cross the Empty Quarter will soon become totally disoriented by the lack of landmarks. If a great sandstorm blows up, and the sun is obscured, then there is simply no hope of finding one's way until it subsides.

"Bohu" only occurs in the Bible alongside "tohu". Besides Genesis 1:2, the other two instances are Jeremiah 4:23 and Isaiah 34:11. Some Bible expositors, taking their cue from this juxtaposition, suggest that the pair is a "hendiadys" — which literally means "a one-in-two word", where two words combine to produce a new word. (Think about "fireman" or "drugstore" or "bestseller".) Combining the two

words, then, "tohu w'bohu" would mean a "formless emptiness", or an "empty chaos".

Even when "tohu" occurs, as it does, without "bohu", it may imply "tohu w'bohu"! That is, "tohu" alone may not so much mean "that which is formless" or "disorganized" only; but rather a place that is both "formless" and "empty":

a. the "wasteland" (Hebrew "tohu") that Job describes (Job 6:18), with wadis (dry creek beds) and no water to be found, or
b. the "desert land... the waste ('tohu') howling wilderness" of the Sinai (Deut. 32:10), through which Israel journeyed on their way to the Land of Promise.

Genesis 1

So, when we read in Genesis 1:2 that the earth, at some point after its creation, was "tohu w'bohu", we need not think of simple nothingness (like a vacuum in outer space). Instead, we should think (with the Middle Eastern sensibilities of Jew or Arab) of a useless piece of land, a barrenness in which nothing of consequence can grow, a stretch of sand without order, with no fixed landmarks, no set patterns — and no discernible life. Just such a place was the "earth" before God began his creative (or, perhaps, His ***re***-creative) work.

> *"Now the earth was 'tohu w'bohu', darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters" (Gen. 1:2, NIV).*

"Hovering", or "moving" (as the KJV), is a Hebrew word that describes a devoted mother bird brooding over, or sheltering, her young. Through His Spirit or power, God is lavishing His love on the new world about to be born. Remember the "waste ('tohu') howling wilderness" of Deuteronomy 32:10? It was in just that place, a chaotic emptiness, that Moses said God found His people, Jacob or Israel. There He "guarded [the children of Israel]... like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young" (Deut. 32:11)!

The words describe a mother bird, and through her they portray the energy-giving presence of God — wrapping, protecting, and caressing, under His wings, the chaos of an empty and unfinished earth as He prepares to complete His creation.

And so, where there had been nothing but "darkness" (Gen. 1:2) before, now there would be light! "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day,' and the darkness he called 'night.' And there was evening, and there was morning — the first day" (vv. 3-5).

First the earth was (in sequence):

(a) formless ('tohu'),
(b) empty ('bohu'), and
(c) dark.

Then at God's command (and in reverse sequence) it became:

(c) bright with light (vv. 3-5),
(b) "full" of vegetation (vv. 11,12) and animal life of every imaginable kind (vv. 20-25), and
(a) well-ordered: its regular and recurrent heavenly lights and seasons ordained to mark out days and months and years (vv. 14-18).

And it was all "good"!

Here is the essence of God's creative act: an earth filled with life, and regulated by His hand. Over this newly filled and ordered world God placed His greatest single "creation": man and woman.

> *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth* ***[that until just now has been 'empty'!]*** *and subdue it* ***[i.e., bring order to what until just now had been 'chaotic'!]'*** *" (vv. 27,28).*

"Tohu w'bohu" elsewhere

The other instances of this phrase are remarkably instructive:

First, Jeremiah 4 depicts an "earth" — "eretz", the Land of Israel — that had once been "fruitful" (v. 26), with inhabited towns (v. 26), and God's people dwelling peacefully in and around His city of Jerusalem. But how had His people responded to the wonderful blessings of God's creation — of full and ordered lives — out of which they might glorify Him?

> *"My people are fools; they do not know me. They are senseless children; they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil; they know not how to do good" (v. 22).*

What was God's reaction to this? Out of the north came a great "disaster" (v. 6), a "lion" who "destroyed nations" (v. 7) — the Babylonian king with his armies. "Look! He advances like the clouds, his chariots come like a whirlwind, his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us! We are ruined!" (v. 13). And when the war was finished, the trumpet ceased, and the battle cry quieted (vv. 16-19)... and when, thereafter, the "scorching wind from the barren heights in the desert blows toward my people" (v. 11), to finish what the invading armies had begun...

...Then, there was nothing left at all, but... "tohu w'bohu" again (v. 23):

> *"I looked at the earth ['eretz'], and it was formless ['tohu'] and empty ['bohu']; and at the heavens, and their light was gone [a reversal of Gen. 1:4!]. I looked at the mountains, and they were quaking; all the hills were swaying. I looked, and there were no people; every bird in the sky had flown away..." (vv. 23-25).*

At every stage, the wonderful effects of God's earlier creation were being reversed; the Eretz was being returned to its primordial state!

> *"I looked, and the fruitful land was a desert; all its towns lay in ruins before the LORD, before his fierce anger. This is what the LORD says: 'The whole*

land will be ruined, though I will not destroy it completely. Therefore the earth will mourn and the heavens above grow dark, because I have spoken and will not relent, I have decided and will not turn back' " (vv. 26-28).

*****

Secondly, Isaiah 34 depicts a day of terrible judgment upon Edom, one of Israel's staunchest enemies, because of their disregard for God's law and their hatred of God's people. The description is briefer, but still powerful. All the amenities of God's creative work... fertile lands with crops and animals for food, ordered and inhabited cities and societies... all were gone! And what remained in their place? Smoke and darkness and desolation (vv. 9,10). Thorns and nettles and brambles (v. 13). Jackals and owls and other desert creatures (vv. 13,14). Nothing but a desert... an "empty quarter"... a "tohu w'bohu"!

"God will stretch out over Edom the measuring line of chaos ['tohu'] and the plumb line of desolation ['bohu']" (v. 11). These (the measuring line, and the plumb line) were the tools of a carpenter or builder... as if to say, 'First I must sweep away all the rubble, all the trash, of that old work. Only then can I start again to build a new — and better — creation!'

"Tohu w'bohu" in the "creation" of Israel

What is true of God's natural creation is especially true of God's *spiritual* "creation" also.

The God who, "in the beginning", brought light out of darkness, order out of chaos, and abundant life out of the stillness and emptiness of death... plans to do the same — and does the same! — with the *spiritual* lives of those who believe in Him.

He called a wild, disorganized slave rabble out of Egypt — a people that scarcely knew what they believed anymore. He led them through the desert, feeding and watering and sheltering and protecting them along the way (as a mother bird might care for her chicks).

Along the way, He showed them His glory. He built His tabernacle in the midst of their newly-organized ranks of tribes. He gave them His laws and statutes and ordinances. He provided them precise directions about how and when, and with what substance they might worship Him. Among other things, He instructed them as to:

a. which days, and at what times, they might come before Him to offer specific sacrifices;
b. what garments their priests and Levites should wear;
c. the precise measurements of ingredients for their incense and anointing oil; and
d. the preparation schedule, and time of sacrifice, and manner of consuming their Passover lambs.

Later, when God brought the children of Israel into the Land of Promise, He instructed them as to:

a. when, and by what means, they might conquer the cities of Canaan;
b. how they were to treat those whom they captured;
c. how they would allocate the newly-acquired lands among their various tribes and families; and
d. how they should keep the Sabbath — a special day for putting aside all ordinary labor, and for reading, praying, instructing their children, and worshiping Him.

It was in remembering the LORD their God, in the ways He appointed, that they became "a people holy to the LORD" — set apart, sanctified, removed from the presence of the other nations, and dedicated to Him alone. In the orderliness of their lives, insofar as they followed His rules and guidelines, they separated themselves to become the LORD's "precious jewels". While all the people of the world, and the cattle on a thousand hills, belonged to Yahweh, they — His special covenant people — were His very special possession: kept close to Him, in His bosom as it were, where as a Father He would always watch over and love them as His dear children.

In the shadow of His hovering wings — as symbolized by the cherubim that overshadowed the mercy seat in tabernacle and temple — they found repose, rest, and comfort. For those who truly loved the LORD, His laws were not burdensome. And even when He chastened them, they were reminded that it was because He loved them as sons and daughters, and yearned for their betterment.

He had brought them from darkness into light, from death to life, from emptiness to fullness, and from the terrible fear of a chaotic, pointless, random existence into an ordered and purposeful service in His divine family.... from "tohu w'bohu" into "the beauty of holiness". So they might sing:

"Drop Thy still dews of *quietness*,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our *ordered* lives confess
The beauty of Thy *peace*.

"Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy *coolness* and Thy *balm*;
Let sense be numb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of *calm*!"

Perhaps they were not "free" as they had been, in the "waste howling wilderness" of Sinai, the "empty quarter" of the Arabian desert — but what did that really mean? It meant they were no longer "free" to live out sad, confused, bewildered lives — existences without meaning and without hope. Now, instead, they were God's servants, specially chosen by Him and nurtured and instructed. Every day had focus and significance — today, tomorrow, and beyond — because they lived in His household and belonged to His family.

"Why should His people, then, be sad?

None have such reason to be glad
As those redeemed by God."

"Tohu w'bohu" in the New Testament

In the New Testament — *especially* in the New Testament! — there is found in Christ Jesus the remedy for the "chaotic emptiness" of a worldly life.

"Thou Whose Almighty word
Chaos and darkness heard,
And took their flight:
Hear us, we humbly pray,
And where the Gospel day
Sheds not its glorious ray,
Let there be light" (John Marriott).

Perhaps this is best demonstrated in the life of the man who called himself "Legion", being (as he imagined) inhabited by thousands of little "demons" — his mind confused and disoriented, and his life a living hell. The madman who barely survived, naked, among tombs and dead bodies, came face to face with the Savior. When last we see him, he is "clothed, and in his right mind", sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to his words. Upon his dark inflamed mind there had dawned the light of the glory of God in the face of His Son. Into the pandemonium of his existence there had come calmness and peace. Into the terrible loneliness of his world there had entered a friend to comfort him, bringing healing for his sores and covering for his nakedness.

Writing to the believers in Ephesus, Paul writes of those like the insane "Legion", Gentiles who had been "*separate* from Christ, *excluded* from citizenship in Israel and *foreigners* to the covenants of the promise, *without hope* and *without God* in the world" (2:12).

But, he tells them,

(a) where once they had been "separate", they are now "brought near" (v. 13);
(b) where once they had been "excluded" from God's family, they are now "reconciled to God" (v. 16);
(c) where once they had been "foreigners", they are now "fellow citizens with God's people" (v. 19);
(d) where once they had been "without hope", they are now "built on... the prophets" (v. 20), veritable beacons of hope; and
(e) where once they had been "without God", they now "have access" through Christ's blood into His presence (v. 18)!

Their lives of "empty chaos" have been saved by grace, through faith — God's gift to them (v. 8). They have been "created in Christ Jesus" (v. 10), and the "good works" enjoined upon them (v. 10) are anything but onerous. Not at all! The "good works", which they joyfully seek to do, are the means by which their loving Father continues to "work" with them — for they are His "workmanship", and in their partnership with the Creator they do their part to prepare themselves for His new, glorious, everlasting creation.

From darkness to light. From death to life. From emptiness and desolation to fullness and fruitfulness. From chaos and confusion to meaning and purpose.

Those who belong to Christ have come out of a trackless Sahara into a beautiful garden. Now that they rest in its cool shades, should they complain and fret about which flowers they must not pick, or which fruits they must not eat? Looking at the irony of such short-sighted dissatisfaction, the old Bible expositor Robert Candlish writes, "Insensible to the free grant of many trees, we take it amiss that even one should be withheld — and fret under the wholesome restraint of duty."

"Tohu w'bohu" in Corinth

Similar problems plagued the Corinthian ecclesia. In Corinth there was much fretting under the wholesome restraint of ecclesial rules...

(a) much concern about being able to "exercise [one's] freedom", even if it caused others to "stumble" (1 Cor. 8:9)...

(b) much concern about "freedom" to enjoy oneself in certain activities, whether it was "expedient" and "edifying" ("beneficial" and "constructive": NIV) to all or not (10:23)...

(c) much concern about expressing one's individuality in various forms of worship, even if it did not bring encouragement and comfort to everyone else (14:31).

To all this, the apostle Paul has various words of advice. But much of what he says boils down to one thing: that whatever is done, or not done, in the ecclesia must be out of "love" (ch. 13) — love which is "patient" and "kind", love which "does not boast", love which is "not rude" nor "self-seeking".

And specifically, and finally, he reminds them that "God is not a God of *disorder [cp 'tohu': chaos and confusion]*, but of peace" (14:33), and that "everything should be done in a fitting and *orderly way*" (v. 40).

God is not a "God" of "tohu w'bohu", but a God who has a beautiful, holy, enlightened, and infinitely reasonable plan — which He will implement to fill the earth with His own special glory, in the person of those who conform to His pattern.

"Tohu w'bohu" in our personal lives

What is true of the ecclesia, the body of believers, is also true of every individual believer: As we follow Christ, we need to learn how to put aside the "tohu w'bohu" of our own private lives, and develop — by God's grace — a regular, well-organized lifestyle, in which all we think, and say, and do shows forth His glory!

We do this, quite simply, by developing good habits. We do this regularly, daily and weekly, as a matter of routine:

a. by praying,
b. by reading the Bible, and other spiritually helpful books,
c. by attending memorial meetings at regular times,
d. by supporting Bible classes and other ecclesial activities,
e. by instructing our children,

f. by seeking out how we can be of practical help to others, in the brotherhood and outside.

Of course, we will never do ***all*** that we should do — that's not the point! We will never be saved by our "works", but only by our faith! Yet our faith must show itself in a desire, at least, to do what we can — no matter how small or faltering — to advance the cause of God's Kingdom on this earth, and to prepare others along with ourselves for Christ's coming.

And, most importantly, in the simple process of doing reasonable spiritual things as best we can every day, we keep ourselves — our minds and hearts and spirits — close to the Lord. In developing and following good habits each day, we are like the sheep that follow the Good Shepherd. He is the one who protects us and guides us — we cannot care for ourselves. But we ***can*** decide to stay close to him, and not to stray off to pursue our own little selfish interests and pleasures. The order of our daily lives keeps us in his "peace", beside his "still waters"; there we are fed and watered and tended.

If we stay close by the Good Shepherd, then we will not wander away into the nearby wilderness, where there is only "chaos" and "nothingness" — where confusion and fear await us, and where wolves and lions attack and devour.

As sheep, let us listen to the shepherd's voice (John 10:3), and follow that voice

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (4) God's gracious purpose of redemption preceded the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-6)

In Ephesians 1:3 the Apostle blesses God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he recognizes to be the source of blessing ("who hath blessed us"). On reflection we recognize the term bears two senses:

(1) the LORD God is manifestly the source of all blessing, and

(2) in their response to this, believers throughout the ages have expressed their gratitude to Him by blessing His Name. Notable in this connection is Psalm 103: "Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name" (v. 1).

None of the LORD's blessings is to be forgotten, foremost among which is His readiness to forget our iniquities, a sentiment later reflected in the psalm, where we read, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (v. 12). But the LORD can also heal our diseases and rescue us from the pit, crowning us with lovingkindness and tender mercies (vv. 3,4).

While Psalm 103 is outstanding as a noble expression of thankfulness, the theme is one which recurs insistently in Scripture and surely it must find a place in the heart and prayers of every child of God. Paul, especially, was keenly conscious of

what he owed to his God and to the Lord Jesus. Typically, he exhorts the Colossians to abound in thanksgiving (2:7). Immensely talented as he was, he reminds the Corinthians that if one appears to be more gifted than another, this is no reason for self-congratulation: "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" (1 Cor. 4:7, NIV). But the supreme ground for the Apostle's personal gratitude lay in the consciousness of the grace which had been extended to him when, as a feared persecutor, he received the revelation on the Damascus road. Saul, the blasphemer and persecutor, on his mission of destruction, obtained mercy and experienced the abounding grace of his Lord (see 1 Tim. 1:13,14).

To return to the beginning of verse 3; we note that the LORD God is referred to as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". Paul thus recognizes (and this we have already emphasized) the primary source of all blessing is the Father Himself. As a true Israelite, Paul knows of only one God, and the relationship Jesus bears to him is that of Son. This great truth figures prominently in Paul's letters (see Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; Col. 1:3); later in Ephesians 1 we read, "...the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" (v. 17). In an earlier letter, the Apostle had written: "Yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him" (1 Cor. 8:6). It is, then, in the light of the foregoing passages that we discover the evidences of Paul's uncompromising monotheism. In the letter to the Ephesians, where we encounter such an emphasis upon the unique status of the Lord Jesus, it is surely highly significant that Paul stresses the Father's total and universal sovereignty. This our Lord himself, after his resurrection, proclaimed to Mary Magdalene: "…I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John 20:17).

In Ephesians 1:3 the emphasis is on the ***spiritual*** blessings we receive. These are available to the believer "in the heavenly places in Christ". The NIV renders this: "in the heavenly realms". The Greek plural term occurs first in the New Testament in Matthew 3:2 ("Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand") and recurs in the plural in verses 16,17 where the RV renders it "the heavens". However, there can be little doubt that the expression refers to heaven, as in the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:10, where various versions render the plural by "heaven". The term recurs in Ephesians (3:15; 4:10; 6:9). In the last of these references, the Apostle speaks of the Master being in heaven. It is this which puts us on the right track, for there we are told our new life is in Christ in heaven. This is the supreme blessing which no silver or gold can purchase; the forms in which this blessing is extended become apparent in a later part of the chapter. To quote James: "Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?" (2:5, NIV). The Lord himself exhorts us not to lay up treasures on earth but in heaven (Matt. 6:19).

These treasures are in the Lord Christ, and ***in him*** alone. It was to this great privilege, vested in Christ, that the disciples of all ages were destined in him before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). Here we encounter the concept of the foreknowledge of the One who works all things according to His will. The LORD

God has existed from all eternity, a notion which, in our present condition, we cannot comprehend. What becomes increasingly evident in Ephesians is that the history of mankind, and especially its consummation, are predetermined by our God. This concept is brought out especially in the various passages where "the foundation of the world" is encountered.

But what are we to understand by "the foundation of the world"? If we examine the passages in which the expression occurs, we discover they divide themselves into two groups:

(1) In common with Ephesians 1:4, we find "***before*** the foundation of the world" in the following passages: John 17:24, 1 Peter 1:20; and

(2) In the following more numerous passages we find "***from***": Matthew 13:35; 25:34; Luke 11:50; Hebrews 4:3; 9:26; Revelation 13:8; 17:8.

The key word in these occurrences is "world" ***(kosmos)***. This has nothing to do with the physical universe but with mankind, as shown in 1 Corinthians 5:10 where Paul advises against withdrawing from human society ***(kosmos)*** in order to avoid moral contamination. As we examine the various passages it becomes increasingly apparent that the foundation of the world is the establishment of the order of things brought about as the consequence of the creation of man.[1] We may perhaps liken "the foundation of the world" to a constitution.[2] To quote the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*: "In the broadest sense, a constitution is a body of rules governing the affairs of an organized group", and this can apply to a state. In the case of the United States it is governed by the constitution which became effective in 1789 (see the 1980 edition, vol. 5, pp. 84,85).

So it was that God set up a constitution by which mankind has been governed, whether men recognize the fact or not. From the start of human history man has been subject to God's law, which required total obedience. Thus sin, disobedience, brought about death. Man's own endeavour to conceal the fact was in vain: the garments of fig leaves were replaced by the coats of skins, provided by God Himself. All this speaks to us of God's work of salvation in His Son. This enables us to understand how in Revelation 13:8 the Lord Jesus is referred to as "the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world" (NIV). So it is clear that something, at the very beginning of human history, took place which prefigured our Lord's sacrifice. This passage in its turn can lead us to the conclusion that the creatures slain to provide Adam and Eve with a covering for their nakedness were lambs, a conclusion confirmed by the fact that Abel, in sacrificing a lamb, satisfied divine requirements (Gen. 4:4).[3]

To return to Ephesians 1:3, we can now conclude God foresaw the call of His servants in his Son, and it is he — the Son — who at the Judgement says to the faithful: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). By our faith in God and our baptism into the Lord Jesus, we can be incorporated into the flock of the One whose purpose precedes the creation of mankind and controls all subsequent history. The concept of a divine purpose controlling human history in all its major phases may be illustrated by using the analogy of architecture. This is suggested by Hebrews

3:4: "For every house is builded by someone; but he that built all things is God"; the supreme architect is indeed the LORD God. In the case of a building to be erected, the details are drawn up by the architect and made available to all involved in its construction. This is what our God has done in the Scriptures. But while the privilege of knowing the divine purpose is the greatest available to us, this knowledge is in itself insufficient: it must awaken a proper response. This response becomes meaningful only if we live a new and full life in the Lord Jesus. The history of Israel reveals, tragically, that the privileges it enjoyed did not produce an appropriate response. Moses was at pains to make clear that the privileges available to the Israelites were accompanied by special responsibilities: "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:6); but this reminder was followed by the words, "Thou shalt therefore keep the commandment, and the statutes and the judgements, which I command thee this day, to do them" (v. 11; see also Exod. 19:5,6).

We can discern an echo of Moses' words in the final part of Ephesians 1:4: the purpose of our call in Christ is to "be holy and without blemish before him in love". The expression "without blemish" reminds us of Colossians 1:28 where the Apostle declares he exerts himself "to present every man perfect in Christ". The perfection is achieved when we perfect ***love*** in our lives. How that love reveals itself in its various manifestations is, as we all know, set out in 1 Corinthians 13. Unless we show that love, whatever we do in the Lord's Name is meaningless: we may even have faith to remove mountains, but if this is not accompanied by love, it is "nothing". There can therefore be no more important prayer than that which asks our God and our Lord to aid us in the development of love. Love provides the environment in which the disciple should live. Later in Ephesians Paul instructs us "to walk in love, as Christ also loved us" (5:2), which appears to be a conscious reference to John 13:34.

Having spent some time in the consideration of verse 4, we can see the force of the words in verse 5: "...having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ". Our natural state, in Adam, is to be "children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3). This is our status as sinners. God's wrath is with the impenitent sinner (see, for example, Rom. 1:18; 2:5). Our God is indeed longsuffering but His patience can at length be exhausted and the consequences for the sinner can be dire, as in the judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah, and on Israel itself at various stages in its history, notably in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. However, and this is the work of God's grace, we can be adopted as God's sons and daughters. The concept of adoption is peculiar to Paul; it occurs here in Ephesians 1:5 and also in Romans 8:15,23; 9:4; and Galatians 4:5. Adoption was practised by the Romans and the first emperor Augustus had, under the name of Octavius, been adopted by Julius Caesar as his heir. Thus the way had been opened for Octavius to occupy the supreme position in a great empire, but this was a status to be lost because of his mortality.

There can be no comparison between the status of an Augustus and that bestowed on God's children by adoption. To the latter is offered the prospect of eternal life.

As with all God's privileges, this too is conditional: in Romans 8:23 Paul reminds us of the final and enduring form of adoption, the redemption of our body. It is only when the body of our humiliation is made like the body of the unique Son of God that our adoption into God's family will be complete and permanent.

Although the term "adoption" does not appear in the Old Testament, the concept is there: the LORD God became a father to Israel, a relationship of which a redeemed people proved itself unworthy: "I thought how I would set you among my children, and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful heritage of all the nations, and I thought you would call me, My Father, and would not turn from following me" (Jer. 3:19, NRSV). The failure of Israel is a perpetual reminder of how easily the status as a child of God can be lost.

The verse with which we are now concerned (v. 5) continues the thought in verse 4 by affirming that adoption is foreordained and, as the Apostle declares so consistently in this letter, it is on God's part "through Jesus Christ unto himself", and this is in keeping with the good pleasure of His will. God's will is absolute and sovereign, and nothing can prevail against it. The mention of God's will is recurrent in the letter and especially in this first chapter; with the mention of this will ("theleema") is linked the word "eudokia" ("good pleasure"). Although the divine will is sovereign, it is not arbitrary or despotic. Rather, as we shall see, it is synonymous with His grace.

In verse 6 Paul is not content with a bare mention of God's grace; rather he speaks of "the glory of God's grace", the contemplation of which moves him, and surely us, to praise. There is no thought in Paul's mind of anything but the fullness of divine grace. In Romans 5:20 the Apostle speaks of grace abounding in response to human sin, and this he had experienced himself — more than most, for he had been persecutor and blasphemer (cf. 1 Tim. 1:13,14).

In Ephesians 1:6 he is making a deliberate play upon words, for the verb used is cognate with the term for "grace": to bring this out we need a rendering something like the following: "the grace with which he graced us". But how is this grace revealed? "In the Beloved." What nobler word can describe our Lord than this — "the Beloved"! Even then, he is no passive recipient only, but also the means of conveying God's love to us: "Even as the Father hath loved me, *I also have loved you:* abide ye in my love" (John 15:9; see also John 5:20).

As we work through this wonderful letter we shall appreciate increasingly how completely Paul's mind is focused on the Father's activity in the Son. The consideration of verse 7 will give full support to this observation.

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

Note:

1. The term corresponding to "foundation" in the expression "the foundation of the world" is ***katabole***, which literally means "a throwing or laying down". Apart from the occurrences of interest to us it is used in only one other place in the New Testament: Hebrews 11:11, of Sarah conceiving seed. The other word for "foundation" in the New Testament is ***themelios***, as in Luke 6:48.
2. It is interesting to note that B.F. Westcott in his commentary on Ephesians 1:4 states that the Vulgate renders "before the foundation of the world" by "ante mundi constitutionem" (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, London 1906, p. 8).

Apologetics

The Hard Questions: (25) Which God? The Exclusivity Issue: (9) Idolatry, Mythology, and Orthodoxy

In this penultimate article on the problem of exclusivity, I will further develop the idolatry perspective raised in the previous article, and also incorporate the aspect of mythology. Orthodox Christianity is not overtly idolatrous, but it is steeped in mythology.

Last month, I made much of the "reasonableness" of idolatry, at least from a human perspective. I wrote that we ought not think of idolaters in the Bible as hopelessly clueless semi-civilized primitives who lived in less enlightened times. Idolatry represented the end product of a process of belief that attempted to incorporate the great powers of nature into one's life. However, God's condemnation remained absolute and without deference to any alleged positive intentions of the idolater (e.g., Psa. 135:15-18).

Orthodox Christianity has as much resemblance to original Christianity as idolatry does to monotheism. The path to orthodoxy followed a somewhat different path than that which resulted in idolatry, but some parallels are evident. This is a rich and fascinating study that I will only outline here.

Early Christian believers came from either Jewish or Gentile backgrounds. On the one hand Jews shed the ineffective rituals based on Mosaic law, and on the other, pagans discarded their immorality and superstitions. Regardless of their previous lives, all believers witnessed the manifestation of power in the gospel and the forms of worship of first century ecclesias. This power was a spiritual power that led to new lives in Christ. Love, faith, unity, peace, and other virtues came to fruition in some of the unlikeliest of humans, including Paul the Apostle.

The first century ecclesias constituted a religious situation parallel to the world of the idolater of Isaiah 44, but set in a different context. Instead of wanting to identify with and obtain the powers of nature for the sake of one's natural life (harvest, war, reproduction, wealth, etc.), people wanted to improve their spiritual lives and find salvation. They wanted to become individual participants in the burgeoning Christian movement. They saw the power that changed lives in the early church and, as they joined the various assemblies of brothers and sisters, they sought to isolate and understand wherein the motivating and sanctifying forces lay. In apostolic times, a combination of several factors worked together to create the ecclesia: personal emulation of Jesus' representative sacrifice, the active Spirit powers, the communal strength of brothers and sisters serving each other in harmony, the power of prayer, the character-building adversities of life, and

the influence of inspiring brothers and sisters such as Paul, Barnabas, Priscilla, Aquilla, Epaphroditus, and many others.

As time progressed, inevitably the human desire to obtain spiritual benefits with a lesser investment wrought its evil work within the household of God. People wanted the power of religion, of course, but they wanted it in some easily attainable, immediate, tangible fashion. While it might come easily and naturally to make material and tangible idols to represent the powers of nature, how does one materially represent the power that converts a life or brings salvation? What idol would you make to represent the growth of internal peace, for instance? What object or image would you choose to concretize the concept of "faith?"[1] Idolatry does not easily fit into the spiritual scheme of Christianity. Moreover, with just a minimum of rituals, there wasn't much to work with on that account.

Thus, the path to orthodox idolatry did not first come in the form of making images to represent religious values. First there came a distinct shift in the belief system. Of greatest significance was the deification of Jesus, which began probably late in the first century and reached formality in 325 with the formulation of the Nicene Creed.[2] This new view of Christ was an understanding, a "doctrine," and not a physical image. The deified Jesus was soon represented in images, sculptures, and artwork of many sorts. Christianity never did devolve completely into material idolatry, although the icons of the Eastern orthodoxy and the cathedral affectations of the Western Catholic church did suffice for material representations of religious values.[3]

Had the early theologians retained the understanding of Jesus as we know it in truth (that he was a representative human, fully mortal, one who conquered sin living within the framework of human nature), would we have had the proliferation of Jesus-image icons that developed within the next few centuries? In the first century, worship consisted largely of small groups of brothers and sisters dedicated to mutually aiding each other in spiritual and natural matters. By the fifth century, worship meant assembling in large ornate buildings dedicated to rituals directed at icons of Jesus. The now apostate church "needed" the stature of the man-God, the divine, the God-who-became-man-to-rescue-our-immortal-souls. Thus, the idolatry of the Christian era was largely a matter of the changed perception of the work of the Savior, and then it became materialized in many ways. There was a close and necessary connection between a deified Jesus and the abundance of material representations of him, many of which achieved idolatrous status in their own right.

The Protestant reformation attempted to remove material and tangible forms, such as they were, from the Catholic Church, but they never (except for those smaller sects identified by Bro. Alan Eyre in *The Protestors*) pulled the plug on the root of the problem: the deified Jesus.

Mythological concepts of Jesus

Orthodoxy as we usually encounter it today in the form of evangelical groups does not seem to bear too many marks of idolatry, but the root of the problem, a

deified Jesus, remains. Several other mythological features remain firmly in place, notably the doctrine of incarnation, that is, God becoming a human. This sort of interchangeability between the Divine and human realms is a common feature of mythologies, and is mentioned in Acts 14:11. Orthodoxy has had nearly two millennia to recognize and repair this problem, but to say that it's firmly entrenched would be the understatement of the year. The divinity of Jesus is the *sine qua non [essential feature]* of orthodoxy, and the incarnation, as absurd as it is on any level (theological, practical, metaphysical), is the process by which God allegedly became man. This idea is patently mythological, and I'm sure it has its origins there. Trying to reconstruct what Constantine might have been thinking as the controversy swirled in the religious world around him, Rubenstein writes:

> *...Athanasius maintains that this utterly transcendent God transformed Himself into a man, suffered, died, and then resurrected Himself! Doesn't this mixture of Creator and creature sound pagan?... He therefore hastens to add that the Father's method of generating the Son is beyond human understanding.*[4]

Rubenstein goes on to discuss the nature of Jesus under such an arrangement, and the necessary implications on the atonement:

> *Athanasius apparently thinks that Christ-like behavior is to be limited to a few desert saints like Antony, while the rest of us sinners wait in hope of unmerited salvation. It substitutes the sacraments of the Church for sacrificial action in the world. What, one wonders, would Jesus have made of that?*[5]

Rubenstein nails the point: we cannot form a valid relationship to a false Jesus (Bro. John Launchbury's series on the atonement also highlights this critical issue). The implications of a deified Jesus included mythologizing the mode of salvation and incorporating the idolatry of sacraments, icons, rituals, and pilgrimages. Understanding the atonement depends on knowing who God is, who Jesus is, and what humanity is. Theology does count, and it counts a lot. It doesn't have to be complicated, but it does have to be right.

Today, many concepts or images exist, all under the name of Jesus. The Eastern and Western Catholic systems retain their highly visual and ritualized images, and the inevitable image worship that developed from them. Protestant churches may have rejected the overt imagery, but the deified Jesus concept abides. Speaking in broad terms, the protestant Jesus is a necessarily magical god capable of saving the immortal souls of his adherents; the requirements for being an adherent varies among denominations.

The Jesus of the evangelicals is a talismanic god, invoked for assistance in any circumstance of life, from the need for instant salvation to finding an open parking space. There is also the Jesus of the Unitarians and other organizations that have rejected Biblical veracity; we might not feel so akin to them for that reason, but their Jesus retains the same name, holding the form of religion, but denying the power of it. He has become only a great moral teacher, one among many, and the singularly defining aspect of resurrection is considered nothing more than a teaching myth.

More mythology

The battle between supernatural forces of good and evil is another obviously mythological feature of orthodoxy. There's probably not a mythological tradition anywhere in the world that doesn't have some version of this conflict, and it is a major feature of the oldest mythologies. In the somewhat sophisticated "Christian" version, the supernatural force of evil, the Devil himself, plies his nefarious work not by direct confrontation with God, but by contesting for the immortal souls of mankind. This form of an adversarial supernatural power fits right into the Christian scheme of salvation versus punishment.

And what shall we say of the ubiquitous immortal soul? Found in mythologies worldwide, the immortal soul certainly ranks as the primal expression of human arrogance. Even worse, it necessitates the equally mythological locations of heaven and hell. Again, there's probably not a mythology anywhere without these features in some form.

It's not my purpose here to catalog the errors of orthodox Christianity. Nor do I intend to show how these errors destroy any possibility of a meaningful relationship to God. Our writers have vigorously addressed these vital topics. My point here is to show that what might sound very close to us is, in fact, plainly mythological. Just as we would have no trouble excluding ourselves from a hypothetical idolater or devotee of some ancient mythology, we should have the same judgment about adherents to the conventions of orthodox Christianity in its many forms.

The early Christian departure from the Truth involved layering important principles upon existing mythological beliefs. Again, this is a subject ripe for detailed study, but the only point I want to make here is this: despite the similar terminology, orthodox Christianity is so much a mythological affair that it provides few insights into Biblical teaching.

Same terminology, different meaning

The troubling aspect is the overlap of terminology: God, Jesus, Bible, salvation, Holy Spirit, baptism, salvation, and so on. We can listen to people of this persuasion talk about their belief in Jesus and think that they are pretty well lined up with us. However, the words are only a veneer, and the meanings behind them are worlds apart. Many people use the word Jesus or the phrase "Son of God". What they mean with these words differs at an essential level. Do not be deceived by similar terminology. What can sound very similar represents a system of falsehood that bears no resemblance to any truth about the world. Similar terminology masks ideas that share no harmonious relationship.

Ask yourself this question if you are sometimes vexed by the separateness we maintain from orthodoxy: "Would I be likely to accept the religion of an idolater or one who believed in any mythology? What if a Molech worshiper or one who believed in the Greek pantheon came into my presence? Would I consider their form of worship as close enough to mine that I would I extend my boundaries to include that person?" If the answer is "No," and I expect it would be, then you should have the same response when asked about a practitioner of orthodoxy.

The underlying principles are the same in each case.

However, the main issue is not how we regard those entrapped in the errors of orthodoxy. The main concern of our life is how we respond to the love of God and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who have revealed themselves to us in truth. Knowing the truth, we have no excuses for our discipleship.

(Next: Pluralism and Propositional Theology.)

David Levin
(Baltimore, MD)

Footnotes:

1. There is certainly a warning for us here concerning the statement of faith, and other tangible aspects of worship.
2. For a well-documented and insightful history of this movement, read Richard Rubenstein's *When Jesus Became God* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999). It has been popular in our community, and for good reason. Rubenstein stated that "selling" a human Jesus, one like them, at that time in the Roman Empire was not at all feasible; the people needed a divine, iconic figure, one such as readily available in a deified Jesus image. Rubenstein accounts for social and political influences in this process.
3. The word "iconoclast" (literally, "image breaker") comes from the artifact-smashers of the Reformation ages. Pictures of the Virgin Mary, crucifixes, and cathedral artwork items were destroyed by frenzied mobs of zealous Protestants in outbreaks of what became known as "iconoclastic furies".
4. Rubenstein, p. 118.
5. Rubenstein, p. 119.

Special Invitation

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

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

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

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

Bible Study

Rightly Dividing the Word: (3) Recognizing the Flow of Thought

Our goal in reading the Bible is to hear what God is actually saying to us, and to understand what He means by what He is saying. That requires us not only to look closely at the words, but also to read them in their context, which determines their meaning.

Context, as we have seen, includes:

a. to whom the words were first spoken,
b. their particular circumstances and place in history,
c. the flow of thought in the Bible passage as a whole (ignoring chapter breaks),
d. how this teaching is used by Jesus and his apostles, and
e. the way in which our understanding of a passage fits with the message of the Bible as a whole.

To illustrate how context can shed light upon meaning, we will consider Paul's writings to the Corinthian believers. Familiar, but not always well-understood, words of the Apostle Paul illustrate the importance of following the flow of his thought. Sometimes we read, "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1) as if it was an introduction to Paul's reproofs and instructions about their communal meals in remembrance of their Lord's sacrifice. These familiar words are, instead, a continuation of the difficult words of 10:33, "even as I try to please everybody in every way". Paul is actually saying that we must imitate him "in trying to please everybody in every way", just as his doing so is an imitation of Christ.

Human wisdom rejects or mocks the idea of trying to please everybody, and even among disciples of the Lord the words of Paul are often misunderstood. What did he really mean? The context gives us the answer. Paul's words (10:31-11:1) sum up powerfully his answer to the question "about food sacrificed to idols" (1 Cor. 8:1). Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11:1 are Paul's inspired answer.

The letter was written from Ephesus to the Corinthian believers a year or two after Paul had left Corinth, where he had resided more than 18 months (1 Cor. 16:8,9; Acts 18:11,18; 19:1). Many people, mostly Gentiles and some Jews, had been baptized in Corinth during the stay of Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

Thus the believers in Corinth had been converted to faith and discipleship in Christ during the previous three years before Paul wrote this letter. They were wonderfully enthusiastic, and many were blessed with gifts of the Spirit. However, they were short on experience of life in Christ. Many had left lives of gross idolatry and immorality (1 Cor. 6:9-11) to begin a new life in the Lord, but were

surrounded by idolatrous and immoral practices. It was, all in all, an extremely inhospitable environment for new believers.

A particular problem in Corinth was the selling in the market of meat that came from sacrifices to idols. To eat meat that had been dedicated to idols seemed to many disciples like a return to idolatry. Their sensitive ("weak") consciences forbade it. However, other disciples, knowing now that an idol was nothing, felt no inhibitions about eating such meat, and did so. Self-confidence in their knowledge was thus weakening the resolution and wounding the consciences of the "weak", thus causing them to sin against Christ (1 Cor. 8:4-12).

Paul is so concerned for the "weak" brothers and sisters that, if what he ate caused his brother to fall into sin, he would never eat meat again so that he would not cause him to fall (8:13). This unselfish concern for the spiritual welfare of fellow disciples is what Paul means by saying in 10:33 that he tried to please everybody in every way. "Please" is not used here in the sense of currying favor, but as acting for the spiritual benefit of every disciple.

In parallel instruction in Romans 14 and 15, the Apostle writes (15:1-3), "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself..." — an understatement that should humble us who think we are strong.

Those self-confident in their knowledge that idols were nothing felt that they had a right to act according to their own clear conscience and not to be judged by another's conscience (1 Cor. 10:29,30). However, Paul relates in chapter 9 how he had "rights" as an apostle. He had a right to have a wife as did Cephas (Peter). He had a right to receive support, his living, from those to whom he preached the gospel — as the Lord had said (Matt. 10). Yet he had not claimed or used his rights — an example he is urging upon the self-confident Corinthians.

Paul was free from all (in the sense that no man could give him orders), yet he made himself a slave to everyone to win as many for Christ as possible. To the Jews he became like a Jew to win the Jews (e.g., circumcising Timothy, not to save him, but to make it possible for him to speak in synagogues). To those not under the law of Moses he became like them (e.g., eating with Gentile brothers in Antioch; refusing to circumcise Titus) in order to win Gentiles for Christ. He had become all things to all men so that he might save some (1 Cor. 9:19-23; Acts 21:17-26; Gal. 2:3,11-16).

In chapter 10, Paul attacks the pride in their knowledge that idols were nothing; this pride led some believers to attend feasts in idol temples, where prostitutes served worshippers. Using the example of Israel coming out of Egypt, led by the cloud and baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, Paul shows how they failed. He is warning self-confident disciples: "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (v. 12).

In 10:14-22, Paul urges these brothers to flee from idolatry, and he bluntly shows how wrong it is to partake of the Lord's Table while also eating at the table of

demons, or idols. Paul is quoting (and actually agreeing with) these self-confident brethren when he says, "All things are lawful for me" (v. 23) — meaning that, in Christ there is no law against what they were doing. "But", he adds, "all things are not helpful; 'all things are lawful for me', but all things do not edify [build up spiritually]."

In our age, there are many wicked practices and pastimes that are not identified and forbidden in the Bible. We must test everything we do by asking, "Is it helpful?" "Does it edify?" "Is it enslaving me?" "Am I doing it for the Lord?" (1 Cor. 6:12,13).

Paul concludes with practical instructions in 10:24-28, beginning with the principle, "Let no one seek his own, but each the other's well-being." He makes the same point in verse 33, "just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." Some objected to having their liberty of conscience judged by the conscience of others; to them Paul answered (vv. 31,32): all that we do must be done to the glory of God and must not give offense (i.e., must not cause others to stumble or sin).

Like Paul and the Lord Jesus we must seek to please all. This is a first principle of life in Christ Jesus. We are to seek the spiritual welfare of others, that they may be saved. In this we must be imitators of Paul as he was of Christ.

Let us, therefore, remember the connection between 1 Corinthians 11:1 and the apostle's words in the previous chapters. Let's not glibly say or agree with someone else saying, "You can't please everybody." Our aim, as imitators of Paul, must be to "please" all men, in the Biblical sense.

In this exercise of searching for the meaning of the inspired words, we have seen the importance of the context. We have attempted to learn a little about Corinth (perhaps from a Bible dictionary), and about Paul's preaching there from the Acts of the Apostles. We have bypassed the artificial chapter breaks to appreciate how 1 Corinthians 11:1 sums up the apostle's instruction in chapters 8, 9, and 10. Thus we have followed the flow of Paul's reasoning through these chapters. In this we have been aided by comparing similar teaching in Romans, and recalling practical examples from Paul's life.

Of course, we have only begun to see what these chapters can teach us. In our day, there are many idols around us — particularly those in the many forms of worldly entertainment that press in on our lives. How Paul's words here, particularly chapter 10, apply to our attitude to these idols is very relevant to us. That, however, is another subject.

(Next: Definitions and context.)

Bob Green
(Brantford, ON)

"He who marries a heathen woman is as if he made himself son-in-law to an idol" (Jewish proverb).

Bible Study

Stones

The other day my friend Cheran gave me a stone. It was carefully wrapped in paper, very well taped, and tied up with string. Cheran has a wonderful ability to appreciate the small things in life, things that perhaps others take for granted. Cheran's interest in stones, and his willingness to share his stones, reminded me of how God shares His thoughts about stones with us in Scripture. God wants us to be aware of what can be done with stones. He also warns us that we could be hurt if we choose to use stones at a time, or in a way, that is not within His will. We have many examples in the record of how stones were used appropriately and inappropriately.

A stone for a pillow

One of my favorite stories about stones is when Jacob fled from the anger of Esau and spent the night at Bethel ("the house of God"); there he used a stone for a pillow. As he slept, he saw angels ascending and descending upon a ladder, or stairway, that extended to heaven. In that dream God made promises to him. Jacob was promised that he would inherit the land, that his descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth, that blessings upon all the earth would come through him, and — finally— that God was going to be with him wherever he went and would bring him back to the land. The next morning Jacob took the stone he had used as a pillow, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil upon it. Then he made a covenant with God there (Gen. 28:10-22). Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, had also set up an altar at or very near Bethel; several times he went there to worship (Gen. 12:8; 13:1-4). Could this stone — the one that Jacob used at Bethel — have been one of the stones Abraham had originally used for the altar of worship in "God's house"?

A watchtower of stones

Later in Jacob's life, when he left Laban to return to his father's land, as God had directed, he used stones again (Gen. 31:1-3). Jacob and Laban gathered stones together into "a heap of witness" between the two of them. They used words in both Hebrew and Aramaic to describe the heap of witness. Two languages but the same meaning, so that there could be no misunderstanding as to why that heap was there. Not only that, but the place is called "Mizpah" ("a watchtower, or beacon"). The Lord was brought into that covenant as a third witness, to watch between them, when they were not able to see each other. The word "watch" means "to lean forward", as if straining to see into the distance. The heap of stones became a memorial for both of them: not only were they to remember their promise to each other, but also that God was in the watchtower (Gen. 31:43-55).

Graves of stones

There are several more heaps of stones in Scripture. Often the graves of condemned men were heaped with stones. Israel lost a battle at Ai because Achan had stolen some of the spoil from Jericho. Stones were heaped onto the grave of Achan, after he and his family had been stoned and burned. He and his family were remembered by a heap of stones in the valley of trouble. After Achan was buried, Israel defeated and burned Ai. The king of Ai, after being hung, was also buried beneath a heap of stones. Ai ("a ruin, or heap") was all that Israel left of that city (Josh. 7; 8).

Later in Israel's history, David's son Absalom stole the heart of the people of Israel from David. He also tried to steal David's throne. But he was killed and thrown into a pit, where a great heap of stones was erected over him — all that marked his grave (2 Sam. 18:9-18).

A memorial of stones

In contrast, perhaps, the most profound and important heap of stones mentioned is in Joshua 4:3-9,20,21. This is the stone reminder that God commanded the Israelites to build themselves, when they crossed Jordan and came into the Promised Land. Men from each tribe took stones from the center of the river where the feet of the priests had stood and built a memorial at their camp in Gilgal. They would carry those stones in their minds wherever they went, as a memory of a mighty God who could do all things. So Joshua instructed them to tell their children why those stones were there (vv. 22,23).

Altars of stones

Altars were made of stones, but not all altars were used to worship God. God had strict instructions for Israel not to offer their children on the altars of Molech (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5).

Solomon was led away by his foreign wives to seek after and worship on other altars than the one that he had helped to build, in God's beautiful temple. God took the kingdom away from Solomon because of it (1 Kings 11:5-13).

On Mount Carmel, the 450 prophets of Baal made an altar and danced around it. They yelled, and cut themselves, but the sacrifice on Baal's altar was not consumed. In contrast, Elijah repaired the altar on Mount Carmel, which was built out of twelve stones. He built it "in the name of the Lord". He made a trench around it, arranged the wood on it, and poured twelve jars of water over it until everything was soaking wet and the trench was full. When Elijah called on God, the fire of God completely consumed the offering, the wood, and the altar, and also dried up all the water. When the people saw this they fell on their faces and acknowledged, "The Lord, He is God" (1 Kings 18:22-40).

Death by stones

Execution by stoning was a means of punishment under God's law. The law commanded that a person be stoned for gathering wood on the Sabbath, for serving other gods, for promoting the worship of other gods, for disobeying parents and

living a useless life, and for some types of sexual immorality. Sometimes stoning was used outside the law, and usually by an angry mob. The people of Israel took up stones to kill Caleb and Joshua when they brought back a good report of the land. Shimei threw stones at David when David was fleeing from Absalom. Naboth was murdered by stoning when Ahab wanted his field and Naboth refused to sell it to him (although the formalities of the Law seem to have been observed). Zechariah son of Jehoiada was murdered by stoning because he openly denounced the idolatry in which Joash was involved after the death of Jehoiada. Jesus himself was almost stoned during his ministry. Stephen was stoned by Saul and the angry mob in Jerusalem, after he defended his faith in Jesus Christ. Paul survived stoning three times. Interestingly, Mary the mother of Jesus, when she was found with child outside of wedlock, could have been stoned for that sin.

***"A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones together"* (Eccl. 3:5)**

David, the man after God's own heart, knew the value of not throwing stones. David's experience with Goliath is the only place in the Bible where it is recorded that he took up stones against his fellow man. Throwing stones was not part of the way David lived with his fellow Israelites. David's charisma seems to have been greatly enhanced by his willingness to accept others without throwing stones at them, and this certainly allowed him to do God's work very effectively. David reflected the kind of acceptance extended to each of us by grace. The discontented and distressed sought him out and lived with him in the caves of the wilderness while he was on the run from Saul. He valued people, and in turn he was respected and his friendship was valued (1 Sam. 22:1-3; 1 Chron.11:17-19). David, himself, was later spared from stoning, even though he was guilty of taking another man's wife and then murdering her husband. He was covered by the grace of God for the very sin upon which Jesus was later asked to pass judgment...

> *"The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the midst, they said to Jesus, 'Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do you say?' And they were saying this, testing him, in order that they might have grounds for accusing him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground.*
>
> *"But when they persisted in asking him, he straightened up, and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And when they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and he was left alone and the woman, where she was in the midst.*
>
> *"And straightening up, Jesus said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?'*
>
> *"And she said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you; go your way. From now on sin no more.'*
>
> *"And therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world; he who follows me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of*

life' " (John 8:1-12).

Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground near the temple. The temple was thought of as "the house of God", and presumably they were to come there to worship at the altar of God. Jesus bent down, perhaps just as the God whom they worshiped "leaned forward and looked into the distance" to see His plan of salvation realized through His Son. Jesus wrote on the ground, in the "dust of the earth". The God whom they worshiped had formed man from the dust of the earth, and later had promised Jacob that his descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth. Jesus wrote in that dust with his finger.

The only sinless man there, and therefore the only one truly eligible to cast a stone in punishment, chose instead to use his fingers to write rather than to pick up a stone. He held the woman's life in his hands and — instead of crushing her life with stones — he gave her life back to her! After all of the accusers had left, he finally looked at the woman. "The Light of the world" (John 8:12) shone upon her in her darkness, and showed her the way of grace. Forgiven and covered by the grace of God, she was asked to reflect the glory of God in the way she lived her life from then on: "From now on sin no more!" She became a light and a continuing message to those who knew the grace extended to her.

A foundation of stone

Jesus built his church upon a rock. That rock was the belief that Peter had first demonstrated by declaring his faith in Jesus Christ. Peter's name means "the rock or stone". Even though he declared his faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, he also was rebuked as an adversary to God's will. Later he cut off the ear of the high priest's servant; then he forsook his Lord during the trial and crucifixion. Later again, he ran to the tomb when the stone had been rolled away, eager to see what had become of his Lord. Finally, by the sea of Galilee, he was asked three times if he loved Jesus, and then was given the commission to care for, tend, and shepherd the sheep of Jesus' flock. He began the great work of building the household of God with Christ as the chief cornerstone.

A great round stone

"And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his garments as white as snow; and the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men" (Matt. 28:2-4).

After his death Jesus was buried in a grave, with a great stone across its mouth. Soldiers were hired to watch the grave and to prevent the disciples from carrying away his body. The angel descended, just like angels had done upon Jacob's stairway in Bethel, and the stone was rolled away like the reproach of Egypt was rolled away from Israel at Gilgal. If the stone had remained where it was, there would have been reason to doubt that Jesus had risen. That stone, and that grave, could not hold Jesus; the stone was removed so that the glory of God could be revealed.

***"He who quarries stones may be hurt by them"* (Eccl. 10:9).**

Each of us carries stones. Some of these stones have been with us for so long that we don't even notice that we are still holding them. Like Achan or Absalom, we throw stones for selfish reasons or in order to promote ourselves, although we know that it will only end with a heap of stones in the valley of trouble. We are so good at finding legitimate reasons for throwing stones at others, and we are efficient at gathering more to heap upon them.

What are the stones we are holding? Could they be stones of pride, or jealousy, or refusal to forgive? Could they be bitterness, or unbelief, or a harsh and critical attitude? God's grace cannot work effectively in our lives unless we drop the stones that we are holding so that our hands are free to grasp His gift of grace.

We need carefully to analyze our reasons for going to the stone quarry, so that we don't hurt others — or ourselves — by the stones we gather there.

Let us take up stones to build the house of God, not tear down that precious house, stone by stone!

A stone in the pocket

Let us pick up a stone and keep it in our pocket for a memorial. Let it be a reminder to us that the Rock of our salvation is in the watchtower and is a witness in our covenants with one another. Let it be a reminder that He is the one to whom we should build altars.

Every time we reach into our pocket and touch that stone, we can take a moment to worship the God who formed man from the dust of the ground — the same God that extended great and precious promises to those who believe. Let that stone remind us to build our homes and our lives with stones that fit in with the chief cornerstone.

That stone can remind us that the only sinless man never threw a stone at the woman who committed adultery, and does not throw stones at us either.

When our children ask us about the stone in our pocket, we can tell them — like the Israelites did at Gilgal — about all the wonderful things God has done for us in our lives. We can tell them how He brought each one of us personally out of a land of darkness, and how that beacon of light shone into our life. We can tell them about His mighty power, His everlasting love, and His amazing gift of grace. We can share with them the stories about the stones of Gilgal, "the rolling away" of sin from Israel... about the altar that Elijah rebuilt when Israel cried "the Lord, He is God"... about the smooth stones in the pouch of a shepherd boy named David, and the one in his sling that killed the giant that defied the Lord God of Israel.

We can tell them about the stones that killed Stephen because of his great faith, and about Peter the rock, who spent the rest of his life working to tend the sheep and lambs of Jesus. We can tell them about the stone that was rolled away from the tomb when the grave could not hold our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

"I love Thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised and I am saved from my enemies. The cords of death encompassed me, and the torrents of ungodliness terrified me. The cords of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry for help before Him came into His ears" (Psa. 18:1-6, NASV).

Cheran's gift to me is not polished. It is not very large. It holds no value in most people's eyes. That stone, however, rests on my desk where I work every day. It reminds me that a small, unpolished stone in God's eyes has very great value. We are God's living stones now, possibly rejected by the world around us, but seeking to offer our spiritual sacrifices and build something of substance, that when it is tested and tried will reward us for our work (1 Pet. 2:5; 1 Cor. 3:12).

Like Peter the rock, we have declared our faith in Christ as the Son of the Living God. We must build our lives upon that rock.

We may often fail to do what we should, perhaps denying our Lord, or perhaps running away from him. But ultimately we may come back to that rock that was rolled away from the garden tomb, and on our knees thank our God for the grace extended to us through the sacrifice of His Son.

Eileen Henthorn
(Victoria, BC)

* * * * *

"While you were watching, a stone was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the stone that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2:34,35).

"It is evident that the dominion of the Image is not broken by a human power. The stone which destroys it is represented as not in hands; that is, it symbolizes a supernatural power. If the stone had been poised in a man's hands ready to smite the image, we might look for an earthly conqueror to overthrow the dominion of the Autocrat, as he will overthrow the rest. But the power that wields the stone is plainly declared in the interpretation. It is the God of heaven Who pulverizes the image, and sweeps its chaffy dust away by the whirling tempest which wrecks the kingdoms of the world and transfers them to His saints. The kingdom of the stone grinds to powder whatsoever it falls

Letters

More on global warming

The following questions are sometimes asked about global warming:

1. Is it a man-made or God-made phenomenon?
2. Is it a true sign of the times, since it was not prophesied in the Bible?

Man-made or God-made?

A United Nations report, issued in February 2007, says that the current global warming crisis is "very likely" the result of human activities. The scientific authors of the report defined "very likely" as between 90 and 99 percent probable. The report said global warming is the result of large amounts of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases being released into the atmosphere from the burning of fossil fuels.

Science also tells us that there have been prior periods of global warming that were the result of natural climate changes, and unrelated to man's activities. The end of the last ice age, which (supposedly) occurred about 10,000 years ago, is one such period.

Regardless of how we view science and the natural history of the earth, God's hand in the current crisis cannot be overlooked. Since the world has rejected Him, the Bible says God has "given them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Rom. 1:28). Quite probably God has *allowed* this condition to develop, through man's self-centered and evil pursuits, as a further demonstration that, without him, there is no hope for the world.

Sign of the times?

The signs of the times that Jesus prophesied would occur prior to his return include wars, famines, diseases and earthquakes (Matt. 24:7). While none of these events is new, the increasing numbers and/or scale of them, in these last days, is evident to all believers.

Although Jesus did not mention global warming directly, there are strong links between it and the four signs, which further points to God's involvement in the crisis:

1. Politicians predict that future wars will be fought over water, which will become increasingly scarce as glaciers dry up from global warming.
2. Future famines are likely to occur from global warming, due to expanding deserts and lack of irrigation water.
3. Diseases are also predicted to increase from global warming, through the spreading of flies, mosquitoes and other germ-carrying life forms.
4. Future earthquakes and global warming are linked through a process called *isostatic rebound*, which occurs when glaciers melt and the massive weight

of the ice on the earth's crust is reduced. This process can reactivate faults, increase seismic activity, and lift pressure on magma chambers that feed volcanoes.

Accordingly, global warming can be perceived, more correctly perhaps, to be a *catalyst* that is contributing to the signs of the times and latter day events.

Science and the Bible

The United Nations report also concluded that global warming has become "an unstoppable, runaway train". It is unusual for science to provide such a doomsday scenario, and to reach conclusions that are in harmony (albeit imperfectly) with the Bible's predictions of a coming "time of trouble such as never was" (Dan. 12:1). It reflects man's growing helplessness in the face of rapidly deteriorating world conditions. Until now, scientists have been generally optimistic that environmental and other problems could be resolved.

When Noah was building the ark, his "hammer" was God's warning to the world of impending destruction, and also pointed the way to salvation. In these times, global warming may be the "hammer". It could be one of the most powerful preaching tools we presently have. Global warming will be resolved, but not by man's efforts. The resolution awaits the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Martin Owen (San Diego County, CA)

RR's preface to Bible Companion

Attached is an excerpt from the "original" preface to Bro. Robert Roberts' Bible reading tables. I wish you had published this in your issue on important Christadelphian writings instead of the sterilized version that most of are used to reading.

As much as one loves the style, the preface carries overtones of self-reliance and ritual reading. One could think, "If I just adhere to the daily readings, some day I'll be spiritual and I'll be in the Kingdom."

Salvation depends on developing faith in the living God, and certainly Bible reading — and understanding, and application — is a major necessity in this process, but it also involves living, learning, praying, serving, etc., to develop a real faith in God and His living Son, Jesus Christ.

David Levin (Baltimore, MD)

"Salvation depends on the assimilation of the mind to the divine ideas, principles, and affections, exhibited in the Scriptures... The mind is naturally alien from God and all His ideas (Rom. viii. 7; I Cor. ii. 14), and cannot be brought at once to the Divine Likeness... Spiritual-mindedness, or a state of mind in accordance with the mind of the Spirit as displayed in these writings, can only grow within a man by daily intercourse with this mind, as there unfolded. Apart from this, the mind will return to its original swinishness. The advice then, for every man and woman anxious about their salvation, is — READ THE SCRIPTURES DAILY...

Much spiritual fructification is only to be realized in connection with fructifying influences of the Spirit in the Word.

"...By a strict adherence to this plan, from year to year, the reader will reap much profit, and find himself or herself gradually losing the insipidity of the natural mind, and taking on the warm and exalted tone of the Spirit's teaching, which qualifies for the inheritance of the Saints in light."

*****

*Ah, the sad lot of the editor! Reprimanded for what he puts in, and also for what he leaves out! But of course you are right: it is never enough **just** to read the Bible — although there is really no other place to start in the journey of spiritual development! For that journey must also lead to faith, and to the application of faith in one's daily life.*

Your point is Bro. Green's also, in the previous installment of "Rightly Dividing the Word" (March-April issue). There he points out in John 5 that the Pharisees were adept at "searching the Scriptures", but they were not led by their studies to the recognition of Jesus for who he was — and thus their reading was to no avail.

George

Christadelphian books

Dear brother George,

I read with interest your selection of the "best and most profitable Christadelphian books" and heartily agree with your choice. Two of my favourites are *The Ways of Providence*, by Bro. Robert Roberts, and *Studies in the Gospels,* by Harry Whittaker. The former was presented to me at my baptism 45 years ago, and it still thrills me to consider the ways in which God works in our lives. When we are doing the readings from the Gospel chapters, my husband and I often refer to Bro. Harry's masterpiece to our profit. Especially helpful are his various suggestions for difficult sections (such as the parable of the unjust steward).

Your sister in Christ,
Pat Bartle

Joseph and his brothers?

Do you think that Joseph had a pretty good idea ahead of time that he'd be seeing his brothers come down to Egypt to buy grain? Even before they showed up, he might have already thought out the whole complicated ordeal he put them through. Given the severity and extent of the famine, after the years of plenty, it seems to me likely that he had been planning his "lessons" and hoping to see them. Have you read it this way?

David Levin (Baltimore, MD)

Yes, I think that's entirely possible. What Joseph says to his brothers, at this crisis

for them, suggests that — during his own terrible trials, that had come earlier — he had begun to work out in his mind the providential purpose of his God in those trials: "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance" (Gen. 45:5-7).

And even much later, when his brothers still exhibited a continuing fear of the brother whom they had wronged, he spoke to them in a similar vein: "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children" (Gen. 50:19-21).

And why not? The one who had received the title "Zaphenath-Paneah", "Supporter of life" or "Savior of the world" (Gen. 41:45) — the one who was so plainly a pattern of the coming Messiah — was well prepared and well situated to teach his brothers

OPPORTUNITY TO TEACH

The Christadelphian Heritage School (CHS), held in the Simi Hills Ecclesia in the greater Los Angeles area, California, is recruiting teachers and an administrative assistant. The school term is September 2007 through June 2008. This is an ideal opportunity for retired school teachers and young brothers and sisters just out of college — who would like to dedicate a portion of their lives to providing a spiritual and academic educational experience for our children.

Grades are kindergarten through middle school. The school meets on a four-day week, with occasional field trips on Fridays. Curriculum materials are provided. Some financial assistance is available.

The governing principle of CHS is to provide quality education within a Biblical context. It is of the utmost importance that our children be in a safe learning environment, where their best interests and their individual progress are paramount. The small student-to-teacher ratio ensures that our children receive personal attention and an education of the highest caliber. With such a personalized education, we are able to accommodate those with special needs to help them achieve their individual potential. The results have been most positive both in spiritual and secular areas.

If you would like additional information please contact Bro. Greg Robinson at (805) 491-3923. E-mail: greg@bigbrand.com

With love in Christ,

Bro. Greg Robinson, CHS Board

Bible Mission News

Heart Searching in Ecuador

The three-hour bus journey back to Quito from Ambato presented us with ample opportunity to reflect upon the events of the past two days. We were returning from spending time with a brother in isolation and supporting him visiting Bible contacts.

It had been planned that we should spend one day of our visit together. Our brother was keen to share discoveries in his Bible study and at the same time show us something of his local environment. Travelling to the east of Ecuador, we skirted around the volcano Tungurahua. The volcano, 5,000 metres tall, was belching huge columns of ash every fifteen minutes. Our journey took us through Baños, a town famous for its basilica and "Virgin of the Holy Water". (This Virgin is claimed to have miraculously saved people from exploding volcanoes, accidents and other misfortunes.) Following the river Pastaza, famous for its spectacular waterfalls and lush vegetation shading wild orchids, we passed through scenery of steep mountains and deep ravines. We eventually arrived at the gateway to the Amazon Basin. This was where our brother had planned for us to hold our service of remembrance of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

So in the open air, overlooking a wide riverbed meandering into the distance, we broke bread together. The only spectators were huge birds circling above us enjoying the afternoon thermals. Our thoughts focused on the reading from Ephesians 1 and 2 and the spiritual blessings offered to us in Christ. We marvelled at the love of God in our being chosen, blessed and predestined.

Our brother told us of his long search for truth. He began to question the teachings of the Roman Catholic church as a teenager; then, after visiting various other groups, he was drawn to a newspaper advertisement placed by the Christadelphians. He had found what he was searching for — the truth — and has never looked back. Over the last few years an enthusiastic group interested in studying the Bible, several of which are his friends, has been formed in his town of Ambato. We know that similar stories are continually repeated throughout the world.

On our return journey to Ambato, we were told that the road had to be closed to traffic at 6 pm. The following day was "Good Friday", and hundreds of pilgrims were preparing to walk 34 kilometres through the night to remember the crucifixion in the town famed for its Virgin. Our brother noted how strange it was for the three of us to be travelling in the opposite direction to what he described as "this river" of people. We contemplated the teachings of the Apostle Paul in

Ephesians 2: "But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ."

During the long bus journey back to Quito, we thought about the events of the past two days. There is fertile ground in this town and we are leaving it behind! This same feeling always accompanies us wherever we visit. There is a real need for brothers and sisters whose hearts burn within them to preach the gospel, and who are eager to learn Spanish — a language so vital to outreach in Latin America. Then on reflection, we might ask: Why look at others? What are we going to do about it? Our consciences have been truly pricked!

Bill and Carol Rawson
Kevin Hunter, CBMA Representative for Ecuador

2006 Bible school, El Salvador

On December 23 an event began which had been anxiously awaited by both the adult members and children of the Christadelphian community in El Salvador: our annual year-end Bible school. It was held at a camp in a pine forest of the Chalatenango mountains, near the border with Honduras, 55 miles north of the city of San Salvador. On this occasion 100 persons had a marvelous experience at the school, including brethren and sisters from Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Los Angeles, California.

For three relaxing, comfortable and happy days, the members and their children enjoyed much stimulating fellowship, all together in one place and far away from our normal daily concerns. We lived as one big family, taking our meals together, playing games together, and chatting until all hours of the night. Most

El Salvador Bible School

importantly, we sought fellowship with God through hymns and prayers, and Bro. Jim and Sis. Jean Hunter led the adults and young people in uplifting Bible classes. Jim based his talks on Paul's letter to the Ephesians, which was very gratifying because the apostle reminded us that we are called to form one single body in Christ, to work together as a team and as members of the great Christadelphian family. Jean led the young people through the early life of Jesus, while the younger children studied Jesus' parables and how to apply them to their daily lives.

During recreational periods we played games designed to remind us that we must always work together as members of one single body, and that we should share each other's joys or sufferings. Thus in the course of these three days we shared what some considered the best time of the year.

As a happy footnote, one of the young people present at the Bible school, Alejandra García, 17, was baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in the San Salvador ecclesial hall on Sunday, March 18, 2007 in the presence of 150 joyous onlookers.

It is our fervent hope that Jesus will soon return to the earth and establish his kingdom, so that we might be able to enjoy for all eternity the fellowship of the saints.

Manuel and Silvia Fernández
Jim Hunter — CBMA linkman for El Salvador

Brothers and sisters at the El Salvador Bible school

A Sure Foundation
Guatemala City, Guatemala

The ecclesial growth in Guatemala City has been slow, but the core group of the 12-member ecclesia are very strong in their faith. They could well use the assistance of resident missionaries to help with all aspects of the work in this country. My wife Miriam and I were able to visit the ecclesia in March and to enjoy their fellowship and hospitality during four days. We helped with a few public lectures, but unfortunately the response of our contacts to our invitations was poor. We were encouraged, however, by the attendance and participation of the members, who send their love and greetings to the worldwide brotherhood!

Bro. Jorge Lemus (baptized December 2006) took time off work on the Monday (March 26) and guided us around the centre of Guatemala City, as we looked at different places for future overnight accommodation and alternate areas of the city for another ecclesial meeting location. There is a need to find a more centrally located meeting hall, in a safer area of the city, than the one that is currently used.

We were very thankful for the support of Bro. Oscar and Sis. Teresa Martinez from El Salvador (the neighbouring country to the north), who bused down Saturday morning (a six-hour trip) in time for the lectures that started at 3 pm. They returned Sunday afternoon after lunch. Their dedication and participation was a source of encouragement to all of us. Teresa and Miriam led a Sunday School class during the lecture for the children that were present.

We ask you to keep our brothers and sisters and their families in your prayers, as we all, with eager anticipation, wait for our Lord's Return.

Don Luff

Brothers and sisters in Guatemala 2007

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

for tax ID numbers please contact the editor

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

News & Notices

AVON, IN

In Avon we still eagerly look forward to the return of our Lord, and in the meantime occupy ourselves exhorting one another as we see the day approaching. We welcome by way of transfer Sis. Debbie Davis (Detroit Livonia, MI), and Bro. Jerry and Sis. Jessica Cotner (Ann Arbor, MI).

We are pleased to have had many visitors in the past few months. We especially thank Bre. Allan Harrison, Paul Sparacino, Kent Ellis, Pat Bryan, and Dan Styles for their words of exhortation.

Dean Brown

BEDFORD, NS

Recent visitors have been Bro. Neil Carr (Mississauga West, ON); Sis. Sarah Luff (Hamilton MacNab, ON); Bro. Phil, Sis. Janice, Sis. Amanda, Bro. Paul and Alyssa Baines, and Bro. Ken and Sis. Wendy Dickson (Sussex, NB); and Bro. Sean Stull (Denver, CO).

Our Learn to Read the Bible seminar continues with a few interested friends, one of whom is considering baptism. We plan a Study Day on prophecy for Saturday, October 20, 2007, with Bro. Brian Luke, Aust., at Grand Lake Oakfield Community Hall, NS.

Congratulations to Bro. Ken and Sis. Nipun Easson on their marriage on March 16, 2007, in Bangladesh. Bro. Ken has been doing missionary work there since last September. We wish them well in their walk to the kingdom together.

Ronald A. A. Hill

BOSTON, MA

We would like to thank everyone who has assisted us with the Asende family. Your support helped them through the winter, especially with clothing and transportation.

We have also been blessed with four baptisms: JOHN and TAMMY RUNDLE and MARCOS and GLORIA SANTOS. In addition, Bro. Matthew and Sis. Kelly Coye have transferred from the Abington Ecclesia. In the meantime Sis. Priscilla Walther has transferred to the Los Angeles, CA Ecclesia. We commend her into the care of the brethren and sisters in her new ecclesia.

The Boston ecclesia would like to announce a change of time. Effective April 22, 2007, memorial service will begin at 10:45 AM.

Jeff Wallace

BRANTFORD, ON

We were pleased to welcome four members from the Milton, ON (Dawn) Ecclesia to the Central fellowship and as members of the Brantford Ecclesia on Sunday, February 18. It was a very joyful occasion as we extended fellowship to Bro. Barrie and Sis. Cathy Heywood, along with Bro. Patrick and Sis. Melanie Warner. We look forward to working together in our Lord's service as we await his return.

Once again the youth in this area benefited from two weekend activities. On Saturday, February 10, approximately 230 parents and children gathered at an outdoor recreational facility for a full day of activities. The children ranged in age from toddlers to 12 years old. The studies for the day were centered on "David — A Boy of Faith".

On Saturday, February 17, the SCYC group, about 150, received studies from Bro. Steve Faver, Montana, on "Signs and Symbols in Scripture", as well as enjoying sports activities in the evening.

We grieve with Bro. Paul and Sis. Roxanna Chalifoux over the death of their second child Stephanie. Stephanie was born prematurely with a number of health problems and lived only a few days. This is a difficult time for them, and we ask for your prayers for them that the comfort of the Word will sustain their faith.

God willing, Bro. Brian Luke will be ministering to the Brantford ecclesia from April 23 through May 3, 2007 at CYC, sisters' classes, Sunday services, a special lecture and Bible classes. We also look forward to Bro. Brian's visit to Ontario during the month of October. He has agreed to speak at the Brantford Fraternal Gathering on October 6, 2007, on the theme of "The Last Days of the Apostle Paul".

Donald Luff

DOHA, QATAR

We have been blessed with the visit of Bro. David and Sis. Ruth Green (Clevedon, UK). We were happy to receive his words of exhortation and share fellowship again.

We would like to report that Bro. Randy Vaughn has returned to the USA; Bro. Austen and Sis. Crystal Kenzie, to Victoria, BC; Bro. Steve and Sis. Sandra Hracs, to Calgary, AB; and Sis. Kathy Hlina to Vernon, BC. We are sorry to see all of them leave. If you are traveling to Doha please direct your enquiries to Bro. Ben Brinkerhoff at blissbrink@yahoo.com or 974-671-0605.

Steve Hracs

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We have had many visitors from nearby ecclesias in the past few weeks. In addition, we have welcomed as a visitor Bro. Ben Joseph (Moorebank, Sydney, AU). Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD) was kind enough to lead the adult Sunday school class.

We are very pleased to announce that MARIA QUAGLIERI was baptized into the saving name of the Lord Jesus Christ on February 18, 2007.

Jonathan Link

GUADALAJARA, MEXICO

Once again, we were privileged to be involved with preaching and ecclesial activities in Guadalajara. The ecclesia advertised a series of lectures which were held March 27-30, 2007. There were a number of visitors in attendance on all evenings with keen interest.

We witnessed the good confessions of faith in their interviews during the week, and subsequent baptisms on Saturday, March 31, 2007, of GREGORIO CANO AYALA and SALVADOR GARZA MEJIA. It was a lovely day for the baptisms in the backyard pool of Bro. Luis Ramirez. A number of family members and interested friends were present to witness this simple act of obedience. They participated in their first Breaking of Bread service, and all enjoyed a nice meal together. There have been 10 baptisms

in the last two years in Guadalajara, since Bro. Carl and Sis. Cynthia Paiva arrived from California. We also went through a pre-interview with another gentleman, who should be fully prepared very soon to make his commitment as well.

Don Luff

GUYANA

The Guyana calendar of activities to usher in 2007 looks very promising and exciting.

The following members were engaged in 2006 and have declared their intention to be married in the Lord during the year 2007: Bro. Cyrus and Sis. Elizabeth Europe; Bro. Roland and Sis. Sonia Harilall; and Bro. Kester Trim and Sis. Kendra Joseph.

The Kilcoy Ecclesia will be hosting the Guyana Bible School which is planned for April 6-9, 2007. God willing, the Bible school this year will be extended into a Bible campaign which will involve canvassing and open air meetings. The theme for this year's Bible school is "Even So, Come Lord Jesus." The speakers are Bro. Clive Drepaul and Bro. Ted Hodge. Bro. Clive will lead a study of "The Truth of the Fourth Beast," while Bro. Ted will lead us in "The Only Thing that Counts."

Bro. Charles Klass of Georgetown fell asleep in November, 2006, and sadly, his wife died almost one week after he was laid to rest. Sis. Sophia Hamilton of the New Amsterdam ecclesia also fell asleep on February 2, 2007 at age 91.

RAYON AGARD of Eccles was baptized on December 31, 2006, and SAMUEL TRIM of Mocha was baptized on February 25, 2007.

Bro. David and Sis. Joan Andrews, Trinidad, visited in December, 2006, and ministered to the brotherhood. Bro. Andrew Bradshaw, UK, also visited in January and ministered to the ecclesias in Demerara and Berbice. Bro. Gideon Drepaul, US, arrived on January 28, 2007. His visit coincided with the funeral of Sis. Hamilton. He returned on February 18, 2007.

Bro. Abedi Ndjelekulu and family's stay in Guyana has officially been extended for another year, for which we give God many thanks.

Frederick Hammond

HAMILTON GREENAWAY, ON

We are very pleased to welcome as new members Sis. Lisamarie Cromie (Brantford, ON) and Bro. Rob and Sis. Jodee Webb (Toronto West, ON). We look forward to a productive association with our new members as we work and journey together, by the Father's grace, toward the day when His kingdom will be established.

The Greenaway fraternal gathering will be held at Wildwood, Georgetown, ON, on September 8, 2007, starting at 2 pm. Bring your own picnic meal for supper at 4:30 pm. Bro. Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON), will speak on "The Challenge of Holiness — What Does God Require?"

Tom Thorp

KAMLOOPS, BC

Bro. Jon Fletcher has taken over the duties of the recording brother, replacing Bro. Gregg Ferrie as of November 1, 2006. His address is: 2515 Partridge Crescent, Kamloops, BC, V2B 6W5. He may be contacted by phone at 250-579-2291 or by e-mail at jfletcher@kamloopsbiblestudy.info.

We have received by transfer Bro. Nathaniel Massey (Prince George, BC) in July 2006. We welcome our brother to this small ecclesia and greatly appreciate his assistance.

In addition, our Bro. Daniel Ferrie is currently living and working in North Battleford, SK, and is attending their ecclesia. Sunday school student Joel Ferrie is living and working in Victoria and attending their ecclesia, and Bro. Nathan and Sis. Crystal Bartholomew are living and working in Kamloops and attending our ecclesia.

We were blessed with the birth of Zechariah Nathan Montgomery on July 8, 2005, a firstborn son for Bro. Dean and Sis Jenni-anne Montgomery.

Our gospel proclamation work has included a Learn to Read the Bible Effectively seminar, followed by Genesis, Prophecy. We are now almost finished with the Revelation seminar. We presently have two contacts, one of which is studying for baptism.

We have had many visiting speakers over the last year and a half and are very grateful for their fellowship. We thank Bre. Skip and Stephen Bartholomew, Tim Graeme, and Paul Osborn (Okanagan); Bill Hlina, David Drysdale and Dean Bailey (Vernon); Wesley Butler (Vancouver); Rapheek Soolaman (Maple Ridge); Mark Higgs (Victoria); Ron Kidd (London, ON); Mike LeDuke (Kitchener/Waterloo, ON); Wayne Osborne (Denver, CO); Colin Hollamby (Glenlock, UK); John Sivior (Adelaide, AU); and Bernard Burt (Coventry, UK) for their adult Sunday school classes, exhortations and — in some cases — mid-week Bible classes. We also would like to thank the sisters and families who accompanied these brethren in their labor of love. Bro. Jim Cowie (Brisbane, AU) also led a study day for us on "Christ in the Wilderness", and Bro. Geoff Higgs led our 2006 fraternal in a study on "Peter".

We have had many visitors as well over the past year, too many to record them all here, as it seems Kamloops is geographically at the crossroads of the ecclesial world here in BC. We truly enjoy all the company and support we receive, particularly at our study days and fraternals, and would encourage anyone passing through to give us a call and stop to visit.

Jon Fletcher

KOUTS, IN

It is with sadness that we report the death of our Sis. Elaine Johnston. Her maiden name was Evans, a founding family of this ecclesia. Yet another stalwart awaits the awakening call in the dawning of the age of righteousness. Our sister was born in Gorseinan, South Wales, on March 19, 1923. She died September 18, 2006, at the age of 83. On March 30, 1955, she was baptized, as she would recount, "that she might dwell in the house of the Lord forever." She was a leader by example and fiercely proclaimed her convictions. We mourn her absence, along with her daughter Sis. Patti Bobis, her granddaughter Sis. Jorie Asbury, her husband Bro. James Asbury, and her grandson Bro. Jason Bobis, all members of this ecclesia.

Our annual study weekend was successfully held on November 4-5, 2006. The speaker was Bro. David Levin (Baltimore, MD). He gave a series of five talks on the topic "When Life Hurts." We profited from his insights. He came with Sis. Cora, along with those who travel from many places to share this time of refreshment together. Their company made us glad. May it please our Heavenly Father to soon bring together in one the bride of His beloved Son, our Lord.

Noel Peare

LOS ANGELES HISPANIC, CA

With sadness we report the sudden death of Bro. Angel Alban in June, 2006. Only recently baptized, Bro. Angel was full of enthusiasm for the truth, never missing meetings. He died of a stroke after having surgery. He told his brother in the flesh that he wasn't worried because he now believed in the resurrection when Jesus returns.

The meeting has been blessed with four baptisms since our last report. MARTHA CERRILLOS, mother of Sis. Patricia Barbosa, first came to meeting in 1999. EDWIN SANCLEMENTE, a young man who came to our very first talks here in Los Angeles in 1998. These two were baptized in July, 2006. Then in March 2007, CARMEN and JESUS RODRIGUEZ were baptized. Jesus was a "walk-in" to the meeting about seven years ago and began bringing Carmen and his four children about 18 months ago. They live just a couple of blocks from the hall and, along with all the children, are a great boost to our little meeting.

It was a pleasure to have a month-long visit from Bro. Julio Silva, who lives in Florida. His work repairing and painting the hall was greatly appreciated!

Jim Hunter

SARASOTA, FL

We have enjoyed the presence at our ecclesial hall of many brethren and sisters. They came from Canada, the UK, and Australia. We want to thank all the brethren for their exhortations, and the sisters for their help with the music portion of our meeting.

Bro. Dick and Sis. Betty Schenk requested that we transfer their membership from Sarasota, FL to Springfield, MA, which we did.

We are also pleased to announce the baptism of CHRISTINE DILLINGHAM. She is the granddaughter of Bro. Art and Sis. Eleanor Dillingham, of Sarasota. She was baptized on January 15, 2007. Also, RON BADLU was baptized on February 25, 2007 in the Gulf of Mexico, by his former Sunday school teacher, Bro. Ashraf Ali (South Ozone Park, NY). We want to thank all of Bro. Ron's relatives and friends from the New York area for coming to Ron's baptismal service in Venice, FL. We pray that God will guide our new sister, Christine, and brother, Ron, on their journey to Christ's kingdom.

Howard Souder

ST. LUCIA

We have been well blessed and the ecclesia has grown to fifteen members. On February 4, 2007, after a good confession of her faith, WILHELMINA BERTY GEORGE was baptized into the saving name of the Lord Jesus. Sis. Wilhelmina had just celebrated her ninetieth birthday! She is delighted to have learned the faith of the gospel during the past three years through her son, Bro. Andre George.

We are very sorry to report that Bro. Denis Fedee is no longer a member of the ecclesia.

In February, 2007, we held a campaign. Eight lectures were given in the Castries library and three in a small fishing village, Anse La Raye, down the coast. Eight thousand leaflets were handed out for the Castries lectures and about 800 in Anse La Raye. Contacts already on the mailing list were invited. The response was excellent! Each

evening there were more than thirty visitors present to hear the gospel of salvation presented by Bre. Eddy Anthony and Andre George (St. Lucia), and Dan Wilton and Martin Webster (Canada). Many new people signed for the postal course and we are busy following up with the approximately 250 active contacts.

We were thrilled with the response and greatly appreciate the support from CBMC. Without their assistance, these preaching efforts would not be possible. We give a hearty "thank you" to all who contribute to CBM to make such campaigns possible.

There is much work to be done here in St. Lucia. Please "come over… and help us."

George Rock

TOLEDO, OH

It is with sadness that we report the falling asleep of three of our sisters in Christ in a very short time. Sis. Mary Ellen Monroe fell asleep after a long illness on September 30, 2006; Sis. Edna Wilson had several health problems and fell asleep on January 2, 2007; and Sis. Pat Henzler fell asleep after losing her battle with cancer and other lung problems on January 16, 2007. Their loss is deeply felt, and their singing voices and their service to the ecclesia will be missed. We are confident we will see them again at the resurrection, and in God's coming kingdom on earth. We would like to thank the brethren and sisters from the surrounding area, and all those who sent their words of comfort and support.

We would like to acknowledge our recent visitors: Bro. Dan and Sis. Niki Styles and their children; Bro. Phil and Sis. Linda Beckerson; Bro. Matt Bilello; and Bro. John and Sis. Mary Bilello. We thank Bre. Dan Styles and Matt Bilello for their exhortations, and Sis. Mary for her assistance with the music.

Doug Henzler

VERNON, BC

We are pleased to welcome, by transfer from the New Westminster Ecclesia, Sis. Yvonne Teel. We have also welcomed two new arrivals: Brandon Abel Roy was born to Bro. Matt and Sis. Leah Siegler on October 4, 2006. Bro. David and Sis. Candace Drysdale were blessed with their fourth child, a boy named Simon Gareb, born on Feb. 3, 2007.

We are sorry to have to report that Sis. Charlene Zantingh is no longer in fellowship. We ask for your prayers for our sister that she might reconsider her position before our God. We are thankful for those brethren who have ministered to us over the past few months, including Bro Steven Hornhardt and Bro. Ken Whitehead , both of Australia. It is always uplifting to have visitors from both near and far to join us.

David Zantingh

The Galilee Bible School

The Galilee Bible School will be held, God willing, November 13-18, 2007, at Kibbutz Ma'agan, on the southeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The teachers will be Bro. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA) and Bro. Don Pearce (Rugby, UK).

Last year's Galilee Bible school drew 84 brethren and sisters from Israel, Australia, New Zealand, the UK, and North America. Come and join in the studies and international fellowship around the Word of Life, in the land of all lands. God willing, there will be a youth program, evening activities, and half days of touring included this year.

Minute Meditation

Learning Obedience

The writer to the Hebrews tells us, concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, that "though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." If our Heavenly Father felt it necessary to teach His only begotten son obedience through suffering, we should not be surprised when we also have to endure suffering.

We should ask: what lessons are we to learn from the suffering we are enduring? Since we know that all things work together for good for those who are called by God, we must recognize that our suffering is for our good. We need to look for God's purpose in bringing these experiences into our lives.

Recently I have experienced the most suffering of my life. As I lay in the hospital bed, cut across the chest from the open heart surgery, with both legs lined with scars from the tumor operation and from harvesting the veins for the bypass, I wondered what lessons God intended for me to learn through this difficult time. I knew that God had given me this experience for my benefit. I prayed I would be a good student, willingly learning what He intended, and growing in wisdom and understanding.

The writer to the Hebrews explains that we should expect some suffering in our lives, and that it is the Lord's way of showing us that He really loves us. "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees."

I now have a better appreciation for what feeble arms and weak knees are, because never before have I ever had such feeble arms and weak knees. I am not allowed to pick up anything that weighs more than five pounds. My knees are so weak that I can barely stand; I have been using a walker for support. Although I know that I am not the only one to feel this way, for these surgeries are being done every day in hospitals around the world, I now know firsthand what it feels like, and how frail our bodies are.

Experiencing these types of problems can make us either bitter or better. Paul is a comfort to us when he tells us that there is no temptation or trial that we endure

which is not common to mankind, but that God is faithful and will not allow us to be tried beyond what we are able to bear.

These verses filled my thoughts as I lay wide awake in the middle of the night — hurting, it seemed, everywhere. It is one thing to memorize verses and be able to repeat them, but it is an altogether different thing to apply them personally while enduring the trial, the pain and the suffering that God is giving us for our ultimate benefit.

One lesson that came out of all this — loud and clear — is how much I am looking for and yearning for the return of our Lord. Old age and the conditions that go with it certainly help us to understand what Job meant when he said, "I would not live always." Job also declared, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"... because he knew that when our life ends, that is not all there is. Paul tells us, "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." What a comfort it is to know that in life or death, we are in our merciful Heavenly Father's hands. Paul also longed for relief from the burden of suffering he was enduring as, with a heavy heart, he declared, "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

We want to live always, but not with this frail mortal body. Our experiences in suffering help us to long for the coming of the Lord, who will "transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."

In the meantime, I thank God that He has spared my life. And I pray that all of us may redeem the time we have left, so that all we do may be done to the glory and honor of His Name.

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

MAY

11-13 Nanaimo, BC Vancouver Island Sisters' Weekend, Beach Acres Resort, Parksville, Vancouver Island, BC. Sis. Yvonne Rosenau (Nanaimo, BC): "My Strength is Made Perfect in Weakness". Contact Sis. Beth Dangerfield, 1155 Ranger Place, Victoria, BC V8X 3P5 gdanger@shaw.ca 250-479-8422

18-20 Cachuma Lake, CA Men's weekend. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord: Making your home a spiritual retreat". Contact Bro. David Lloyd 818-352-6486 davidrlloyd@earthlink.net

18-20 Hartford City, IN Fraternal gathering, Lake Placid Retreat. Bro. Paul Billington (Brantford, ON): "Signs of the Times". Contact Bro. Jerry Asbury 618-288-5023 JerryandDot1@cs.com

19,20 Prince George, BC Fraternal gathering. Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC): "Biblical Examples of Personal Sacrifice". Contact Bro. Ken Loveridge loveridgeken@shaw.ca

19,20 Echo Lake, NJ Mid-Atlantic Gathering, Cherry Hill, NJ. Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "Road to Atonement". Contact Bro. Jonathan Link 973-633-8534 jonlink@optonline.net

25-27 New York Metropolitan Sisters' Retreat. Pocono Manor, Pocono, PA. Sis. Gerry Ann Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA): "Facing Today's Challenges / Dilemmas". For complete information and registration contact Sis. Averil Ferguson 718-881-8705 averilpsm23@juno.com

26,27 Baltimore, MD Study day. Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): "The Life of Jacob". Saturday classes begin 1 pm; supper served. Sunday 5th class at 9:45, and memorial service at 11. Lunch served. Afternoon lecture 2 pm. Contact Bro. Andy Bilello 410-692-9855

26,27 Seattle, WA Fraternal gathering and study weekend. Edmonds Home School Center, Edmonds, WA. Bro. Bob Lloyd (Verdugo Hills, CA): "The Way of Life". Contact Bro. Tony Ball 425-397-6344 at_ball@hotmail.com

26,27 Sussex, NB Study weekend. Bro. George Jackson (Toronto East, ON): "God's Striking Revelation of His Son: A Study in Hebrews". Contact Bro. Brad Goodwin 506-433-6681 braddeb@nb.sympatico.ca

JUNE

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

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

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

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

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

JULY

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

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

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

22-28 Pacific Coast Bible School, Idyllwild, CA. Bro. Matthew Blewett (Durban, South Africa): "Finding Faith"; Bro. Kitson Reid (Birmingham, UK): "The Hand of God in our Lives"; and Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco, CA): "That I Might Know Him". Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065 mail@gelineau.org or Bro. Gary Patterson garympatterson@hotmail.com or visit our website at www.californiabibleschool.org

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

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

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

AUGUST

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

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

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

SEPTEMBER

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

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

9-14 Adult Study Week. The Bible school with a difference! Wildwood Manor, Ballinafad, ON. Topic: Zechariah 1 —7. For information about the workbook or to register please

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
P.O. Box 530696 • Livonia, MI 48153-0696
Periodicals Postage Paid at San Dimas, California

---

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

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

OCTOBER

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

NOVEMBER

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

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 70 **June, 2007** **No. 5**

Editorial — Redeemed and Redeeming **211**
Exhortation — Distraction, *Michael Atkin* **216**
Apologetics — The Hard Questions:
(26) Which God? The Exclusivity Issue:
(10) Pluralism and Concluding Thoughts, *David Levin* **220**
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:
(5) God's all-embracing purpose in the Lord Jesus, *Tom Barling* **225**
Bible Study — Rightly Dividing the Word:
(4) Definitions and Context, *Bob Green* **230**
Bible Study — Paul in Arabia, *Ethel Archard* **234**
Music in Worship :
"They'll hang the trumpet in the hall", *Bob Burr* **237**
"Lone Mary comes at early morn" **239**
Instruments in Worship, *Mike LeDuke* **240**
Reflections:
"Dear Sprout", *Ryan Mutter* **242**
"We're All Babies in God's Eyes", *Sharee Grazda* **244**
Compassion, *Jim Harper* **245**
Letters — "This generation", Book reviews for the newly baptised **247**
Current Events — Bruce Metzger, *George Booker* **249**
Bible Mission News — Guadalajara **250**
News & Notices **252**
Minute Meditation — An Apple a Day, *Robert J. Lloyd* **256**
Coming Events **258**

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060) is published monthly by The Christadelphian Tidings, 42076 Hartford Dr., Canton, MI 48187-3360. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID at San Dimas, California. POSTMASTER: Address Service Requested at The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696.

The Tidings Publishing Corporation: Joe Hill (Chairman), John C. Bilello, Peter A. Bilello, Steve Cheetham, Ken Curry, Clive Drepaul, Mark Giordano, Tony Isaacs, Ted Sleeper, Phil Snobelen, Ken Sommerville, and Jeff Wallace.

The Tidings is published on the 25th of the preceding month. Correspondence to the editor: George Booker, 2500 Berwyn Cir., Austin, TX 78745-3559. E-mail: editor@tidings.org. Administrator: Rose Madge. E-mail: rm_madge@yahoo.com. Home page: www.tidings.org.

Subscriptions

The current subscription rate is $20 in the United States, $28 in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and £14 in the United Kingdom. Subscribers in UK please send checks to: Malcolm Cross, Grange Farm, East Cottingwith, York YO42 4TB; in New Zealand & Australia to: John Beer, P.O. Box 559, Te Awamutu, Waikato, New Zealand 3840. Otherwise checks should be made payable to: The Tidings, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF.

Items for publication MUST be received by the 10th of the month.

Editor: George Booker; Assistant Editor: Donald H. Styles

Nest in the Gale

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

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

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

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

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

Robert J. Lloyd

Editorial

Redeemed and Redeeming

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

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

The "problem" of redemption

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

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

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

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

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

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

Money in the New Testament

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sam Houston was a drunk and a carouser; he was also a fascinating orator, a brilliant politician and a great general — he led the fight for Texas independence in 1836 and then worked to bring Texas into the United States in 1845. He was also a man of tremendous courage, and great wit and self-deprecating humor. When, late in life, he was baptized (into the Baptist Church), he remarked first of all that, if his sins were indeed all washed away, he feared for the fish downstream when the huge numbers of sins reached them! ***Thereafter, and for the last years of his life, he resolutely devoted a large portion of his income to charity. His old friends were stunned by the change in Sam Houston, but he told them that, when he was***

baptized, his wallet had been baptized also!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Buying and selling

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the cost of "buying" wisdom?

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

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

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

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

any price (Prov. 23:23)!

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

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

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

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

What is Christ worth?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Exhortation

Distraction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Developing self-control

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

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

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

Just three problems

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

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

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

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

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

Blocking our view of salvation

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

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

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

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

Only one adversary

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

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

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

Michael Atkin (Toronto East)

Editor's Note:

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

nonessentials"?'

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

*****

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

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

Special Invitation

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

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

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

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

Apologetics

The Hard Questions: (26) Which God? The Exclusivity Issue: (10) Pluralism and Concluding Thoughts

The pluralist perspective

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A further use of the resurrection

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

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

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

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

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

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

Issues downstream from revelation

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

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

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

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

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

An acceptable aspect of pluralism

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

David Levin (Baltimore, MD)

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

"Two other"

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

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

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

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

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

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (5) God's all-embracing purpose in the Lord Jesus

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

Note:

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

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

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

Bible Study

Rightly Dividing the Word: (4) Definitions and Context

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*****

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

"The 'New' is in the 'Old' concealed.
The 'Old' is in the 'New' revealed"
(Yorkshire proverb used by Bro. John Carter).

Bob Green (Brantford, ON)

*****

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

God's Placement of the Jews

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

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

Bible Study

Paul in Arabia

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

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

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

At Sinai with Christ

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Evidence in Paul's writings

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

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

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

In 1 Corinthians 2:9, Paul wrote, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit." It was at Sinai that God showed Paul the marvelous things He has in store for the faithful.

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

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

Galatians and Hebrews

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

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

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

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

A source of strength

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

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

Ethel Archard (Ottawa, ON)

Editor's Footnotes:

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

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

Music in Worship

Section editors: Ken and Joan Curry
Markham and Eglington
P.O. Box 90525
Toronto, ON M1J 3N7

"They'll hang the trumpet in the hall and study war no more!"

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

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

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

In Numbers the silver trumpet — "Make thee two trumpets of silver" (Num. 10:2) — is specified for use at the monthly annual festivals. "Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God" (Num. 10:10).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bob Burr (Barnt Green, Birmingham, UK)

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

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

"Lone Mary comes at early morn"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Use of Instruments in Worship

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2006 Manitoulin Youth Conference Cantata on CD

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

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

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

Reflections

"Dear Sprout"

Dear Sprout,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Love,
Dad (Ryan Mutter, Baltimore, MD)

"We're All Babies in God's Eyes"

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

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

"The babysitter?" "No."

"Mama Dell?" "No."

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

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

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

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

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

We are, every one of us, truly "babies in God's eyes".

Compassion

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

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

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

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

My heart melted. Poor child!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)

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

*****

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

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

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

Letters

"This generation"

Dear Bro. George,

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

"Generation" is the Hebrew "dowr":

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

"Generation" is the Greek "genea", "genos", or "gennema":

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

sign of the prophet Jonas."

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

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

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

May the Lord bless and keep you.

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

Book reviews for the newly baptised

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

Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON)

He ate and drank the precious words,
His spirit grew robust;
He knew no more that he was poor,
Nor that his frame was dust.

He danced along the dingy days,
And this bequest of wings
Was but a book. What liberty
A loosened spirit brings!

(Emily Dickinson)

"A book is a garden carried in one's pocket."

(Chinese proverb)

Current Events

Bruce Metzger

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

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

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

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

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

George Booker (Austin South, TX)

I dreamed that Jesus came, last night;
The Kingdom doors flew wide.
An apostle, dressed in shining white,
Escorted me inside.

And there, to my astonishment,
Were folks I'd always labeled
As quite unfit, of little worth,
And spiritually disabled!

Indignant words rose to my lips,
But never were set free:
For every face bore stunned surprise —
No one expected ME!

(Author unknown; adapted)

Bible Mission News

Guadalajara, Mexico

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

Don Luff
CBMA linkman for Guadalajara

Preaching through the Bible

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

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

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

for tax ID numbers please contact the editor

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

News & Notices

BOZEMAN, MT

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

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

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

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

Mark Bittinger

BRAMPTON, ON

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

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

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

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

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

Dave McKay

CALGARY, AB

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

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

Paul Aback

DETROIT ROYAL OAK, MI

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

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

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

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

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

Ken Styles

LARGO, FL

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

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

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

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

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

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

Walt Dodrill

NEW WESTMINSTER, BC

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

Art Bull

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CA

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

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

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

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

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

Kent Ellis

WICHITA FALLS, TX

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

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

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

John A. Clubb

Johannesburg/Cape Town, South Africa Bible Tour

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

Used Books for CBMA Publicity and Overseas Book Service

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

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

Minute Meditation

An Apple a Day

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Martin Luther King, Jr.).

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

JUNE

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

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

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

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

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

JULY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AUGUST

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

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

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

SEPTEMBER

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

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

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

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

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

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
P.O. Box 530696 • Livonia, MI 48153-0696
Periodicals Postage Paid at San Dimas, California

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

OCTOBER

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

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

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

NOVEMBER

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

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

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 70 **July, 2007** **No. 6**

Editorial — America the Beautiful **263**
Exhortation — Responding To Tribulation, *Clive Drepaul* **268**
Bible Study — Rightly Dividing the Word:
(5) The "Old" is in the "New" Revealed, *Bob Green* **271**
Bible Study — "A Broken Spirit", *Colin Edwards* **274**
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:
(6) God's heritage and our inheritance, *Tom Barling* **277**
Reflections:
Famous Last Words:
(10) Lot, *Chris Sales* **282**
"Greater lov'd ye canno' be!", *George Booker* **283**
Fruits from the True Vine, *Colin Cooper* **284**
"I'm One of Those Stars, Sam...", *Sharee Grazda* **287**
Jesus' Unlikely Conversions,
(1) Simon of Cyrene, *Wesley Booker* **289**
Letters — A "generation"?, Distractions, "Sprout" is here! **291**
Bible Mission News — Guatemala; The search for Truth in South America — Argentina, Chili, Peru and Bolivia; Reflections on a short mission trip to Peru and Bolivia; Thisisyourbible.com website **293**
News & Notices **301**
Minute Meditation — The majority is not always right, *Robert J. Lloyd* **308**
Coming Events **310**

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060) is published monthly by The Christadelphian Tidings, 42076 Hartford Dr., Canton, MI 48187-3360. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID at San Dimas, California. POSTMASTER: Address Service Requested at The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696.

The Tidings Publishing Corporation: Joe Hill (Chairman), John C. Bilello, Peter A. Bilello, Steve Cheetham, Ken Curry, Clive Drepaul, Mark Giordano, Tony Isaacs, Ted Sleeper, Phil Snobelen, Ken Sommerville, and Jeff Wallace.

The Tidings is published on the 25th of the preceding month. Correspondence to the editor: George Booker, 2500 Berwyn Cir., Austin, TX 78745-3559. E-mail: editor@tidings.org. Administrator: Rose Madge. E-mail: rm_madge@yahoo.com. Home page: www.tidings.org.

Subscriptions

The current subscription rate is $20 in the United States, $28 in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and £14 in the United Kingdom. Subscribers in UK please send checks to: Malcolm Cross, Grange Farm, East Cottingwith, York YO42 4TB; in New Zealand & Australia to: John Beer, P.O. Box 559, Te Awamutu, Waikato, New Zealand 3840. Otherwise checks should be made payable to: The Tidings, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF.

Items for publication MUST be received by the 10th of the month.

Editor: George Booker; Assistant Editor: Donald H. Styles

Forty years since June 1967

On June 7, 1967, the climactic day of the Six Day War, Israeli troops captured the Old City of Jerusalem, reunifying the city of David, Israel's ancient capital. This included the Western Wall, the only remnant left of King Solomon's Temple.

In divine history, some consider the 1967 date of equal importance with the 1948 date. In 1948 the State of Israel came into existence again after almost 2,000 years. And in 1967 Jerusalem, long trodden under foot by the Gentiles, was freed (Luke 21:24).

In his Olivet prophecy, our Lord told his disciples, 'When you see "the fig tree" [symbolic of Israel and Jerusalem] sprout leaves, then you will know that summer ["the kingdom of God"] is near' (Luke 21:29-31).

Finally, he told them, "This generation [that sees these things] will not pass away until all these things have happened" (v. 32).

Lately we have been discussing whether the "generation" mentioned by Jesus is 40 years, or 100 years, or 50 years (see this month's Letter), or perhaps simply an indeterminate, but relatively brief, period.

*It is clear we are living in momentous times. We should not **set dates** (Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:7). But we should **set ourselves**... to the task of being alert, and preparing ourselves, and others for our Lord's return*

Editorial

America the Beautiful

Katharine Lee Bates was born in Falmouth, Massachusetts, in 1859. The daughter of a minister, she graduated from Wellesley College in 1880. For many years she was a professor of English literature at Wellesley.

She hastily wrote the first draft of *America the Beautiful* during the summer of 1893, which she spent teaching English at a college in Colorado. As she told the story, "One day some of the other teachers and I decided to go on a trip to 14,000-foot Pike's Peak. We hired a prairie wagon. Near the top we had to leave the wagon and go the rest of the way on mules. I was very tired. But when I saw the view, I felt great joy. All the wonder of America seemed displayed there, with the sea-like expanse."

The words to her famous poem first appeared in print in *The Congregationalist*, a weekly religious journal, for Independence Day, July 4, 1895. The poem reached a wider audience when her revised version was printed in a Boston newspaper in 1904. It was later set to the music of Samuel Ward's familiar tune "Materna", by which the hymn "God is our Refuge and our Strength" had been sung.

In 1926, a strong push was made to adopt *America the Beautiful* as the national anthem. But the older, more established *Star-Spangled Banner* instead won official status when, in 1931, President Herbert Hoover signed a bill. Even today, advocates of *America the Beautiful* continue to seek official anthem status for it.

Practically all of us will recognize Miss Bates' first stanza. It is the stanza that is always sung:

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

On Memorial Day, or the Fourth of July, we have probably heard these words sung (or sung them ourselves) to Ward's powerful, uplifting music — while imagining lovely vistas of blue skies, golden grain, and purple mountains. We are reminded of the lovely and rich land where we live. Maybe, if we are in a particularly reflective mood, we might actually pause and thank God for this country and its freedoms and its opportunities — even for the laws and institutions and traditions (and armed forces!) that preserve and insure the freedoms we enjoy.

In this editorial, I write to Americans, because I am an American. (However, I imagine that, with slight modifications, I could also be speaking to my brethren

in England, Canada, Australia, and many other countries.)

As Christadelphians, we do not vote, or serve in the military, or seek public office. This is because — in a spiritual sense — we are citizens of God's coming kingdom and not of the United States.

But in a "this-worldly" sense, we ***are*** citizens of the United States of America (or Canada, or some other nation). To the nation of our "this-worldly" citizenship, that has given us many benefits and privileges, we owe certain things.

First of all, we owe obedience:

> *"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right... Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king" (1 Pet. 2:13,14,16,17).*

To the "king" (that is, government, Congress, president, state, or governor) we also owe required taxes and revenues:

> *"Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities... because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor" (Rom. 13:5-7; cp. Tit. 3:1,2).*

I leave it to each of you to ask the question (and answer it): "Do I, in my thoughts and words and actions, always ***submit*** to... do I always show ***respect*** for... do I always ***honor***... the authorities?"

And... "Do we — as we should — make supplications... do we pray... do we intercede... do we give thanks... for all those in authority?" (1 Tim. 2:1,2).

In my experience, the above questions often meet with the reply: "Yes... ***when*** they deserve... obedience, submission, respect, and prayers!" But the above commands are not modified in such a way. Who are we to decide ***for ourselves*** when we will obey God's commands, and when we just won't bother?

We ***should*** give rulers and authorities respect (and all else as required) — not just when ***we*** think they deserve it, but always! Why? Because they have been "established", or "ordained" (KJV), by God (Rom. 13:1). Because they are God's "servants" (Rom. 13:4). And because disrespect for them is therefore disrespect for God!

*****

How many of us know that Katherine Bates' hymn has more than one stanza?

The first stanza should lead us to give thanks to God for the wonderful material blessings of this land in which we live, and for His providential arrangement of laws and leaders that have preserved our freedoms, and allowed a "brotherhood"

of peoples — of different races, with different religions and philosophies — to live together, generally, in peace. In the East, and in the Caribbean, poor peoples gather their few belongings into bundles, and set out in barges and rafts — trying to reach our shores, knowing they might perish in dangerous seas — all for the chance to live in America. Others wade across rivers and creep through deserts in the dead of night, evading border guards along the way, hoping they and their children can find work and education in America.

All this might be obvious — ***should*** be obvious — from nothing more than Miss Bates' first stanza.

But then she goes beyond these obvious things. In the following stanzas she writes words that are scarcely ever sung (or considered) today — and what a pity! For there is so much there that might exercise our minds, especially in spiritual things.

O beautiful for pilgrim feet
Whose stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law!

A nation like ours did not happen by chance. It was born in God's providence because many of our ancestors left settled lives and safe homes to come to a new world — where they hoped to be free to follow their consciences and worship the God of the Bible. We may question some of their particular beliefs, but we cannot question the sincerity that braved frightful ocean storms in flimsy vessels, faced devastating illnesses, and endured frigid winters with little food — so they could openly read their Bibles, and fearlessly teach their children its lessons.

Then they, or their children, or their grandchildren, left the little enclaves on the east coast and crossed mountains and grasslands and prairies, and finally mountains again, still searching for freedom. With "stern, impassioned" steps they marched on across a wilderness. Historians tell us that, toward the end of the era when great wagon trains trekked westward from Missouri to California and Oregon, one might have followed the thousand-mile trail of these pioneers by simply looking for grave markers... so many had died along the way. There were "giants" in the earth in those days, giants of faith and dedication. May God, today, confirm our souls in the self-control that enabled our forefathers to walk across a vast continent, step by weary step, looking for their "promised land".

O beautiful for heroes proved in liberating strife.
Who more than self their country loved
And mercy more than life!
America! America!
May God thy gold refine
Till all success be nobleness

And every gain divine!

In the struggles of those who went before, we see lived-out parables of sacrificial love. Many died so that their brothers, their children, and others who came after might have a freedom that they themselves only saw "afar off". Others struggled against injustices in society because their minds were enlivened by the dream that, one day, children of every color might join hands in fuller freedom. They all believed, in the words of Jackie Robinson (a "hero" and "pioneer" of another sort, who broke the "color barrier" in baseball), that "A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives."

Surveying the lives of those heroes who have gone before, we begin to understand why the apostle Paul chose soldiers and athletes to exemplify the virtues of strong faith, reliability, endurance, and courage (2 Tim. 2:1-5). Where are men and women today — to whom faith and virtue mean more than life? May God refine the gold of ***their*** faith, until they learn to define all success not by the size of bank accounts but by whatever is noble and divine and pure and admirable and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8).

*****

Miss Bates' last stanza lifts us to a higher plane yet, and reminds us that America is (or should be) so much more than natural beauty and fruitfulness.

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
Till nobler men keep once again
Thy whiter jubilee!

In his retirement speech, President Ronald Reagan spoke of America as a "shining city upon a hill". He borrowed this phrase from John Winthrop, an early Pilgrim, who himself — as we probably all realize — borrowed the phrase from Jesus:

> *"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:14-16).*

John Winthrop and, 300 years later, Ronald Reagan saw America as a beacon of light to the world. The Statue of Liberty that overlooks the harbor at New York is the visual representation of America as the shining city: Liberty is portrayed as a woman who holds high the torch of freedom, beckoning "your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free".

And so America has been, for so many refugees. Not a perfect light — what in this world ***is*** perfect? But it has been a great light, a light of hope for generations

of immigrants seeking liberty.

Jesus tells ***us:*** "In the same way, let ***your*** light shine before men." As individuals, and especially as ***the*** ecclesia, whether local or worldwide, we can be lights too — not perfect lights, but lights nonetheless. May God shed His grace upon us, so that we may be like a "shining city on a hill", lighting the way to the eternal city that will be truly "undimmed by human tears":

> *"I saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem... Now the dwelling of God is with men... He will wipe every tear from their eyes" (Rev. 21:2-4).*

When that city is revealed for all the world to see, then will also be revealed a nobler race of men and woman than ever graced the earth before:

> *"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when [Christ] appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).*

That "nobler race" — of glorified immortals with Christ — will keep once again a Greater Jubilee, celebrating a new and glorious freedom to the whole world — freedom from sin, freedom from death... and freedom to serve God with all one's being:

> *"Proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you" (Lev. 25:10).*

It will be a "whiter jubilee" because the "fields" will be "white to harvest" (John 4:35, KJV), and God's people will be bound in sheaves (Psa. 126:6) and gathered to Him in astounding abundance.

*****

God has blessed us with a rich land, a rich heritage, and a rich hope. Whether we look around us, or backward, or forward, we rejoice in the vastness of His grace, "from sea to shining sea", and "from the river to the ends of the earth" (Psa. 72:8).

But God has blessed us, not so that we can keep the "feast" all to ourselves (cf. 2 Kings 7:9). Rather, God has blessed us so that we might be strengthened, and confirmed, in our discipleship. He has blessed us so that we might be refined, and purified, and remade in His glorious image. He has blessed us so that we may shine forth like lights in a dark world (Phil. 2:15), like gleaming alabaster cities reflecting the One who is truly the light of the world (John 8:12), and calling men to him.

> In speaking of the "fields white already to harvest" (John 4:35), "Jesus uses words which recall Isaiah's language concerning the gathering of Zion's children in the day of her exaltation: 'Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these [i.e., the approaching Samaritans!] gather themselves together, and come to thee' (Isa. 49:18). Even then the Lord himself was realizing the joy of sowing and reaping, and gathering fruit unto life eternal" (John Carter, *The Gospel of John).*

Exhortation

Responding To Tribulation

The word "tribulation" is not in common use today but, to those who read the Scriptures, it brings to mind the picture of great trials and anxiety. This is in accord with the dictionary definition: "Distress, suffering, misery, oppression, sorrow and trouble". A comparison of some of the Scriptural usages of the word is an exhortation in itself.

As Paul and Barnabas retraced the steps of their first missionary journey, "they strengthened the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God"(Acts 14:22, NKJ). Despite the terrible trials and suffering that the apostle Paul endured throughout his missionary journeys, he never failed in his attempts to strengthen his beloved brothers and sisters, exhorting them to hold fast to their faith in the volatile circumstances of those days.

Jesus Christ himself revealed to the apostle John that the path to the kingdom was not easy. John cried out in wonder as he viewed the amazing apocalyptic vision: ***"Who are these arrayed in white robes? And whence come they?"*** The answer was truly revealing: ***"These are those who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"*** (Rev. 7:13,14). Through the grace of God, the immortalized saints had acquired their exalted state, but first they had been purged by ongoing trials and testing.

Catalogue of tribulation

In Hebrews 11 there is a profitable resource for the subject under consideration. There we find Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, each with a unique experience of trials and tribulations.

It was not a 'cruise' for Noah, locked up in the ark in a churning rising ocean enveloping the highest mountains.

Nor was it a 'picnic' for Abraham as he trekked for miles with his precious son who was about to be sacrificed.

Jacob had to leave home prematurely, to endure twenty years of oppression from the wily Laban. Then after Jacob returned home to his native Canaan, there was one misery after another. His daughter got into trouble, two sons committed genocide, Rachel died in childbirth, and her son — the favorite of his father — was lost and presumed dead!

Joseph made a trip to Egypt but not for a vacation. No, it was from the pit to prison for this young man. He endured suffering to the extent that, in some aspects, he was a type of the promised Messiah.

Towards the end of Hebrews 11, the writer states: "Still others had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented... of whom the world was not worthy... they wandered in deserts and mountains and dens and caves of the earth…" (Heb. 11:36-38). The common factor of course in this chapter is the great faith shown by these stalwarts in extreme adversity.

Although it is very unlikely that any of us will be subject to similar tribulations, nevertheless, our individual problems can cause much heart searching and, at times, anxiety and pain.

The right attitude

What should be our response to tribulation? Jesus told his disciples: "In the world ye shall have tribulations but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Being cheerful does not mean delighting in the empty fun and frivolity indulged in by many 'in the world' when things are going their way. The Greek word is "tharseo", meaning "take courage, be of good comfort". In the vernacular, we would say "take heart", or "put your mind at rest".

A lovely example of the meaning "take cheer" is the sad case of the woman who had suffered from a gynecological condition for twelve years. Not only was the malady inconvenient and physically debilitating, but under the Law of Moses it was a barrier to worship. In faith, she touched the hem of the Lord's garment in the belief that she would be healed: "But Jesus turned around, and when he saw her he said, 'Be of good cheer, daughter, your faith has made you well' " (Matt. 9:21,22, NKJ). Jesus was telling this woman of faith to be comforted and to take heart, because her tribulations were about to be addressed by the greatest of physicians.

Blind Bartimaeus, as he called out to the Son of David to take pity on his condition, was told by the people standing near: "Be of good cheer. Rise up; he is calling for you" (Mark 10:49, NKJ). Witnessing the stressful cries of this pathetic sightless man and realizing that his loud urgent pleading was preventing him from hearing the Master's response, some of the bystanders took pity and tried to calm him: "Take heart, put your mind at rest, the healer has heard you and wants you to approach him."

When we are overwhelmed by troubles and in a state of panic, crying out to the Lord for help, we must try to discipline our minds in order to stop and listen for "the still small voice of God" (1 Kings 19:12). Whatever the turmoil, He is aware and patiently waits for us to approach Him. The psalmist put it so well: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psa. 46:10).

Courage and comfort

There are two classic examples of this kind of 'cheerfulness' found in the book of Acts.

Peter and the other disciples were punished by the Jewish council for preaching the Gospel. The wise advice of Gamaliel had been to leave them alone. Nevertheless, they were beaten prior to being released: "And when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:40-42). Comforted by the knowledge of God's plan and purpose, they took courage and rejoiced in tribulation.

Secondly, Paul and Silas were severely whipped for proclaiming the message of the kingdom: "The magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them" (Acts 16:22-25). What a wonderful example of courage and peace of mind in the midst of severe trials and suffering.

Patience and joy

James, the Lord's brother, gives another attitudinal response to tribulation, one of patience. He urges his fellow believers to remember the way the prophets had patiently coped with the ruthless treatment and cruelty meted out to them by Israel of old: "My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience." Then James turns their attention to the patriarch Job in the same regard: "Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord, that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful" (James 5:10,11, NKJ). "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4, NKJ).

It is hard to be joyful and patient in the midst of tribulation; however, we can find strength by "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). Our Savior coped by patiently focusing on the inexpressible joy that awaited him in his Father's kingdom.

We all have anxieties and trials, but let the words of our brother Paul help clear our minds: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Cor. 1:3,4).

Clive Drepaul
(Brooklyn, NY)

"Trials teach us what we are; they dig up the soil,
and let us see what we are made of" (Charles Spurgeon).

Bible Study

Rightly Dividing the Word: (5) The "Old" is in the "New" Revealed

One of the great strengths of our Christadelphian community is that we use the whole of the Bible as the basis of our faith and hope. We are confident that the Old Testament is inspired by God in the same way as is the New Testament. In reading the Old Testament carefully to hear what it is actually saying and in seeking to understand what God means, it is very important that we take into account how the Lord Jesus and his apostles explained these Old Testament passages.

Jesus often quoted the Old Testament to prove that his teaching was in harmony with God's will: "Go and learn what this means..." (Matt. 9:13); "Have you not read what David did...?" (Matt. 12:3; Mark 2:25; Luke 6:3); or, "Have you not read in the law...?" (Matt. 12:5). These are just a few of many examples of Jesus using the Old Testament as the benchmark of truth. The Apostle Paul speaks of the minds of the children of Israel being hardened and a veil remaining over their hearts in the reading of the Old Testament: "Nevertheless, when one turns to the Lord (Jesus) the veil is taken away" (2 Cor. 3:16).

On the day that Jesus was raised, he walked with two disciples near Jerusalem. They did not recognize him until he blessed and broke bread and gave it to them as they ate together. Jesus had been showing them from the prophets that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer crucifixion and to enter into his glory. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Later that day, when Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples, "he opened their understanding that they might comprehend the scriptures" (Luke 24:13-49).

Thus, we find that both the Lord Jesus and his apostles open up for us the meaning of many Old Testament passages. In some cases, we should not at all have understood the meaning God intended without their inspired and enlightening words. Always, when searching for the meaning of the Old Testament passages, we must take into account the meaning Jesus and his apostles give them, and how they fit into the purpose of God revealed in Christ.

An illustration of the extraordinary import the apostles give to an Old Testament passage is God's word to Abraham in Ur (later repeated to him, to Isaac, and to Jacob): "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). The Apostle Paul says these words are "the gospel preached to Abraham beforehand", and "the scripture foreseeing that God would justify (count as righteous) the nations by faith" (Gal. 3:6-8). How important these few words in Genesis 12:3 are!

The LORD repeated these words to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in a slightly expanded form: "In your seed (singular) all the nations of the earth shall be blessed"

(Gen. 22:15-18; 26:2-4; 28:10-14). The LORD called Abraham to be the father of a particular great nation, Israel. However, His purpose with that nation, as seen in these promises, was to bring blessing, through Abraham and his seed, to all families and nations of the earth. Israel was intended to be the channel of God's revelation of His call and purpose to all the other peoples of the world. As Paul would say of the advantage the Jew had, "Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:1,2).

In the letter to the Galatians quoted above, the apostle explains that "blessing" (in the gospel God spoke to Abraham) means that God would justify, or forgive, and count as righteous all families and peoples of the earth. As we learn from Galatians 3 and Romans 3-6 in particular, this blessing of forgiveness is bestowed by God on all those, Jew and Gentile, who have faith in Jesus Christ — a faith expressed in baptism and in a life committed to his way.

Without these New Testament words, we could read in Genesis about this promised "blessing" without really understanding what God means. We might focus on Israel and the land as the essential elements of these promises. The Apostle Paul teaches us that the key point in God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the blessing (forgiveness in Christ) for all families of the earth.

Until Jesus and his apostles explain this meaning, we might read these promises without realizing who the seed of Abraham is. It is Jesus, himself, the Apostle teaches us, and Jews and Gentiles who have faith in Jesus. It is only to Abraham, together with this special seed, that the everlasting possession of the land is promised (Gal. 3:26-29; Gen. 13:14-16; 17:5-8; 26:3-5; 28:13-15).

The Apostle Paul explains in Romans that "blessing", the key word in the gospel preached to Abraham, means the forgiveness of sins. This blessing (which David describes so beautifully in Psalm 32) is promised by God to both Jews and Gentiles. It is not earned, Paul tells us, or bestowed on the basis of racial descent. It is granted by the grace of God on the basis of our faith in Him and in His Son as the savior 'who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification' (Rom. 4:25). Paul continues in Romans 5:1-11, describing the peace, the rejoicing in hope, and the joy in God that this blessing of forgiveness brings to those who have hope.

The Apostle Peter speaks of this blessing too. To Jews in the temple at Jerusalem, he says, "You are sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' To you first, God, having raised up his servant Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (Acts 3:25,26). Here, Peter shows the full intent of God's gracious forgiveness. His intent goes beyond forgiving and not punishing our sins. His grace is meant to change us within so that we turn away from our iniquities (cf. Rom. 2:4; Tit. 2:11-14).

What did this promise of blessing for all families of the earth really mean? The answer is found in the Lord Jesus and in the words of his inspired apostles. It is a thrilling answer! It fully meets our need with a transforming grace, peace and

joy in the present time and a glorious hope for the future. In those simple words to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the full scope of God's gracious purpose for us in Christ is expressed.

It was very hard for Jewish disciples, including the twelve apostles, to accept this fundamental truth of the gospel. To faithful Jews, their necessary separation from idolatrous and immoral Gentiles was ingrained from birth and reinforced by eating only "kosher" food, observing the Sabbath, and carefully distinguishing between the ritually clean and unclean. For a Jew even to enter a Gentile's house or eat with him was unthinkable. Many Jewish disciples believed that Gentile converts must be circumcised (that is, must become Jews) and keep the Law of Moses. This issue (described in Acts 15:1-6) was addressed by the apostles and elders and the whole church at the conference in Jerusalem described in Acts 15.

There, the Apostle Peter recounted how God had chosen him to speak the gospel to Gentiles and had made no distinction between "us" (Jewish believers) and "them" (Gentile believers). The purifying of hearts through faith — not circumcision — was the basis of God's acceptance. That was true of Jews as well as Gentiles. "For", Peter adds, "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we (Jewish believers) shall be saved in the same manner as they (Gentile believers)" (Acts 15:7-11).

In Acts 15:13-21 James described God choosing Peter to be the first to preach to Gentiles in this way: "God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name." With this, James says, the words of the prophets agree; he quotes God's words by Amos (Amos 9:11,12).

In the days of Amos, both Israel and Judah had become militarily strong and their ruling class very wealthy. Yet, in God's eyes, the tabernacle of David, the house that He had promised to build for David, had fallen down. The kingdom was divided; all the kings of the ten tribes had been wicked; the kings of Judah a mixed lot; and only a remnant of their people were faithful to the LORD. God knew that this divided house would fall. Yet He promises to rebuild it (a promise now being fulfilled by Jesus Christ) "in order that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the Gentiles who are called by My name."

What does God mean by possessing the ***"remnant of Edom"?*** James, using the Greek language translation of Amos, says that the tabernacle of David would be rebuilt "so that ***the rest of mankind*** may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by my name" (Acts 15:17). Thus James tells what the LORD means in Amos. David's house will include Gentiles. In Christ, God is taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name.

Thus Paul, Peter, and James are inspired to tell us what God is actually saying and what He means by the words He has spoken "to us" in the Old Testament.

"The "Old" is in the "New" revealed.

(Next: Varying "weights")

Bob Green (Brantford, ON)

Bible Study

"A Broken Spirit"

It should not surprise us to learn that the things people despise, God accepts. When a bottle or jar is broken, most of us would throw it away. Particularly in Western Europe, America and Australasia, where we live in a "throw-away society", we take it for granted that when something is broken, instead of repairing it we throw it away and buy a new one. This is particularly seen with electrical goods — where it is often impossible to repair a damaged component, but quite easy to replace the whole item with a new one from the factory — this is what is called a built-in obsolescence. All of this breeds in us an attitude of mind which accepts, without question, that when something is broken it should be thrown away as useless.

However, Psalm 51:17 teaches us differently; "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." The very thing which man despises and rejects, God accepts and uses for His purpose. The human spirit seeks to be self-sufficient — to survive every crisis and ideally live forever without pain and suffering. However, human life is not like that — the Scriptures teach us clearly that we are sinful, dying creatures — that the human condition is one of frail mortality. We are taught that suffering has a purpose — to bring us humbly before the throne of grace — to be aware of our own insufficiency and frailty. In other words, to have our 'spirit broken', our independence challenged and our whole outlook changed.

When we realise our uselessness, when we know beyond any shadow of doubt that we are indeed broken and incapable of saving ourselves, then the Lord can use us. There is no hypocrisy with a broken heart, no pretence, no secrets, no hidden agenda, and no pride. In order to be broken in such a manner we may have to suffer and bleed and almost die before we may be taught the ultimate lesson. But do not forget; "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:6). When we have been broken and our own opinions have drained away then the Lord can fill us with his teaching and guidance. In this process we may well have been bruised and damaged. But remember, many flowers do not release their scent until they have been crushed! So likewise many people do not show their full potential till they have been crushed in the press of life.

When we think of the Apostle Paul and his difficulties and compare ourselves with him, we realise our problems are, for the most part, relatively insignificant. The full list can be read in 2 Corinthians 11:23-33: "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the

wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands."

The passage reads not only as a catalogue of privations and problems but also as a very personal record of the way in which the great apostle was humbled. The chapter ends with what must have been, at the time, the greatest indignity of all — the representative of the High Priest having to flee for his life in what was probably a laundry basket being let down the wall like a rag-doll on the end of a rope! In the following chapter he writes about his enduring problem, his 'thorn in the flesh'. Whether this was blindness or malaria matters not; the point is that the Apostle Paul was being constantly reminded he was as frail as anyone else. Even when he challenged God, he was told, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

The Apostle had to learn, as we do, that God can only work with us when our human spirit is broken, when we are shattered and bend on our knees before Him in abject surrender. When we are weak then we can be strong by means of the Lord's help. But when we are 'strong' because of our own supposed strength and ability, then in reality we are weak and ready to vanish away.

Remember the Lord himself had to experience pain and suffering before he could experience glory and exaltation. He was crucified through weakness, the weakness of the flesh, but raised by the power of God. Paul adds; "For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him" (2 Cor. 13:4). Weakness and failure and the recognition of such characteristics are vital prerequisites for acceptance by God. We therefore need to learn to use our moments of weakness and our times of failure in order to be acceptable to God.

Some observations:

- Suffering is the examination paper — it reveals what has been learned in the school of life.
- Pain is the anguish of the soul: when a man and his God are brought into the same room, man will either curse or praise, either count God as an enemy or welcome him as a friend and confidant.
- Suffering may be physical or mental, personal or collective.
- The recognition of weakness can bring a freedom, from trying to achieve the impossible, or from the bitterness of lost opportunities.
- Weakness and failure can allow us to embrace our brothers and sisters as real family and allow us to share our doubts and our faith... or it can force us to withdraw into a corner, alone and in despair.

These are just a few of the reactions to pain and suffering. The awareness of being broken can destroy, or it can be the opportunity to rebuild. It can be disaster or it can be triumph. It can be the moment of absolute desolation, or it can be the moment of truth.

It all depends upon how we react. Let us give some suggestions;

- Be honest with yourself. You might fool others but you cannot fool God!
- Whatever has happened cannot be changed — the past is history, not to be rewritten. Let us move forward into the future.
- Share the problems with other members of the ecclesial family, either the immediate family or other brothers and sisters at home or abroad.
- Look for the positive — how can I use this situation for the greater good?
- Time is finite — use it wisely. Look for things to do that can be achieved, and do them with cheerfulness and optimism.
- Anger and resentment do not help the healing process — the only person who suffers is you. Be magnanimous, be forgiving. In other words, 'give and do not count the cost.'

This brings us to Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. In chapters eight and nine, Paul in his characteristic manner explains about giving to the Lord. Although he is primarily concerned with the giving of money, he is also concerned about an attitude of mind — an attitude of mind which is critical in order to respond correctly to pain and suffering;

1. The ultimate example: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (8:9). He had all things, but he suffered and died that he might obey his Father's will and give us hope of everlasting life.
2. The principle for us: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give" (9:7). If we give our time, our energy and our opportunities — then the Lord will hear and see and give us more in return. Thus our poverty of spirit will become enriched and our empty soul filled.
3. "Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God" (9:11). If we are aware of the great blessings that have come to us because of our discipleship, we shall be strengthened and changed by our faith and fellowship.

A "broken and contrite heart" is a necessary prerequisite for discipleship. These are qualities despised by men but admired and cherished by God — because they allow Him to use men and women in His work. This is a first step in the creation of a world filled with His glory.

Colin Edwards (Newbury, UK)

Aeschylus was a Greek philosopher who, so far as is known, did not believe in the God of Israel. But his words about the meaning and use of pain are profound, even if we make allowances for his definition of "God": "It is God's law that he who learns must suffer. And even in our sleep, pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, so that despite ourselves and even against our will, wisdom comes to us by the awful grace of God."

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (6) God's heritage and our inheritance

In the section of Ephesians 1 beginning at verse 11, we are confronted with a special and challenging task: Paul's thought is dense, and so many themes in the Old Testament and the New Testament converge here, that one can scarcely hope to exhaust all the riches of his teaching. Much could be added to what follows.

In verse 11, we need first of all to take note of the RV, which says the believers are God's heritage, and not as the KJV renders the verse: "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance". The "we" here is meaningful for Paul is now speaking of his own people, a conclusion confirmed in the following verse. The Apostle thus shows he was fully acquainted with the divine purpose as it initially embraced Israel. God chose in His wisdom and foreknowledge to work especially in the history of one nation, a truth many will not acknowledge. (However, this was no unconditional favouritism, for all the divine blessings are attended by that significant word "if": note especially in this connection the "if" in Exodus 19:5.) As for the word "heritage", we recall the song which Moses uttered towards the end of his taxing stewardship with the Israelites:

> *"When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,*
> *When he separated the children of men,*
> *He set the bounds of the people*
> *According to the number of the children of Israel.*
> *For the LORD's portion is his people;*
> *Jacob is the lot of his inheritance" (Deut. 32:8,9).*

But this is only one place where, in his final words to the nation he had led, Moses stresses the special blessings God had bestowed upon them as God's heritage among the nations; it is a subject to which he returns (see Deut. 4:20; 9:29). In this repeated emphasis he seems to be anticipating what Paul says to those who have an inheritance in the Lord Jesus. Circumcision was the seal God imposed upon all Israelites but, lest they should glory in this, he solemnly bids them to circumcise the foreskin of their hearts and to be no longer stiff-necked (Deut. 10:16), an exhortation repeated by Jeremiah (see 4:4), and echoed by Paul in Romans 2:28,29.

It may seem strange for the One who made the heavens and the earth and to whom all belongs (see, for example, Psa. 50:10-12) to work for so long through one people. At the same time they were answerable for their blessings, and if they fell into the trap of thinking the land belonged inalienably to them, they needed to be reminded by their God, "The land is mine" (Lev. 25:23).

Scripture makes it clear that Israel was only a part of God's purpose and the selection of Abraham, the father of the nation, was accompanied by this declaration:

"In thee shall ***all the families of the earth*** be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). Here we find the very first mention of blessing in Scripture and we note it is associated with the call of Abraham. Furthermore, it was not restricted to the physical descendants of Abraham; rather, it was to embrace all mankind. Centuries later, the Jews who boasted of their descent from Abraham were engaged in a lively altercation with Jesus. In the discussion the Lord affirmed that the authentic posterity of Abraham were those who did "the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). The other attribute required in the true posterity of Abraham was faith, as the Lord declared when he was moved by the Roman centurion's faith (see Matt. 8:8-13).

In Romans 3:1,2 Paul emphasizes the special privileges bestowed upon his people, but he was also well aware of their many failures. However, let us not forget there were happy periods in Israel too: Jeremiah, so much involved in denouncing his contemporaries, looked back to a time when Israel was holiness to the LORD, "the firstfruits of his increase" (Jer. 2:3). Then we think of the contribution made to our understanding of the Almighty by Moses, David and the prophets; the Lord Jesus was often guided by his unique insight into the Old Testament. The Psalms in themselves are a priceless treasury. Briefly then, it was only those Jews among Paul's contemporaries who recognized the need to emulate Abraham both in their works and their faith who constituted a true and worthy part of God's heritage. This is true for believers in all ages.

But if Israel enjoyed special privileges, it was incumbent upon them to contribute to God's glory, a responsibility which they too often failed to discharge. It was finally their failure to revere God's Son which led to the eventual loss of their special place in God's purpose (see Matt. 21:33-43, especially v. 43), although in due time they will be restored (see Zech. 12:10; Rom. 11:1,22-24).

Even as Paul affirms the eventual priority of his own people, he hastens to reassure his predominantly Gentile readers that they too had received "the word of the truth", defined as the gospel of their salvation. This response by Gentiles to the proclamation of the Gospel was a great historical development which was gaining increasing momentum in the contemporary world, preeminently through the activities of Paul himself and co-workers like Barnabas, Silas, Timothy and Epaphras. There was a momentum about this which many orthodox Jews tried to arrest, but in vain.

As for the disciples in Colosse and the neighbouring ecclesias, the efficacy of their conversion lay in the fact that they had been "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise". A seal served to authenticate, and in this case it was a mark of divine approval. They had received the unique status, in the Lord Jesus, of God's spiritual sons and daughters, a status which has been considered above. On the matter of sealing, J. Strahan comments: "The seal was used at all times for the purpose of safeguarding valuable possessions: wine jars were stopped and sealed, rolls folded and sealed, doors closed and sealed… Property, security, secrecy, finality are the ideas suggested by the act of solemnly attaching one's seal to anything." [1]

Particularly interesting in this connection is the vision of the redeemed who have the name of the Lamb and his Father written upon their foreheads (Rev. 14:1).

When the high priest entered the Tabernacle he always bore upon his forehead a plate of pure gold inscribed with the words: "HOLY TO THE LORD" (Exod. 28:36). This speaks for itself, being rich in symbolism. When king Uzziah, not content with his royal position, forced his way into the Temple and endeavoured to usurp the function of high priest, leprosy broke out on his forehead (see 2 Chron. 26:16-20). Then Ezekiel, in one of his visions when he heard the LORD GOD pronouncing judgement upon Jerusalem, saw that those who were to be spared slaughter had a mark placed upon their foreheads (9:4-6).

Both Paul and the apostle John indicate the unique status of those who have accepted the word of salvation in the Lord Jesus and thus constitute God's lot or portion among the nations. We first note John's witness to this in John 1:12,13: "But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Surely this is a bold declaration that such have become true children of the Almighty, a great and precious truth which John confirms in his first letter: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are" (3:1).

On this same subject, Paul has much to say to the Colossians: "We have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love" (1:13), "For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (3:3). Then to the Philippians Paul wrote: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (3:20). There is something awesome about these declarations; it is difficult for a Christian disciple to grasp their full meaning and to live by them. But he needs to ponder them constantly, for they have the power to transform our mundane lives.

Fundamental to this process is the individual's response to the Word of God, a theme developed in Romans 10. There the Apostle shows with great clarity that it is not merely the enlightenment of the mind which counts, but the penetration of the heart: "Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (vv. 9,10). It is then the response of the heart which matters for salvation.

The words of the Apostle echo in a most interesting way what Jeremiah had to say centuries before; he bore witness to Israel's failure to fulfill the conditions of the covenant God made with the Israelites in the desert (see Exod. 24:3-8). This failure created the need for a new covenant, and it is of this that the prophet speaks in chapter 31: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah… this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the LORD; I will put my laws in their inward parts, and in their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (vv. 31-33). This is surely an anticipation of Paul's words for, alas, the enlightenment of the mind does not necessarily ensure a change of heart:

(1) Ananias and Sapphira had conceived deception in their hearts (see Acts 5:1-10), and
(2) The heart of Simon, who thought he could purchase the power to convey the Holy Spirit to others, was "not right before God" (Acts 8:21).

These reflections enable us to understand why later in Ephesians 1 Paul uses a curious expression, "the eyes of the heart" (v. 18).

While the disciple who holds the hope in his heart should rejoice in the privileges bestowed upon him, he knows he has received only an "earnest" of the full inheritance (Eph. 1:14). An earnest here means a preliminary payment but which in itself is a guarantee that the full sum will be paid; William Barclay makes these comments on the Greek term for "earnest": "In classical Greek the word *'arrabon'* regularly means the caution money that a purchaser had to deposit and pay down when a bargain was struck... It was the first installment which was the pledge and guarantee that the rest would follow in due course." [2]

The LORD God will most certainly honour His commitment to those who place their trust in Him. The redemption of our bodies, with its release from the present bondage of corruption, lies in the future when the Lord Jesus descends from heaven and changes our bodies into the likeness of his own glorious body (Phil. 3:21). However, we live now in the present with its limitations and temptations. We must accordingly draw upon the strength available to us in the Lord Jesus, in prayer and in the constant reading of God's word. As already emphasized, what should exercise our minds is the awesome nature of the privileges we already enjoy in the Lord Jesus, and we should gladly and gratefully respond to them in love.

Paul knew full well how abysmal had been his own understanding of the divine purpose with mankind at large. Furthermore, when he had learned of developments in the Lycus valley, he was moved to pray for the disciples there. Epaphras had brought him news of the faithfulness of some (Eph. 1:15), a fact to which we referred at an earlier stage in these studies. These faithful ones were to be counted among the divine heritage; for them he did not cease to pray (v. 16).

It was Paul's custom, as his own outlook was so positive, to give encouragement to all who were responding to God's grace. At the same time, he possessed a sympathetic understanding of the difficulty any might have in appreciating the rich privileges they enjoyed in the Lord Jesus. He was moved, therefore, to ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, to grant them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. It is this, surely, which is so fundamental: "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou dost send, even Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). In asking his God to grant them wisdom, he reminds us of James: "But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraided not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith..." (1:5,6).

When Paul speaks of "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ", we are reminded of his monotheism. Then he proceeds to designate Him "the Father of glory". A fine feature of Paul's letters lies in the terms he employs to describe his God. This feature is prominent towards the end of Romans: thus in 15:5, he is "the God of

patience and comfort"; in verse 13, He is "the God of hope", and in verse 33 "the God of peace" (see also 2 Cor. 1:3). Here now, he speaks of the "Father of glory", the One who is the single source of all (cf. Rom. 11:36).

There is special significance in the reference to God's glory in the present context. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament that glory can be associated with those faithful to their God:

(a) When Caleb and Joshua tried to rally their fellows, the latter took stones to kill them but the LORD intervened: "The glory of the LORD appeared in the tent of meeting unto all the children of Israel" (Num. 14:10) and stopped the mutinous Israelites in their tracks.

(b) The divine glory was visibly associated with Caleb and Joshua and served at the same time to protect them.

(c) When the compassionate Moses intervened on behalf of his faithless people, the LORD did indeed forgive but He also declared that the earth would one day be filled with His glory (v. 21). This surely will be in the person of His Son and those associated with him.

(d) The glory of the LORD was associated with Moses and Aaron when Korah and his fellows rose against them (Num. 16:19).

(e) Stephen started his historic defense by referring to "the God of glory" (Acts 7:2) and as he was dying, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus himself standing on the right hand of God (v. 56).

A basic theme unites the Old and New Testaments, as is often the case. Indeed, the subject of glory is so fundamental in Scripture that it could be pursued at great length.

In Ephesians 1:18 Paul continues his prayer with what might appear at first an odd request on behalf of his readers: "that the eyes of their heart should be enlightened." We have already seen how important it is that such enlightenment should reach the heart, our inmost being; our eyes are the medium of perception. We recall the Lord said to his disciples: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear" (Matt. 13:16). In the present case (in v. 18) Paul's wish is that the readers should understand the hope they can cherish, the riches of God's glory of the inheritance in the saints. Thus we are reminded that the basic theme of this section is the inheritance to which Christ calls believers.

In keeping with his efforts to bring his readers to an appreciation of what is even now available to them in the Lord Jesus, the Apostle invokes the thought of the "exceeding greatness of his power" (Eph. 1:19). Paul seems almost to be straining to find words adequate to open the eyes of his readers to a proper appreciation of the extent of their inheritance in the Lord Jesus. We hope to see in our next study how the supreme evidence of divine power lies in the resurrection and elevation of the Lord Jesus.

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

Notes:

1. W. Strahan, in *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church,* T & T Clark, 1918, vol. 2, p. 465.
2. W. Barclay, *A New Testament Wordbook,* SCM Press Ltd., 1955, p. 24.

Reflections

Famous Last Words: (10) Lot

Our last article looked at the words of Melchizedek to Abraham. We saw the wonderful type of the Messiah exhibited in this man, who as King-Priest blessed the patriarch and was given tithes by him. We look for the day when the Most High God sends His Son to the earth, and will "deliver his enemies into his hand."

The last recorded words of Lot are: "Oh, not so, my Lord... I cannot escape to the mountains... behold now this city... let me escape thither..." (Gen. 19:18-20).

Poor Lot, he never really seems to understand the working of God in his life. God says, "Flee to the mountains", and he comes up with a million excuses why this won't work, and why his plan is better than God's! God always knows best, and we have to trust Him implicitly and unquestioningly! Lot's great plan is to flee to a small city to be safe. However, Lot later finds himself in danger in the city, and he has to flee to the mountains (Gen. 19:30). You can imagine the people's reaction to the lone survivor of the Sodom and Gomorrah destruction!

What tragedy results from this! His daughters now despair of life (perhaps based on experiences in the city), and they manipulate their father into incestuous relations with them. How much better for Lot if he had gone to the mountains initially, as God commanded, trusting that God knew what He was doing and would work things out for good. Maybe if Lot had gone to the mountains first, he could have integrated into society later "when the dust settled"!

This incident also gives some interesting insight into the work of the angels. Lot's last words are a request to the angels working with him, a request that they grant. We can see here that the angel listens to Lot's request, and makes a decision to allow it: "See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing ***also...***" (Gen. 19:21). Do we sense a little frustration in the angel's words here? There is no indication that the angel had to get authority from on high to grant this request. The angel made this decision himself. Note that granting this request meant that Zoar (the little city Lot wanted to flee to) was spared from overthrow (v. 21)! Too bad the people of the city didn't realize this — maybe they would have accepted Lot as a hero, not a villain! It would seem that the angels are given a job to do by God with certain parameters and guidelines to work within. Inside those parameters they have room to change plans and make decisions — they are ***not*** robots. Rather, they have to react to unexpected circumstances (like an uncooperative Lot).

But there are limits to the parameters. The angels could ***not*** destroy Sodom until Lot was safe (v. 22), and the moment Lot entered Zoar "the LORD rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from heaven... and overthrew those cities and all the plain" (vv. 23-25).

The lesson we learn from Lot's "famous last words" is that we must accept God's will for us and obey His commands without question. "Thy will, not mine be done" and "God willing, we will do this or that" must be the hallmarks of a faithful believer's life. We must never doubt God by asking for our circumstances to be changed to suit our wants and desires. As the old saying goes, "Be careful what you ask for — you just might get it!"

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5,6).

Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON)

"Greater lov'd ye canno' be!"

In 1958, the great golfer Bobby Jones visited St. Andrews, Scotland, the birthplace of golf. Jones was more than 25 years past his last great tournament victories, and he was now beset with a terrible debilitating and crippling disease. But he had come to accept an award naming him a Freeman of St. Andrews. The small town, scene of some of his most memorable achievements, and a town which had adopted this quiet American as one of its own, was in effect granting him genuine citizenship, the first and only time they had extended that honor to an American since 1759. The only previous recipient had been Benjamin Franklin.

Mark Frost describes the scene in his book, *The Grand Slam: Bobby Jones, America, and the Story of Golf.*

Nearly two thousand crowded into the Great Hall at St. Andrews University. After the award was presented, Bobby Jones stood and walked to the podium. It was the first time he had walked unaided in a number of years. He spoke of his previous visits to St. Andrews, and the tournaments played at the Old Course. In each instance, he said, it had been the respect and affection he felt from the people of the town that meant so much more to him than trophies or medals or championships.

"And now I have this," he said. "I could take out of my life everything but my experiences at St. Andrews and I'd still have a rich full life."

He spoke of friendship and expressed with a full heart and his precise lawyer's language exactly how much that overused expression — "friend" — meant to him. The spiritual clarity of his emotions rose to meet the eloquence of his words, and in his steady gaze and warm, measured baritone Bobby reflected back to his audience the love he felt from them.

"When I say that I am your friend, I have pledged to you the ultimate in loyalty and devotion. In some respects friendship may even transcend love, for in true friendship there is no place for jealousy. When I say that you are my friends, it is possible that I may be imposing upon you a greater burden than you are willing to assume. But when you have made me aware on many occasions that you have

a kindly feeling toward me, and when you have honored me by every means at your command, then when I call you my friend, I am at once affirming my high regard and affection for you and declaring my complete faith in you and trust in the sincerity of your expressions. And so, my fellow citizens of St. Andrews, it is with this appreciation of the full sense of this word that I salute you as my friends."

The speech was greeted by thunderous applause. As Bobby Jones left the hall, riding a golf cart up the center aisle to the exit, someone with a high tenor voice broke spontaneously into the lilting old Scottish folk song:

"Will ye no' come back again?...
Greater lov'd ye canno' be.
Will ye no' come back again?"

Within a moment virtually every other voice in the hall had joined in.

Frost writes, "They reached out to touch Bobby and his family as he passed. This was a true valedictory, the sort of tribute seldom given or received while the person being honored still lives, made possible only if that person has moved past longing and pride and illusions of the self into the rarest wisdom... After [Bobby] and his family had left the hall, ten full minutes passed before any of the audience were even able to speak."

Put aside the setting. Put aside even the man himself, along with his particular accomplishments, extraordinary as they were. But consider the thoughts of love and the expression — and exposition — of friendship that he shared with the people gathered in that place. Can there be a better exposition of the words of Jesus himself, when he said to his disciples: "I have called you friends" (John 15:15)?

Can we understand, and express, the full sense of this word "friend"? Jesus did: "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Do our actions, as well as our words, truly reflect our "friendship" for ***Jesus?*** Let us say to ***him,*** in the words of the old Scottish song,

"Will ye no' come back again?...
Greater lov'd ye canno' be.
Will you no' come back again?"

George Booker, Austin South, TX

Fruits from the True Vine

The record in John's gospel — the last supper and the walk to the Mount of Olives — is interrupted by four chapters (John 14-17) in which Jesus talks to his disciples. In John 13:38 Jesus predicts Peter's denial; then we have to wait until John 18 to read about Jesus going to the Mount of Olives with his disciples.

Surely at this moment in his life — with the crucifixion so close, and the impending excruciating pain that it would entail — Jesus must have considered these last words with his disciples to have been of prime importance. Therefore they must surely be a very necessary message to us also.

Part of this message Jesus felt was so important — for all disciples — is set out in his description of the true vine and the branches in John 15. Describing God's people as vineyards bearing fruit would not have been a novel idea to the disciples:

"I will sing for the One I love a song about his Vineyard:
My loved one had a Vineyard on a fertile hillside.
He dug it up and cleared it of stones
And planted it with the choicest vines.
He built a watchtower in it
And cut out a winepress as well.
Then he looked for a crop of good grapes,
But it yielded only bad fruit" (Isa. 5:1,2).

"The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the House of Israel,
and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight.
And he looked for justice but saw bloodshed;
For righteousness, but heard cries of distress" (v. 7).

In John 15 Jesus uses the same figure of the vineyard but says in verse 5: "I am the vine and you are the branches." Moreover, he says in verse 1 that God is the gardener who cuts off the branches that bear no fruit. Remembering the importance that Jesus gave to these last words to his disciples, we have to ask ourselves: what is it that Jesus requires us to understand?

Who are the "clean" ones?

In John 15:3 Jesus says, "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me and I will remain in you." Words such as these have led our community, in some cases, into an attitude similar to that of the Pharisee. The Pharisee went up to pray at the temple: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get" (Luke 18:11,12). The Pharisee was so deluded that he felt the urge to congratulate himself on being "clean", as though it were all his own doing!

But what Jesus meant by verse 3, and what is required of us if we are to remain in him, is described for us a bit further on: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love... My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (vv. 9,12,13). This is a repetition of what he told his disciples earlier in the upper room (John 13:34,35). Another aspect is given in John 15:16: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last."

Jesus felt it necessary to tell his disciples that he was the only true vine, and it was through "abiding" in him alone that they might be connected to God and His Kingdom (John 15:4). Only by abiding, or remaining, in the vine could they produce fruit that would last, nourished by that love they had seen in him.

The Samaritan

The quality of what Jesus exhibited and which is required by each one of us is, I believe, nowhere better explained than in Luke 10. We read here of the Good Samaritan, exemplified by Jesus and to be followed by us.

In the parable, a man was beaten, robbed and left for dead. Both a priest and a Levite refused to stop to help him; but a Samaritan, a person despised by many Jews, not only stopped to help the victim but also took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he even left money with the innkeeper, and promised to give him additional money when he returned, if necessary.

The question for now is not whether ***we*** would have helped out to the same extent, but rather: what kind of person was the victim? Was he a robber, an evildoer or an adulterer — the sort whom the Pharisee of Luke 18 would have disdained? Was he a drunkard or a drug addict? If, in Jesus' story, the traveler had been a woman rather than a man, could she have been a prostitute or a woman of loose morals?

Closer to home, and in relation to our own ecclesias, is the one who "fell among thieves" a brother or sister who has not attended the meeting for some time, from whom we have withdrawn? Or is it a sister whose violent marriage ended in divorce and who has remarried a kind, gentle and caring man — but who is no longer, according to our view of matters, able to break bread with us? The answer is: we are not told ***because to Jesus it did not matter.***

Paul exhorts us: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph. 4:32 — 5:2).

Bearing fruit

Jesus also tells his disciples, in John 15:16, to "bear fruit, fruit that will last."

Elsewhere Jesus says, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (John 7:37,38). Do we want to be vessels from which streams of living water flow? "By this he meant the Spirit whom those who believed in him were later to receive" (v. 39).

We shy away from the thought of receiving God's "Spirit". But Jesus makes it quite plain that in order to bear ***lasting*** fruit, as commanded in John 15, we have to be connected with God's holy Spirit. How is this? If we remain in the True Vine, which is Jesus Christ, then the Spirit of God will work to produce in us the ***fruit*** of that Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and gentleness" (Gal. 5:22,23). These spiritual fruits come from God; they are fruits of the True Vine, and they cannot be produced by anyone who is ***not*** part of that Vine!

As we remember the sacrifice of Jesus, let us ask ourselves: do we manifest those qualities demonstrated by Jesus, and requested by him of his disciples immediately before he was taken to be crucified?

If we do, then his prayer for us will not be in vain:

"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them" (John 17:24-26).

Colin Cooper (Barbados)

"I'm One of Those Stars, Sam…"

Our five-year old granddaughter, Samantha, is quite a girl. She is bright, funny, loving, curious, and generous. She brings us great joy just by her very existence, and we are grateful to have such a wonderful young girl in our lives.

One of her favorite things to do is lie out in the yard at night on a quilt, looking up at the stars with her daddy. A shooting star is something she has always wanted to see but she hasn't seen one yet. Her voice is sad but hopeful when she quietly says, "Daddy has seen one, but I haven't — not yet."

This morning my husband and I rose early to watch the Perseids meteor shower, predicted to be very visible and active between 2 am and dawn. We stood together quietly on the deck, listening to the insect and animal sounds of a mountain night. Staring up into the northeastern sky, I thought about Sam, and I also thought about Abraham.

Abraham lived over four thousand years ago, on the other side of the world from me, and yet I feel I know him. I read the stories of how he loved and trusted God, how he treated his family and servants, his enemies and friends. I have a picture of him in my mind.

I thought of him because of what happened to him one clear, dark night out on the open rolling hills of Canaan (what we call Israel today). He had a visitor, a heavenly messenger, who told him not to fear, that God was his shield and his very great reward. Abraham appreciated that, I'm sure — what could be better? But Abraham admitted he was sad because he had no children, and at his death all his vast wealth and possessions would pass along to a servant in his household.

The angel then took Abraham outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars — ***if*** you can count them." Then he said, "So shall your offspring be."

How thrilled he must have been! Incredulous, too, because he and his wife had been together a long time and were very old, past the normal time for a couple to have children. He believed God, though, and God gave him credit for his honorable, respectful goodness and belief.

Though Abraham and his wife Sarah had to wait a long time to have a child together, they did have a son, Isaac, born when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90. Isaac married, had two sons, and those sons had children. So God

kept His promise to Abraham that he would have children, grandchildren, and so on and on, even up until this day. His physical descendents through the promised son, Isaac, and one of Isaac's sons, Jacob, are the Jewish people today. His physical descendents through another son, Ishmael, and the other of Isaac's sons, Esau, are a part of the Arab nations.

God also promised Abraham that since he was faithful in leaving his homeland (in what is now Iraq) and traveling to the land of Canaan, as directed by God, that he and his descendents would inherit that land and possess it forever.

Now here is where it really gets interesting, because it directly relates to you and me. In about the year 50 AD, Paul wrote a letter to Christians who lived in Galatia, near modern Ankara, Turkey. He told them this amazing thing — that years and years later, generation after generation, Abraham was ***still*** gaining descendents, even those who were not physically his offspring. How could this be?

The promises were spoken to Abraham ***and his seed***, Paul said, especially meaning Jesus, who lived two thousand years after his ancestor Abraham.

Jesus was a descendent from Abraham, through one of Abraham's great-grandsons, Judah. But Jesus did not marry and have children, so how does this connect with us?

We look to Paul again to explain what he meant. "If you have been baptized into Christ, then you have clothed yourself with Christ…" he said. "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and an heir according to the promise."

To belong to Christ, we accept that he was and is the son of God who presented himself as a pure, living sacrifice, and that with his blood he purchased men and women for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. After baptism, symbolizing our regret for our shortcomings and recognition that we need to follow Jesus in dying to this life, we rise up joyfully to a new life.

Belonging to Christ, we are adopted into his family, and become heirs to the family promises. We become one of Abraham's multitudinous offspring — one of those many stars he looked up at so long ago, and marveled, "I'm going to have that many descendents — incredible!"

I have made that decision, to belong to Christ, and thus I am one of Abraham's children. And so, as I looked up at that brilliant, awe-inspiring sky this morning, I thought to myself, "By the grace of God and the love of Christ, I am one of those stars you love so much, Sam — your grandmother is one of those stars!"

Sharee Grazda (Pagosa Springs, CO)

"Look up at the heavens and count the stars" (Gen. 15:5).

"The God who could fashion so many worlds of wonder set in the depths of space had no need of hurry in the outworking of His plan. These stars which Abraham could not begin to count were all ***God's,*** counted and known individually by their names (Psa. 147:4)" (Harry Whittaker, *Abraham: Father of the Faithful).*

Jesus' Unlikely Conversions

There are many believers today who have come from the outside (and even some who were raised in Christadelphian homes) whom — if we could have seen them before their conversions — we might not even recognize as the same people we know today. Their conversions from a life of sin (in many different aspects) to a life of holiness — love of God, Jesus, the Bible, and their neighbor — border on the miraculous.

In these articles we'll look at some Bible characters whose conversions are similarly striking. All these men have this in common: they "saw the light" ***when*** they witnessed the sufferings and death of Jesus. Jesus was like no other man before or since. He was totally righteous throughout his life. But even that statement scarcely does justice to the time just before his death. Perhaps the word "noble" may describe him then, but even that description fails to adequately portray his character. Something in his actions and words during that time led to the most remarkable and unlikely of conversions.

(1) Simon of Cyrene

"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). Probably Simon was a Jew who had come up from Cyrene (in northern Libya) for the Passover (or possibly he had recently moved to Jerusalem from Cyrene).

Comparing the four gospel accounts, it appears Jesus was too physically exhausted to bear the full burden of the cross all the way to Golgotha. (When one considers all he had gone through during the previous 24 to 48 hours, is there any doubt that he physically could not carry the cross that distance without help?) As this became obvious, a centurion compelled Simon to follow Jesus, carrying the cross for him.

Picture what happened here: Simon literally took up Jesus' cross and followed him. Then consider Jesus' words: "If anyone would come after me, he must ***deny*** himself and take up his cross and follow me." Quite likely, at first Simon was not at all pleased to do this. First of all, it was a precious hour out of his day at a very important time of the year. Secondly, it was — obviously — a very distasteful thing. And then, consider the jeers from many in the crowd. Wouldn't they be, in part, aimed at him for helping such a man as this? And yet — Simon must have thought to himself — 'I'm not the criminal being taken to execution!'

Nevertheless, Simon was soon to learn much about this man whom he was forced to follow. For he saw a man who, in his terrible extremity of suffering, did not flinch, and did not hurl curses at his executioners. He saw a man who even asked his "Father" (!) to forgive them. And finally he must have come to see that Jesus' God and Father had provided His Son as a Passover lamb for the sins of the world.

It may be taken as practically certain that Simon's conversion dated from this very day. Did you notice that Mark in his gospel mentions Simon's two sons: Alexander and Rufus? Why would he do that unless it would mean something to his readers — that is, that Alexander and Rufus later became Christians, and were in fact Christians at the time Mark set down his story?

Possibly Alexander is mentioned in Acts 19:33 as living in Ephesus while Paul was there. And Rufus may be the brother mentioned by Paul in Romans 16:13: "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too." (The name "Rufus" occurs only in these two verses in the Bible.)

What is the most likely scenario? I'd suggest that Rufus and Alexander learned from their father Simon, who was so moved by his crucifixion experience that he became a believer in Jesus Christ. Almost certainly Simon's wife also learned and became a Christian; notice that she was such a lovely person that Paul could say that she was like a mother to him!

May we go even a little further, and imagine that Jesus spoke to Simon on the way, thanking him for his help? And in this process, and with the succeeding events, Simon's eyes were opened to the identity of this extraordinary man: that he was the Messiah!

The man compelled to go a mile with Jesus, went with him not only the one mile but a second as well (Matt. 5:41), and then also for the rest of his life.

(Next: Malchus)

Wesley Booker (Austin South, TX)

*****

Simon of Cyrene

There is no mark of course, but I can feel
Here on my shoulder to this very day
The grinding weight where that rough timber lay
And left, an hour or two, its vivid seal.

I had no thought, no patriotic zeal,
That morning there a hero's part to play;
Only, I saw his eyes which, as he lay
Down in the dust, held mine in mute appeal.

"A curse on you, Roman dogs," I cried,
And never felt the lash the soldier swung;
Then we went together side by side,
My back bent double as we climbed the hill
To Calvary where on the cross he hung;
And I am proud to say I feel its burden still.

(adapted, from Wadsworth)

Letters

A "generation"?

Dear Bro. George,

Reading in the March-April edition of *The Tidings* regarding "a generation", we listened to a rabbi being interviewed. On being asked what "a generation" meant, he replied that "a generation went by the Jubilee years", and he explained that the Jubilee [every fiftieth year] brought to an end the possession of Hebrew servants, the restoration of property, etc.

This seemed logical to us — and rather scriptural, don't you think?

Much fraternal love in our wonderful Saviour's Name.

A.W. Wright
(Australia)

Distractions

Dear Bro. George,

In response to Bro. Michael Atkin's excellent exhortation (June, p. 216), please permit me to recount this experience:

At age 18, my high school sweetheart and I flew from Wales to Canada. We were newly married, a couple of energetic immigrants, with little money, but lots of enthusiastic optimism.

Our first few months were spent in a modestly furnished, two-room basement apartment. We shared a bathroom with the couple in the adjacent unit. We naturally expected our standard of living to rise. When we moved to a three-room, unfurnished apartment, we needed some furniture. My job in a department store afforded us the opportunity to open a charge account. So we purchased a bedroom suite: bed, bookcase-style headboard, chest and dresser.

A few weeks passed and we realize we have made a mistake. The credit payments represented a financial burden. Would my employer kindly accept the return of the suite, apart from the bed itself? Yes, they would, for full credit. Were we ever relieved! Our next stop was at a used furniture store. That experience taught us a lesson we would never forget.

Many of us are under financial pressure because we are striving to support a standard of living higher than what we can comfortably afford. We want; therefore we buy. This process generates an inordinate amount of stress. We may be investing more heavily in our houses and vehicles than in our homes and families. Not a good idea. Material possessions are of limited value. It is relationships that really count.

I had long known that truth in theory. In my 30s, I experienced its sad reality. There I was, living in a spacious home, in a desirable neighborhood, with an above-average standard of living, in a prosperous country… without a wife, and our two teenage sons without a resident mother. I had been far happier years earlier, in that tiny, two-room basement apartment.

Most North Americans enjoy a material standard of living higher than that known by 99% of the people who have ever lived, anywhere in the world. But we are not easily satisfied. Compare our living standards to those of our grandparents and great-grandparents. Are we more or less thankful than they were? More or less content? More or less stressed? Do we carefully distinguish between wants and needs? Or do we continually strive for that elusive standard of living always a step or two above our present level? That vain pursuit brings no lasting satisfaction.

If we can learn to be more content, to be more thankful, then our load of stress will be lightened considerably, and our service to the Master will be more acceptable.

Philip Jones
(Calgary, AB)

"Sprout" is here!

I just wanted to let you know that "Sprout" (a.k.a. David Jachin Mutter) was born at 5:09 pm on June 10. He weighed 7 lbs. 15 oz. and was 20 inches long. He and Julia are home from the hospital now and are doing great.

Ryan Mutter
(Baltimore, MD)

(See June issue, p. 242.)

Dear Sis. Julia and Bro. Ryan,

Congratulations! The birth of a baby is a miracle of life, and a mystery. It is also a gift from God, showing His continuing love for man, and His willingness to offer that love, once again, to a completely new life.

Your child is a special child, like Samuel or John the Baptist, who should be dedicated by righteous parents to the service of Yahweh.

May "Sprout" grow up to be a great tree, planted by the river of life, who bears fruit in season, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

George

"We have come to a turning point in the road. If we turn to the right, our children and our children's children may very well go that way; but if we turn to the left, generations yet unborn will curse our names for having been unfaithful to God and to His Word" (Charles Spurgeon).

Bible Mission News

Guatemala City, Guatemala

Eight years ago we landed in a Latin American country to begin two years of missionary work. A sister warned us that, once we spent time in Latin America, it would be in our blood forever. Feeling overwhelmed by the new situation ahead of us, the prospect of learning Spanish, and the completely different culture that surrounded us, we highly doubted that that could be the case. As we landed in Guatemala a few short days ago, we reflected upon her words as we felt the rising excitement of returning to this part of the world. The familiar smells, sounds and sights felt strangely like home, and in the few times we have returned to Latin America since our couple of years spent there, we have learned that yes... once you've lived in Latin America, it is in your blood forever!

We decided to travel to Guatemala for four short days to meet with the ecclesia and discuss ways to preach, and reach out to existing contacts who have yet to make personal contact with the Christadelphian ecclesia there. There are currently seven active members of this small lightstand. The ecclesia is young, with the first member having been baptized in 1995, and the most recent baptism being in December 2006.

The newest brother of the Guatemalan ecclesia impressed us greatly with his love and enthusiasm for the Truth. It is such a good reminder for us sometimes to see the energy and faith that emanates from one so newly baptized into our Lord's saving name. The day we arrived, this new brother (who is in his fifties) sought us out at our hotel, located in the historical district of downtown Guatemala. He walked us around the busy streets, explaining each building in detail, and helping us to orient ourselves. The architecture is breathtakingly beautiful in this old city, and full of history.

On Saturday afternoon, we met with the ecclesial members. We were thrilled that all of the active brothers showed up with ideas and visions for the future of the ecclesia. The brothers are feeling a bit discouraged at the lack of contacts that actually come to the lectures, or to seek more information from the Christadelphians. We discussed preaching ideas, among other things, and were delighted to hear how the ecclesia started, and how each member came to find the Truth. It was interesting to hear that every member had come to an understanding of the Scriptures by answering a small ad in the newspaper, and completing the correspondence course. Each one described vividly the excitement they felt at learning our different doctrines, and seeing clearly the Truth of the Bible. It was

especially touching when one brother began his story by saying, "I remember it was September 16th, the day I saw the ad for the Christadelphians..."

On Sunday we shared in the breaking of bread, followed by a class entitled "The Effective Preaching of the Apostles", based primarily on the example of the establishment of the ecclesia in Thessalonica. The brothers were thrilled when four visitors, who had been invited by phone, showed up for the class.

After sharing a lunch of pizza and Pepsi, we headed back to the hotel with a brother as our guide. We decided to attempt the bus system, since it is always an interesting experience, and gives one a strong sense of the culture of the people. It is also a good way to tour the city and — at a cost of one quetzal (about 15 cents US) each — we couldn't resist.

Our taxi picked us up Monday morning at 4:30 am to get to the airport. Along the way, we had a great conversation with our taxi driver, and by the time he dropped us off at the airport, we had his address in hand, and he says he will be eagerly awaiting the first lessons of the correspondence course!

Brothers and sisters of the Guatemala ecclesia

A couple of things became very apparent to us during our short stay. One: the young ecclesia in Guatemala consists of a solid group of brothers with a strong love of the Truth. And two: these brothers need help! The thing that the ecclesia could use the most at this time is a missionary couple to help out for a few years, in order to work consistently with the contacts, and help the brothers grow in their faith. Guatemala City is a large city of about 2.5 million. There are so many, many people... so many who have yet to hear the Truth of the Gospel, and the wonderful hope of the return of Christ!

The Guatemala Sunday School

Brothers and sisters, we have been given the pearl of great price — we are so blessed. Why is it that compared to other churches that are in darkness, we have so few that are willing to sacrifice a fraction of their lives in service to God in another country? Please consider giving some time to labour in His vineyard. It won't be long before Jesus comes back. Will he find us about our Father's business?

Dan (and Ashley) Robinson
CBMA Linkman, Guatemala

The search for Truth in South America — Argentina, Chile, Peru and Bolivia

On May 11, 2007, we began a trip that would take us to four countries in South America for a period of 18 days. Bro. Robert Alderson (Auckland, NZ) and I met in Santiago, Chile, and we continued from there to Córdoba, Argentina. We were met at the airport in Córdoba by brother Rubén Barbosa. He took us to his house, where we were warmly welcomed by his wife Roxana and their two children, Milena and Juan Segundo. There is a four-member ecclesia in Córdoba consisting of Bro. Francisco Gilardoni, Sis. Julia Leonor Reynoso, Sis. María Teresa Suarez, and Bro. Rubén. Bro. Hugo Petrilli (from Rosario, Argentina) also regularly visits and supports the ecclesia in Córdoba. The ecclesia organized a series of special lectures on Saturday and Sunday (May 12th and 13th), which about four visitors

attended each day. This was disappointing since ads were placed in the newspaper and the 300 correspondence contacts were also invited. We organized an extra session with the ecclesia and a few interested friends for Monday afternoon, on "How to get around the Bible". We really enjoyed the fellowship and hospitality of this small ecclesia.

We left Cordoba on Wednesday, May 16, for Santiago, Chile, to spend two days with the three-member ecclesia and a few of the serious contacts. The ecclesia is comprised of Bro. Bernardo Soto Raimil, Sis. Gisella Pintado Moeira and Bro. Richard Castillo Hernández. We met every day and enjoyed a breaking of bread, Bible readings and studies. Brother Bernardo manages a small data processing company, and the ecclesia uses his office for their weekly meetings.

From Santiago we went to Lima, Peru, on Friday, May 18, for three days of special lectures. We were met there by Bro. Brad and Sis. Susie Butts (Denver, CO), along with Bro. Bill Link, Jr. and his son Bro. Ezra Link (Baltimore, MD). They travelled with us for the next 11 days to provide tremendous support for activities in Peru and Bolivia.

The postal contacts in Peru have shown great interest during weekend hotel meetings and special lectures in the last two years. Special lectures were held Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings (May 18-20) in a hotel conference room in Lima, Peru. An average of 17 visitors attended every night — at least 15 were there every evening! There is a sincere desire to understand the Truth of God's Word. By the end of Sunday evening we had been asked repeatedly when we were going to establish a "church" in Lima, so they could attend.

The Butts' and Links' help was invaluable and greatly appreciated by Robert and me. The fact that their first language is English and all work was done in Spanish did not prevent them from helping — smiling, greeting, getting attendees' names, handing out refreshments and helping find Bible quotations did not require Spanish, especially since notes were handed out prior to each talk as a guide. The added blessing was that Bill Link served on the CBMA Spanish Truth Corps program during 1977-1978, some 30 years ago, and still was able to handle himself quite well in Spanish. The other three (Brad, Susie and Ezra) had all studied some Spanish in the past and this at least gave them a sense of what was being said — plus smiles go a long way in communication!

On Tuesday, May 22, we flew from Lima to La Paz, Bolivia — the highest capital in the world at 3,600 metres [11,000 feet], with the airport at 4,100 metres [12,500 feet]. The city looks like it is literally built in a bowl-shaped crater on the moon! It is breathtaking in more ways than one — the scenery is absolutely unique (arid moonscape surrounded by snow-capped mountains). The air is quite dry and with less oxygen content than we are accustomed to (due to the altitude) so that any activity is a task in itself. Although the scenery is spectacular, it did not compare with the fellowship, courtesy and hospitality demonstrated to us during every day of our six-day visit. The six of us stayed at an inexpensive efficiency style "apart-hotel" which means there is a fridge and a stove, etc. Thus we could prepare a few meals ourselves during our stay.

There are five members in the young ecclesia: Bro. Freddie Monrroy, Sis. Roxana Ramos (temporarily in Spain), Sis. Laura Avila, Bro. Martin Mostacedo and Bro. Victor Hugo Fernández Montaño. There are also six contacts who attend almost all activities, and by their attitude and consistency you would think they were members. One additional bit of good news with regard to the future in La Paz: Bro. Jacob and Sis. Fiona Styles (Newcastle, AU) will be arriving there in July, God willing, as missionaries to assist the ecclesia and help further the work in this country.

The first evening together with the members was a sample of what happened most days, depending on our schedule — the daily readings together in the afternoon or evening, along with good discussion.

Correspondence course contacts had been invited to the special lectures held on Friday and Saturday evenings (May 25th and 26th) at the ecclesial meeting place. Ads were also placed in the newspaper, and we hand-billed about 5,000 invitations on Wednesday morning with Freddie and Laura. The turnout to the lectures was similar to Lima, very encouraging — an average of 16 visitors, as well as the four members and the six regular contacts. One thing that was quite noticeable about the visitors was their courtesy and friendliness. They would greet us when they arrived, and they also took time to say good-bye when they left.

The results of the trip were many and positive. The team of six from other countries worked well together — enjoyed fellowship, developed friendships that will be lifelong and did our best with God's help to encourage ecclesias and further the Lord's work in several countries. By the end of the trip, we all commented about the hospitality we received — not only from brothers and sisters and contacts, but also from hotel staff, taxi drivers and the list goes on! We felt welcomed and at the same time exhorted.

May God guide the Word of the Kingdom to fall on good ground. Many individuals who attended the special lectures are frustrated with the deception of the churches and have studied for years on their own developing a good general knowledge of the Bible; they have a genuine thirst for Truth. A number of follow-up trips are in planning stages for the rest of the year. We need to continue to strengthen the young ecclesias in Córdoba, Santiago and La Paz. Please pray for God's blessing on all our activities around the world.

Donald Luff
CBMA Latin American Committee

Reflections on a short mission trip to Peru and Bolivia

After arriving late at night at our hotel in Lima, we awoke, not to an alarm clock, but to the sound of ceaseless honking horns in the street below. As we gazed over the balcony wall we saw a city already alive with pedestrian and automobile traffic, the latter comprised mostly of small taxis. We were in the heart of historic downtown Lima, about halfway between the Plaza de San Martin and the Presidential Palace.

This was the first of four days in Lima joining Bre. Don Luff, Robert Alderson, Bill Link, Jr. and Ezra Link (Bill's son) to give Bible presentations to an interested group of contacts. We were excited about the prospect, but also a bit apprehensive since neither Sis. Susan nor I speak Spanish.

Our fears were soon dismissed as we met a most friendly and warm group of Peruvians who were genuinely interested in Bible study. They all greeted us with smiles and enthusiasm, and some even with a hug and a kiss! We were impressed with their attention to Scripture and questions at the end of the presentations. Many of them made extensive notes and several lingered for up to an hour to discuss Bible topics with Don and Robert.

The same core group of 15 to 18 visitors attended subsequent lectures! Many shared their email addresses and want to maintain contact with us. Several said they would meet with us regularly if there were a Christadephian "church" in Lima. And, as far as our concern regarding the language barrier, well, some of the students could speak English —and our smiles with a little sign language seemed to take care of the rest! We were excited then as we continued to Bolivia, not only to work with contacts, but also to see the small ecclesia that was founded there about a year ago.

Being inland and much higher in the Andes Mountains, La Paz has a temperature that is much cooler; however, the oxygen there is harder to come by! We were greeted by a sun-filled morning, however, which highlighted the unique terrain of La Paz, with massive and snow-covered Mount Illimani dominating the landscape in the distance.

Again there was a great turnout for the public talks. The small meeting hall was filled to capacity on two consecutive nights. The small ecclesia consists of just a few members, including Martin, Laura, Victor Hugo, Roxana and Freddy. While all are in need of support and encouragement from the brotherhood at large, these brothers and sister energized us with their enthusiasm and warm hospitality. Again, the language was not a barrier as Bro. Martin, Sis. Laura and Bro. Victor Hugo speak English quite well, and Bro. Freddy was most patient with us as we smiled and gestured.

With such a small ecclesia, how do they manage? Well, we must mention regular visitors such as Eva, Aleyda, Milton, Nelida and Patricia. These all are Bible students as well and attend the scheduled activities of the ecclesia. If we hadn't known that they were visitors ahead of time we would have assumed that they were brothers and sisters! They greeted us warmly on every occasion, and took part in preparation and clean-up for the hall and refreshments! While a lot of work awaits Bro. Jacob and Sis. Fiona Styles when they arrive for a long-term missionary assignment in July, a rewarding and spiritually strengthening experience awaits them as well.

As we are home now, Sis. Susan and I reflect not only on the "blessings" we have in this country compared to the developing countries of Peru and Bolivia, but also on the enthusiasm for God's word that both our brethren and the contacts

demonstrated in these distant lands. We are motivated once again to value God's truth, to spread the news of His plan to this troubled world, and to support our brothers and sisters in their walks.

May the day be soon when our Lord returns and we are united with those of like precious faith, wherever they may be whether far or near.

Brad Butts (Denver, CO)

Thisisyourbible.com website

There are incredible things happening with the website and we feel the richness of our Lord's blessing on the work. Each month we are thankful to have more than 5,200 "unique" visitors. These visitors view more than 70,000 pages of content! Brother Mike LeDuke, the webmaster for the site, coordinates the answering of more than 200 questions each month that are submitted to the site. Brother Mike is careful to answer each person's question within a 48-hour period.

The site is growing in number of visits, but also, we are highly encouraged by the number of students now on correspondence courses. In May we had another banner month — with 445 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. In the last two months, we have had nearly 750 new correspondence course students, since the inception of the site in January 2006, we've had more than 3,200 new students. If our current rate were to stay flat, we'd anticipate over 5,000 new correspondence course students this year alone!

We have also been blessed with a significant interest in our Christadelphian (CMPA) pamphlets we make available online. We have had almost 29,000 pamphlets downloaded. Many of these downloads are connected to the "Provocative Question of the Month" that we feature on the front page. In June, for example, we are featuring a question about the importance of Israel in God's plan. These questions seem to draw new visitors to our site and they are then directed to the pamphlet that specifically deals with the question.

There have been five baptisms coming directly from the website outreach and, beginning next month, we'll provide a profile of those being baptized along with a picture so you can get to know them.

Want to help?

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

Jan Berneau

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

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 Sis. Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110. Phone: 818-842-2868. jberneau@earthlink.net.

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

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

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

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

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

BEDFORD, NS

Recent visitors have been Bro. John and Sis. Cloe Cave; Theo and Luke (Acocks Green, Birmingham, UK); Bro. David Pearce (Sussex, NB); and Sis. Wendy Johnsen (Nanaimo, BC).

You are invited to our study day, Saturday, October 20, on Daniel 7, with Bro. Brian Luke (Adelaide Brighton, Aust.) at Grand Lake, Oakfield, NS, from 1:30-7:00 pm with supper included. Contact Bro. Michael Carr at 902-820-2532 or by email at buxtoncarr@hotmail.com.

Ronald A. A. Hill

BRANTFORD, ON

We thank Bro. Brian Luke for his ministrations at the end of April. Our ecclesia was uplifted with the word and encouraged on our journey to the kingdom. We enjoyed the company of many brethren and sisters during this time.

With sadness we report the falling asleep in the Lord of Bro. Bill Adkin on May 3, 2007. Bro. Bill was born June 25, 1941, and was baptized February 25, 2002. Bill searched for the truth on his own for years and came to an understanding very similar to Christadelphians. He walked into the Brantford hall one Saturday while it was being cleaned and asked about the truth. He registered for a seminar and was baptized with conviction! He had experienced health problems for a number of years. Our prayers are with his wife, Shelly.

Jonathan Bowen

DOHA, QATAR

Bro. Ben and Sis. Elissa Brinkerhoff have returned to California. There still remains a baptized couple, Bro. Santos and Sis. Saby as well as a few interested contacts who would enjoy hearing from Christadelphians if you visit Doha. If you are traveling to Doha please contact Sis. Sandra Hracs at sandyhracs@hotmail.com for further details.

Steve Hracs

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We are happy to report the baptism of ADAM PHILLIPS, the son of Bro. Daniel and Sis. Robin Phillips, on May 13, 2007. We thank Bro. Adam's grandfathers, Bro. Warren Phillips (Meriden, CT) and Bro. Tom Davis (Pomona, CA) for their words of exhortation and encouragement at this wonderful occasion. Many of Adam's family and friends witnessed his baptism. We pray that God will bless our new brother on his walk to the kingdom.

The Mid-Atlantic Fraternal Gathering was held at Cherry Hill, NJ, on May 19-20, 2007. We thank Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA) for his study, "Road to Atonement."

In recent weeks, we have been blessed by many visitors: Bro. Warren and Sis. Dorothy Phillips (Meriden, CT); Bro. Tom and Sis. Sally Davis (Pomona, CA); Bro. Mark and

Sis. Fiona Guscott and Bro. Andrew and Sis. Kay Powell (Castle Hill, Sydney, Aust.); Sis. Elise Bailey (Georgetown, Guyana); Bro. John Stoss (Moorestown, NJ); and many members of the New York and New Jersey CYCs.

We are encouraged by all the members of the Echo Lake CYC whose many activities are marked by their spirituality, enthusiasm and energy.

As of May 1, 2007, the undersigned became Recording Secretary of the Echo Lake Ecclesia. Please address all communication to David Link, 25 Hanover Place, Wayne, NJ 07470, or email at Dlink44131@aol.com.

David Link

EDMONTON, AB

Our Father continues to bless our lightstand in Edmonton. We rejoice with the angels and joyfully announce the baptism of our friend SHERRI BROBERG on May 12, 2007. Sherri's first contact with the Truth was through her brother, (Bro.) Darryl Sacher of 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.

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

We commend our Bro. Theo and Sis. Joy Readman, by transfer, to the North Battleford Ecclesia in Saskatchewan. 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 also wish to congratulate our Sis. Crystal Readman and Bro. Nathan Bartholomew in their marriage this past September. We commend our Sis. Crystal to her new home with the Vernon Okanagan Ecclesia. May God bless their new life together in the Lord.

We wish to thank all those who 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

HONESDALE, PA

Bro. Albert Bruce fell asleep April 13, 2007, having been ill for some time. He had been a member of the Glendale, PA, Ecclesia, now disbanded for a number of years. Bro. Albert for the most part lived in isolation.

Any brothers or sisters or Sunday school scholars who are traveling through our area are most welcome to attend meeting here.

Gerald Frisbie

MANITOULIN ISLAND, ON

We would like to thank all of the visitors we have had over the past few months from all around Ontario and the United States. We look forward to the visitors we will see over the next few months with the summer and the Bible camps. We would particularly

like to thank all of those brethren who have exhorted us during their visits.

This past March was our Annual Young People's Weekend. Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak) brought to us classes relevant to young and old alike about the moral challenges facing us in the last days. We would like to thank Bro. Ken and Sis. Diane for all of their work, as well as all who travelled from Southern Ontario and Michigan to join us for a wonderful weekend of fellowship around God's word.

We would also like to thank Bro. Dave Noble (North Industry, OH) for his efforts at our spring study day in April. All of the members of our ecclesia were lifted up by his ministrations and the fellowship we had with him, Sis. Amy, and their daughter, Sis. Anna-Lee. God willing, Bro. Tim Young will be leading our fall study day. For details please contact Bro. Dave Wilson.

Our ecclesia rejoiced with Bro. Matthew Cooper on his marriage to Sis. Michelle Clubb of the Detroit (Royal Oak) Ecclesia on May 25, 2007. We welcome Sis. Michelle and look forward to sharing her enthusiasm as we walk together toward the Kingdom.

Joe Cooper

ORLANDO, FL

With sadness we announce the falling asleep of two of our members: Sis. Edna Scott and Bro. John Green. Sis Edna was the wife of Bro. Charles Scott, who died many years ago. They were the parents of Bro. Isaac Scott, a loving son and a valued essential member of this ecclesia. She enjoyed singing hymns and was a very loving person who constantly had encouraging words for the brethren. Bro. John was a quiet brother who worked in a supportive role. He was one of the original members of the Baltimore, MD, Ecclesia. He later moved to Largo, FL, and then to Orlando. Bro. Green did the audio-taping for both the Baltimore and Largo ecclesias. He was also with the audio-video team for both the Mid-Atlantic and Florida Bible schools. He leaves a void as a source of wisdom, guidance and direction in matters of Scriptural truth.

We report that our Sis. Ruth Smith has relocated to Massachusetts since the death of her husband, Bro. Stan Smith. Bro. Stan and Sis. Ruth came to the Orlando area many years ago with Sis. Ruth's mother, Sis. Jesse Forrest. Sis Ruth needed to be closer to family support, and now it is hoped that she will be able to attend her original home ecclesia as often as possible. We pray for our heavenly Father to continue to bless her always.

We have welcomed around our Lord's table the following brothers and sisters: Trevor and Ruth Deedman, and Andrew Meredith (Sunderland, UK); Robert Terry (Reading, UK); Andrew and Sarah Gill (Knowle and Dorwich, UK); Simon Deedman, Kelly Deedman, and Lucy Cooper (Kings Norton, UK); Alice Patrong and June Neblett (Toronto East, ON); Michael and Veronica Porterfield (Norfolk, VA); Lynette Chan and Brenilda Dale (Brooklyn, NY); Jack and Jay Collister (Verdugo Hills, CA); Donald Clark (Orange County, CA); Alan and Chris Mills (Spalding, UK); Annette Milne (Brampton, ON); Dave and Lynn Wilkins, James Wilkins, Natasha Wilkins (Cannock, UK); Howard and June Brooks (Sutton Coldfield, UK); Adrian Harvey (Redditch, UK); George and Joy Butler (The Villages, FL); Neal Kaplan and Emehla Soriano (Reseda, CA); Michael Savy, and Cameron and Tiara Graminie (Westville, South Africa); Al and Sandra Walker (North Bay, ON); Luis and Vanessa Sobers (Colon, Panama); Cory and Krystel Cabril, Brian and Sharon Adams, and Bob and Norley King (Washington, DC); and Maria Jordan and Hannah Stanford (South Barbados).

Grateful thanks to all the brethren who gave wonderful, instructive and uplifting words of exhortation.

Sam Strunk

PETERSBURG, VA

We thank the following visiting brethren for their efforts toward study weekends and gatherings: Bro. Andrew and Sis. Louise Taberner and family (Boston, MA); Bro. Peter and Sis. Shirley Weller, and Bro. Des Manser (Aust.); Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Charlene Bowen and family, and Bro. David and Sis. Nicole Wisniewski and family (Brantford, ON); and Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON).

We appreciate visiting speakers and their families including: Bro. Ryan and Sis. Julia Mutter, Bro. Bill, Jr. and Sis. Carol Link and family, and Bro. John Woodward and son, Chase (Baltimore, MD); Bro. Peter Evans (Aust.); Bro. Hal and Sis. Stephanie Gibson, and Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC); and Bro. Brian and Sis. Joyce O'Grady (NZ).

Other visitors that we have been blessed with include Bro. Tom and Sis. Miriam Brittle and son, John (Washington, DC); Bro. Ezra Link (Baltimore, MD); Bro. Dan Minion (Meriden, CT); Bro. Greg and Sis. Stephanie Gergle and son, Jordan (Raleigh/Cary, NC); Bro. David Porterfield and Bro. Jeff Lange (Norfolk, VA); Bro. Curtis Brittle, Bro. David and Sis. Davida Mutter (James River, VA); Bro. Jon Perry (Milford Road, MI); Bro. Matthew Link (Washington, DC); Bro. Bruce and Sis. Barb Abel (Shelburne, ON); Sis. Rachel Wilson (Cambridge, ON); and Sis. Nancy-Jean Markwith (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON). We were also pleased to welcome Sis. Penny Keeting (Toronto Ossington Ave., ON); Bro. Scott Mezza, Sis. Lauren Burns, and Bro. Matthew King (Richmond Chapel, VA); and Sis. Ann King (Richmond Hall, VA).

Surely the angels rejoiced, as did we, in witnessing a wonderful confession of faith and assisting CONNOR KERR in her baptism into Christ, on January 14, 2006.

Changes in membership have occurred as follows: Bro. Aaron King has transferred to the Washington, DC, Ecclesia, and Bro. Sandy and Sis. Janice Piskura have transferred to the James River, VA, Ecclesia. Sis. Suzanne Scott, now married to her recently baptized husband, and Bro. Ty and Sis. Shannon Elsea have resigned for various reasons from the Petersburg Ecclesia and the Amended Fellowship, and joined the Richmond Chapel, VA (Unamended) Ecclesia.

Our outreach efforts have included a Learn to Read the Bible Effectively seminar in Spring 2006, and a three-lecture series on "The Middle East Crisis in Light of Bible Prophecy" in Fall 2006. These were publicized by leafleting conducted during the Young People's Gathering.

God willing, Petersburg plans include the Young People's Gathering led by Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON) on October 6-7, 2007 on the subject "Joseph".

Dave Kerr

SAN DIEGO, CA

Lord willing, from June 6 to September 26, 2007 our mid-week, Wednesday, class will rotate among member homes. There is no class on July 25, 2007. Visitors should call ahead of time to find the site of each week's class. Here are several numbers to use. Ellis at 858-674-5645; Schlottman at 858-549-8606; or Jane Tunnell at 760-746-1751.

Howard Schlottman

SPRINGFIELD, MA

Since our last correspondence we have enjoyed the fellowship of Sis. Barbara Ryan (New York); Bro. Jason and Sis. Debbie Cicero (Meriden, CT); Bro. Bob Egles (Stoughton, MA); and Sis. Katie Setkewich (Stoughton, MA). We sincerely appreciate the exhortations by Bre. Cicero and Egles.

We welcome the transfer to our ecclesia of: Bro. Richard and Sis. Elizabeth Schenk from Sarasota, FL, and Sis. Ruth Smith from Orlando, FL.

We are continuing our seminar follow-up classes and currently have six interested participants. We pray that these efforts will bear fruit.

Clarence Wrenn

Advancement of Scripture Knowledge Atlantic

For a number of years there has been talk of forming an ASK group in the Atlantic provinces to assist the needs of the brethren and sisters here and to coordinate the outreach programs of the ecclesias in the area. A number of meetings have taken place starting in September of 2003. At the October 21, 2006 meeting, a formal constitution and mandate for ASKA was voted on and approved by all members present. The participating ecclesias are St. John's, NF, Sussex, NB, and Bedford, NS.

Our mission statement is as follows: Advancement of Scripture Knowledge Atlantic, referred to hereafter as ASKA, is a representative group of the Christadelphian ecclesias located in Atlantic Canada that meet under the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith. The mission of ASKA is to provide a service of coordinating activities and assisting the ecclesias with the resources needed to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God in the Atlantic provinces. In addition, ASKA is in a position to provide opportunities to support ecclesias and isolated brethren and sisters, by promoting or coordinating activities for fellowship, edification, and learning in the word of God.

Committee meetings take place in an Amherst, NS, hotel facility three times a year where representatives of Sussex and Bedford are able, via video link-up with St John's, to conduct an active exchange of ideas and experiences. The meetings have greatly served to bring about a real sense of regional cohesiveness and fellowship in this area of our Lord's vineyard. We pray that our heavenly Father will continue to bless the work in Atlantic Canada, so that others may know of the wonderful hope He has held out to those who would hear and believe.

Any correspondence should be directed to the secretary on behalf of the committee: Bro. Michael Carr, 120 Viewmount Drive, Head of St. Margaret's Bay, NS, B3Z 2G2. He may also be emailed at buxtoncarr@hotmail.com.

Christadelphian Hymns

A new website is available at www.christadelphianmusic.org.

It contains the music to all 438 Christadelphian hymns lovingly recorded by Bro. Peter Clausen (Cleveland, OH, CGAF). Ecclesias without a pianist can download these hymns for use in worship services and other activities. Individual brothers and sisters may also enjoy downloading the music for their listening enjoyment. Please feel free to direct any questions to Bro. Jeff Gelineau at jeff@gelineau.org.

"From Eden Lost to Eden Restored"

Three Region study weekends — "From Eden Lost to Eden Restored: The Amazing Framework of God's Prophetic Purpose" — will commence in New England October 6, 2007.

The correct basis for prophecy was revealed at the foundation of the world, where God established the framework on which the entire prophetic structure hangs. When this is grasped it becomes a benchmark against which all prophetic views can be tested and measured.

This series will provide detailed, convincing scriptural proof for our prophetic expectations in the context of this framework, and an update on exciting current events in several areas that are consistent with our understanding.

The objective of our weekend is to send brethren home thrilled with the soundness of our prophetic understanding, moved by the signs of the times, and determined to prepare for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ with even greater fervency!

The presenting brother will be Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch, NZ). The weekend will be presented in three successive regions as follows:

(1) October 6-7, 2007, New England: contact Bro. Joshua McInturff at joshandtiff@gsinet.net or 603-774-6237

(2) October 13-14, 2007, New Jersey/New York: contact Bro. Jonathan Link at Jonlink@optonline.net or 973-633-8534

(3) October 20-21, 2007, Williamsburg, VA: contact Bro. Jordan Canady at jordancanady5@hotmail.com or 804-365-8512

Manitoulin Island Appeal

The Bible Camp committee wishes to thank the North American brotherhood for their generous donations last year in response to the appeal that appeared in the September issue of *The Christadelphian Tidings*. $30,000 CAN was raised allowing for the completion of phase one of the construction of a new classroom in time for use at the 2006 camps.

Tidings readers will be aware of a new camp being planned for this summer, God willing, thereby utilizing the facilities for an additional week this year. In spite of this, overall registrations continue to grow for each of the 2007 camps.

Recently the appeal was widened to include all Australia, NZ, and UK ecclesias listed in the ALS diary. The committee wishes to thank our overseas brethren for the $15,000 CAN raised to date, towards the $75,000 CAN needed to complete phase two of the expansion of the main meeting hall.

The main pavilion was designed 34 years ago to seat comfortably 150 to 200 people, and it has served the camp attendees well over the years. However, registrations for Kid's Camp, Family Camp and Youth Conference this year all easily exceed this capacity.

Any additional assistance an ecclesia or an individual brother or sister could render to the camp towards this project would be greatly appreciated. If you are able to help, please send your donations, made payable to the "Christadelphian Bible Camp", care of: Bro. Brian Carrick, 9 Sir Raymond Drive, Scarborough, ON, Canada M1E 1C1. He may be contacted by email at lcarrick@rogers.com.

Canadian brothers and sisters who donate will be issued a receipt for income tax

purposes. Donations made by cheque in foreign currencies can be deposited directly into the camp's bank account without charge. The Bible Camp committee looks forward to hearing from you.

Alex Browning

New England Bible Study Weekend

God willing, a Bible study weekend is planned at Barton Center, Oxford, MA, for November 9-11, 2007.

The adult speaker for the weekend will be Bro. Ron Kidd (London, ON) on the subject, "Samson: Strength out of Weakness". There will be separate classes for the teens. Teen teacher and subject will be announced later.

The Barton Center is a beautiful location with a new conference center in which the classes are held. There are two different types of accommodation. Dorm accommodation is in log cabins containing approximately 18 beds (no bunks) with some privacy. Cabins typically have two or more bathrooms that include showers.

There are private rooms in the main lodge that are set aside for husband and wife couples on a first-come, first-served basis. These rooms require a tuition surcharge, as we do not use these to their fullest capacity. There are washbasins in each room and very good bathroom facilities at the end of the hall.

Meals are prepared and served by volunteers attending the weekend. This offers a great opportunity to help out in loving service to each other.

Cost for the weekend will be $106 per person double occupancy in the conference center building. Cabin costs will be $86 per person for adults and $76 per person for young people ages 12-19.

Day registrations are only accepted if we do not exceed the total number of attendees that we can hold in the dining room and main hall. God willing, notices and registration information will be sent out in late August to previous attendees and nearby ecclesias.

We look forward to another spiritually rewarding weekend around the word of God in fellowship with our brethren, sisters and young people.

For further information please contact Bro. Craig Nevers at craignev@cox.net; or Sis. Judith Nevers at jnevers@verizon.net.

Judith Nevers

New USA Christadelphian Sunday School Union Materials Distributor

You can now order Sunday school lessons from CSSU and have them sent from within the US. CSSU has a website: www.cssu.org.uk.

When you enter the site, enter your information and it will format the site according to US prices and will send the order to Karen. Karen will send the order according to your preferred shipping method.

CSSU materials are developed and published in the UK and offer a variety of lessons, quizzes, color books and other age-appropriate materials. Karen carries a fairly complete inventory of the most commonly ordered and used items. Order soon to have your materials for the upcoming year. If you have any questions, please email Karen at karencssuorders@yahoo.com; or phone her at 503-641-0760.

Sis. Marjorie Shaw

Our sister Marge Shaw, age 87, fell asleep in the Lord on February 10, 2007, after a long illness. "Auntie Marge" devoted her life to the care of others in and around the Detroit area, both the young and elderly, and was always present to lend a helping hand. Now asleep, she awaits the Lord's return and the establishment of His glorious Kingdom when sorrow, pain and death will pass away. May we all share her prayer that we be reunited soon with our loved ones.

Bro. and Sis. David Shaw

Minute Meditation

The majority is not always right

Giordano Bruno said, "Truth does not change because it is not believed by a majority of the people." To this William Penn would agree, for he said, "Right is right, even if everyone is against it, and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it."

Prior to Columbus discovering America, people believed that the earth was flat. Thinking so did not make it so. What everyone believes is true can be wrong, and the belief in a flat earth is one example. It can be really dangerous to agree with the beliefs of the majority, for in most things important the majority is wrong.

For example, think how many people lived on the earth at the time of Noah. One mathematician has calculated it to be one billion, thirty million people, using the genealogy in Genesis 5 to draw his conclusion. The number of people was about the same as the population of the world in about 1830, which is a lot of people compared to the eight who entered the ark. All those people ignored the preaching of Noah, probably dismissing him as a crackpot religious fanatic, and all those people were wrong — and as a result they all died.

Consider how many of the children of Israel actually entered the Promised Land at the time of the Exodus. If there were over 600,000 men who left Egypt under the command of Moses, there must have been at least an equal number of women. That would make one million two hundred thousand. Then if they had an average of only two children each, we could add another one million two hundred thousand, bringing the total to at least two million four hundred thousand. Now, of those that were numbered, only two, we are told, entered the Promised Land. Those two, Joshua and Caleb, tried unsuccessfully to convince the vast majority of the people of Israel to go on and possess the land with the help of God. Joshua and Caleb were right, for they knew that God would bring them in successfully. The rest of the people, the majority who doubted, were wrong. Those who were wrong all died, paying with their lives for their error, just as those who were wrong in the time of Noah did.

It can be dangerous to be wrong. We cannot assume we are in the right just be-

cause we are in the minority, but we certainly do not want to support our opinion because it agrees with what the majority thinks.

So how do we find out what is right on any given subject? We must let the facts speak. When it comes to salvation, the facts that are necessary to be believed are all in God's inspired word found in our Bible. We dare not change, ignore or add to what God has said.

The closing words in Revelation contain this warning: "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."

We need to understand that we need to be right when it comes to believing what God has commanded, no matter who or how many tell us differently. There are so many churches yet only one truth because people down through the ages have done what was right in their own eyes. Solomon tells us, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." The fact that there are billions of people alive today who believe that man does not really die but simply makes a transition of some sort does not make it so. People who disregard the commandments in the Bible as being old-fashioned and unnecessary will pay for their error just as those in error did at the time of Noah. We must be willing to stand up for what is right in spite of the opposition we receive from the vast majority. We want to be like Noah or Joshua and Caleb, who were preserved because they were faithful to the Truth.

Isaiah tells us, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." For this reason we must adopt the same attitude as did those in Berea so long ago when they heard Paul speak to them. We are told that "the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."

Notice the Bereans did more than just read the Bible — they examined the Scriptures, and they did it every day. They carefully examined to make sure that what Paul was preaching to them was true. Let us be like them and check that our beliefs are true to the scriptures. We should not be discouraged when everyone around us believes the opposite of what the Bible teaches because they haven't bothered to check.

How do we deal with all those people around us, our neighbors and co-workers, who have false beliefs and are convinced that they are correct? Here is Paul's advice as to how we should conduct ourselves: "And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses."

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

JULY

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

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

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

22-28 Pacific Coast Bible School, Idyllwild, CA. Bro. Matthew Blewett (Durban, South Africa): "Finding Faith"; Bro. Kitson Reid (Birmingham, UK): "The Hand of God in our Lives"; and Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco, CA): "That I Might Know Him". Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065 mail@gelineau. org or Bro. Gary Patterson garympatterson@hotmail.com or visit our website at www.californiabibleschool.org

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

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

28-August 4 New York Family Camp Lake Taghkanic, NY. Theme: "Today's Youth; Tomorrow's Ecclesia". Contact Bro. Gideon Drepaul yerubbaal@yahoo.com

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

AUGUST

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

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

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

SEPTEMBER

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

8 Hamilton Greenaway, ON 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.

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

OCTOBER

6 Brantford, ON Thanksgiving Fraternal Gathering, Copetown Community Centre. Bro. Brian Luke (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 at 780-453-1412 jeromet@telusplanet.net

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

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
P.O. Box 530696 • Livonia, MI 48153-0696
Periodicals Postage Paid at San Dimas, California

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

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

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

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

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

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 70 **August, 2007** **No. 7**

Editorial — What is real? 315
Sis. Pat Bartle, *Don Styles* *318*
319 Exhortation — Dedicated to Serving, *Jonathan Lawrence* 319
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:
(7) The resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, *Tom Barling*.....322
Bible Study — Rightly Dividing the Word:
(6) Varying "Weights", *Bob Green*.....327
Coming Events — "We object...", *Jim Dillingham* 332
Reflections:
Famous Last Words:
(11) Sarah, *Chris Sales* 335
Jesus' Unlikely Conversions,
(2) Malchus, *Wesley Booker* 336
Scenes in a Country Cemetery, *George Booker* 338
The Many Aspects of Love, *Rob Webb* 340
A Virtuous Woman 344
Letters — Distraction and music; *America the Beautiful*;
Bruce Metzger; Simon and the cross; Preaching from jail 345
Bible Mission News — CBMA/CBMC Country Listing;
Thisisyourbible.com website.....351
News & Notices.....355
Minute Meditation — Green and growing, *Robert J. Lloyd*.....361
Coming Events 362

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Editor: George Booker; Assistant Editor: Donald H. Styles

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060) is published monthly by The Christadelphian Tidings, 42076 Hartford Drive, Canton, MI 48187-3360. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID at San Dimas, California. POSTMASTER: Return Service Requested to The Christadelphian Tidings, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696.

Tidings Publishing Corporation: Joe Hill (Chairman), John C. Bilello, Peter A. Bilello, Steve Cheetham, Ken Curry, Clive Drepaul, Mark Giordano, Tony Isaacs, Ted Sleeper, Phil Snobelen, Ken Sommerville, Jeff Wallace.

The Tidings is published on the 25th of the month for the month following. Items for publication must be received by the 10th of the month. Correspondence to the Editor: George Booker, 2500 Berwyn Circle, Austin, TX 78745-3559. E-mail: editor@tidings.org. Administrator: Rose Madge: rm_madge@yahoo.com. Production Editor: Kathy Hill. Home page: www.tidings.org. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF.

Subscriptions

United States: $20, Canada: $28. Checks payable to ***The Tidings*** and sent to P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to the same address. Changes of address and other subscription matters to Rose Madge at the above address or by e-mail at rm_madge@yahoo.com. **Australia: $39.** Mail checks to Fran Caudery, 35 Jeffery Street, Blackburn, VIC 3130. **New Zealand: $39.** Mail checks to John Beer, P.O. Box 559, Te Awamutu 3840. **South Africa: 140 ZAR.** Mail checks to Anthony Oosthuizen, P.O. Box 50357, Durban 4062. **United Kingdom: £14.** Mail checks to Malcolm Cross, Grange Farm, East Cottingwith, York YO42 4TB.

"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 "chasid", 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 (NECRCOC).

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.
Nashua, NH 03062
rschwarz@verizon.net
603-891-0224

Correspondence with the New England Christradelphian Religious Conscientious Objection Committee can be directed to:

NECRCOC Chairman
Bro. Paul Haughton
148 Missouri Dr.
Warwick, RI 02886
pnchaughton@cox.net
401-739-3410

NECRCOC Secretary
Bro. Jim Dillingham
123 Stark Hwy. So.
Dunbarton, NH 03046
bible888@aol.com
603-774-7385

Jim Dillingham(Dunbarton, NH)

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 surpassesd 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 editoral "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

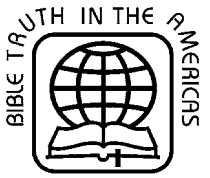
as he could. However, he had found a defective book. The pages for Lesson #15 and #16 were double printed so he could not do those lessons; it is no wonder someone discarded the book. Thomas went through and finished the whole book, except for those lessons. I sent him a new book and he was able to finish 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 amoung 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 Wisnieswski (Ontario, Canada). kidscampcalifornia.com or Bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com

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

SEPTEMBER

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

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

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

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

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

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
P.O. Box 530696 • Livonia, MI 48153-0696
Periodicals Postage Paid at San Dimas, California

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 waltdodrill@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

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 70 **September, 2007** **No. 8**

Editorial — What I don't know **367**
Bible Study — Careless talk can be dangerous!, *Stephen Whitehouse* **371**
Exhortation — Heating the Frog Slowly, *Ken Sommerville* **372**
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:
(8) Rescued by God's grace in the Lord Jesus, *Tom Barling* **376**
Bible Study — Rightly Dividing the Word:
(7) An Open Mind is Essential, *Bob Green* **380**
Bible Study — Little Words that Mean a Lot
(1) Prologue, *John C. Bilello* **384**
Difficult Words in the King James Version **389**
Letters — "Greater lov'd..."; "Decently and in order" **393**
Current Events — News from the Promised Land **395**
Bible Mission News — Vacation Bible School; "My Experiences":
Truth Corp; Thisyourbible.com; Costa Rica and Panama **398**
News & Notices **406**
Minute Meditation — Fired with Enthusiasm, *Robert J. Lloyd* **413**
Coming Events **414**

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Editor: George Booker; Assistant Editor: Donald H. Styles

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060) is published monthly by The Christadelphian Tidings, 42076 Hartford Drive, Canton, MI 48187-3360. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID at San Dimas, California. POSTMASTER: Return Service Requested to The Christadelphian Tidings, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696.

Tidings Publishing Corporation: Joe Hill (Chairman), John C. Bilello, Peter A. Bilello, Steve Cheetham, Ken Curry, Clive Drepaul, Mark Giordano, Tony Isaacs, Ted Sleeper, Phil Snobelen, Ken Sommerville, Jeff Wallace.

The Tidings is published on the 25th of the month for the month following. Items for publication must be received by the 10th of the month. Correspondence to the Editor: George Booker, 2500 Berwyn Circle, Austin, TX 78745-3559. E-mail: editor@tidings.org. Administrator: Rose Madge: rm_madge@yahoo.com. Production Editor: Kathy Hill. Home page: www.tidings.org. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF.

Subscriptions

United States: $20, Canada: $28. Checks payable to ***The Tidings*** and sent to P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to the same address. Changes of address and other subscription matters to Rose Madge at the above address or by e-mail at rm_madge@yahoo.com. **Australia: $39.** Mail checks to Fran Caudery, 35 Jeffery Street, Blackburn, VIC 3130. **New Zealand: $39.** Mail checks to John Beer, P.O. Box 559, Te Awamutu 3840. **South Africa: 140 ZAR.** Mail checks to Anthony Oosthuizen, P.O. Box 50357, Durban 4062. **United Kingdom: £14.** Mail checks to Malcolm Cross, Grange Farm, East Cottingwith, York YO42 4TB.

The "Immortal" Jew

"If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute one percent of the human race. This suggests a nebulous dim puff of stardust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, and has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine and abstract learning are way out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. The Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away. The Greek and Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone. Other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

Mark Twain, ***Concerning the Jews, 1898.***

Editorial

What I Don't Know

Solomon ben Judah (also known by his Arabic name, Suleiman ibn Jabirol) lived in Moorish Spain about a thousand years ago. Among the wise sayings attributed to him is this:

There are four types of men in this world:

1. *The man who knows, and knows that he knows; he is wise, so consult him.*
2. *The man who knows, but doesn't know that he knows; help him not to forget what he knows.*
3. *The man who knows not, and knows that he knows not; teach him.*
4. *Finally, there is the man who knows not but pretends that he knows; he is a fool, so avoid him.*

There is much wisdom in this Solomon's saying, as there is in those from the greater Solomon for whom he was named. The irony is that, in our lives, and perhaps at this very moment, any of us may fall into — not just one — but as many as all four of these categories... at the very same time!

How so? For one, the wisest of men or women (in any single endeavor or field) may be abysmally ignorant of certain other useful knowledge. The greatest philosopher, or professor, or physician may need, from time to time, the knowledge and expertise of the skilled plumber, or auto mechanic, or gardener. And it is a truly wise man who "knows that he knows not", and is still willing to learn, or to appreciate and put to use the wisdom of others.

My father used to speak fondly of an older Christadelphian preacher who was very well educated — like Saul of Tarsus, both in secular and religious knowledge. But, for all his accomplishments, he was nevertheless genuinely interested in what any man or woman could tell him that he didn't know — whether it pertained to the Bible, or farming or food preparation.

Then, for another, there is the brother who knows a very great deal about the Bible, but cannot bring himself to admit that there is a single question for which he has no answer. Years ago, a brother was teaching at a Christadelphian Bible school, along with an older brother very well-known (and justly so) for his knowledge and speaking ability. During the course of a question-and-answer session, the younger brother replied to one question with a simple "I don't know", whereupon the older brother stepped in and gave a long, though somewhat rambling and beside-the-point, "answer".

Afterward, the older brother chastened the younger brother who "didn't know", telling him in no uncertain terms: "***Never*** say you don't know. If necessary, ignore the first question and pose a ***different*** question, and then answer ***that one...*** but ***never*** say you don't know!"

We might ask, 'Why would a man who doesn't know something... pretend he does?' And the answer can scarcely be flattering.

But then we realize — if we are honest, I think — that there have been times when every one of us has pretended to know something he or she did not know — because of pride, convenience, desperation, fear, laziness, or some other reason yet.

But were we the better off for "knowing not" but pretending we knew? Or were we foolish in forfeiting the opportunity to learn something else?

This brings me to a piece of advice. (If it applies to you, very well. If it doesn't, feel free to ignore it.) This advice has to do with the...

PAPATSQ

What is a PAPATSQ? (Pronounce this "pah-pats-cue", by the way.)

It is simply this: **P**roposed **A**ll-**P**urpose **A**nswer **T**o **S**peculative **Q**uestions...

Do not be afraid to use as necessary. Life will go on even if you say (or write, or think) the following 15 times in a day.

Get ready.

Here it comes.

The PAPATSQ... is... drum roll... bugles...

"I don't know."

Try it. Savor each word individually. Practice it (in front of the mirror, perhaps) until the words flow smoothly.

You might use it first with family members, in the privacy of your own home.

Then, when you feel comfortable with that, try it out on good friends. (They may gasp at first, or laugh out loud, but don't mind them; just keep at it.)

Finally, you'll be ready to use it in public... at a Bible class, or with your brothers and sisters.

I know it's tough in the beginning. But every journey of discovery begins with those three little words.

Why don't we try a whisper first... very softly now: ***"I don't know."***

There now... that didn't hurt too much, did it?

"Knowing the Truth"

It is true we "know the Truth", that is, the fundamentals of the gospel message. But it would be foolish to suppose that, having learned (or more likely been taught!) those fundamentals, we are thereby inoculated against ever believing anything that is untrue! Furthermore, if we appropriate to ourselves any merit in "knowing the Truth" — that is, if we suppose this elevates us above others, intellectually or morally or spiritually — then we may well develop a highly-inflated opinion of

ourselves. We might even come to think we need not examine, or re-examine, what we believe and why we believe it. That can be very dangerous.

Such an attitude of pride or arrogance may cause us to close our eyes and ears to other things our Lord would have us learn. The Pharisees of Jesus' day knew so very much about the Bible, but when Jesus came to enlighten them further (and in some very important areas, by the way, such as his Messiahship), they simply could not believe they were "blind" to anything worth knowing. "Are we blind too?" they asked. And Jesus replied to them,

> *"If you were [truly] blind, you would not be guilty of sin [for you would have the excuse of ignorance], but now that you claim you can see [all things?], your guilt remains" (John 9:40,41).*

The irony is that the man born blind could see so much more, from the very moment his natural eyes were opened, than the Pharisees had ever seen with their perfectly good natural vision! And the outcome, wonderful for the one but tragically sad for the others, was this: the blind man ***did*** see, while those who ***claimed*** they could see remained in their own self-imposed darkness (v. 39).

But if we can continue to admit to ourselves, and to others, that we "don't know it all" — even after leaving the "world" behind, and even after many years in the Truth — then we may find new "doors" opening to us each and every day. And they will be "doors" to greater knowledge: whether knowledge of God, or of His purpose, or of the world around us, or even of ourselves (self-knowledge being one of the greatest gifts God can give us).

In Ezekiel's vision of the great Temple to come, he saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple, and proceeding toward the east. And as he surveyed the stream, he saw that it was first "ankle-deep" (Ezek. 47:1-3), then "knee-deep", then "up to the waist" (v. 4), and finally "deep enough to swim in" (v. 5). So it is with the Word of God that, like a life-giving stream, flows out from His Temple! While it offers life to all who approach it, it has at the same time shallows where a little child may safely wade, and also depths where even a grown man will need to swim.

If we are afraid of the deeper water, then we will — like the little child — only splash about in the "safest" places. But if we venture into the "depths" of God's Word, we may learn so much more... provided we don't mind giving up our comfortable footing on the bottom — and provided we don't mind praying the prayer: 'Lord, I don't understand this; help me to understand better!'

What I don't know

Now, when we understand there are things we don't know, we are ready to be taught — and that is a wonderful thing. In fact, it may prove wonderful in either of two ways:

Firstly, as mentioned above, we may more readily learn something we didn't know before, and we'll be the better for learning it.

Secondly, and at least as importantly: we may recognize there are certain things

we don't know — certain things for which we cannot, or do not need to, devise good "answers"! Then we'll be the better for realizing the limitations of our knowledge.

I won't presume to speak for anyone else, but here begins a list of (a few of the) things I don't know! These are items, I believe, that fall into the second category above. Should I worry or despair that I ***don't*** know these things? Or can I learn something very worthwhile by coming to see what I really ***don't*** know?

I'll let you be the judge.

Details of as-yet-unfulfilled prophecies:

Now this item could go on to a great number of particulars, but I'll content myself with quoting a couple of passages here:

> *"No one knows about that day and hour [when the Kingdom of God will come], not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Matt. 24:36; cp. Mark 13:32,33,35).*

What is interesting is how many times this statement of Jesus is repeated, in his parables about the Second Coming and the Judgment for example (Matt. 24:42,44,50; 25:13), as well as in his last message to John (Rev. 3:3). One might almost conclude — on the basis of the number of passages alone — that this uncertainty about dates is ***the*** "first principle" of Bible prophecy!

> *"It is not for you to know the times or dates [when the kingdom will be restored to Israel, that] the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:7; cp. Zech. 14:7).*

Surely this is a case where the lesser is incorporated into the greater. If we do not know, now, the "day" nor the "hour" nor the "time" nor the "date" ("season" in KJV) when Christ will come... then we can hardly be expected to know the times (or the details, or the order) of the events that must (might? may?) happen as a run-up or immediate prelude to that Coming.

Of course we can, and ought to, have some general sense of the "signs of the times" in which we live. But what dangers might lurk in encouraging (in others as well as in ourselves) the feeling that we ***ought*** to know the whole itinerary of the LORD and His Son (an itinerary that, as stated above, the Father has set by His own authority). Worse yet, the feeling that we are unworthy disciples if we can't be absolutely sure about the precise order of events leading up to our Lord's return.

One thing we ***do*** know for sure: "We will all stand before God's judgment seat" (Rom. 14:10), "in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 4:1), and there we will answer for how we have treated the least of Christ's brethren (Matt. 25:40,45).

Another thing we ***do*** know: the servant who thinks he has it all figured out, and believes that his master is staying away for a while yet, may think he has enough time "to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards", and still

have time left over, when he is finished with all that, to prepare for his master's arrival. And such a servant may well be wrong (Matt. 24:48-51). How much better would he have been ***not*** to "know" when his master was coming, but to work steadily each day on the most positive and helpful enterprise he can think of, in a state of continual readiness for that great event.

As a matter of fact, I have come to see there are so many things I don't know, that I feel obliged — Lord willing —to continue this discussion next month.

George Booker

Bible Study

Careless talk can be dangerous!

Some people are known to possess a strong view on just about any subject, whatever it may be! One would never hear them say, "Sorry, I don't know much about that", or simply, "I don't know." Instead they just launch themselves into their response, without a moment's hesitation!

Obviously none of us would like to be viewed in such a way. If we knew that people thought we were like this then, no doubt, we would feel somewhat embarrassed. We therefore need to weigh up and evaluate what we say to each other — both in terms of the words we use and the manner in which we communicate them. The Book of Proverbs offers many constructive guidelines to assist us. Here are just a few to mull over in our minds:

- *Sometimes the wisest course of action is actually to remain silent (11:12; 17:27,28).* Patience and restraint are both key components of wisdom. A wise person knows enough to keep silent when there is nothing to say. Restraint in speech is a mark of true wisdom.
- *Talking about others — especially after being entrusted with something private and confidential — is wrong (11:13).* A faithful friend conceals a private matter but an unfaithful one reveals it. The unfaithful one gathers personal secrets and then acts as a gossiper, going from house to house, spreading strictly confidential information (cp. 1 Tim. 5:13).
- *Often it's not so much what we say, but the manner in which we say it, that causes problems (15:1,2).* Words can achieve very noble ends. A wise person will use his words to strengthen, encourage, and edify — speaking "a word in season" (Isa. 50:4). Kind words, gentle expressions, delivered with compassion and understanding, can often defuse a heated, and potentially volatile, situation. For instance, the Ephraimites were appeased by Gideon's mild reply (Judg. 8) and David by Abigail's reverent manner (1 Sam. 25). But sneering, arrogant, and overbearing words can stir up a hornet's nest! Just think of the damage caused by the explosive words spoken by Nabal to David's servants, or Rehoboam to the people of Israel (1 Kings 12). Hence, these two different approaches can result in two very different outcomes!

- *Being a good listener is something we should all try hard to become (18:2).* Compulsive talkers never listen! They desire to publicly display their knowledge and understanding — to parade and showcase their talents — so that they may be thought of as being wise and intelligent. In reality, they merely expose themselves as arrogant and ignorant!
- *Our mouths can get us into trouble, so we need to watch what we say (18:6,7).* A mark of a fool is his contentious and aggressive character. A fool constantly goads others for a fight! A fool will even try to defend himself — attempting to preserve his tarnished reputation — but instead will end up uttering things that, frankly, should not be spoken! So he becomes further and further entangled. His foolish words will eventually destroy him, for every idle word spoken will be judged at the Judgment Seat by the Lord Jesus Christ (cp. Matt. 12:35).
- *Before an opinion is expressed we need to have all the facts at hand; otherwise, we will bring shame upon ourselves (18:13).* The fool is impatient. He interrupts before all the information has been presented, and then acts upon it in a rash and thoughtless way! He responds without weighing up the situation and thinking through the implications of his decided course of action. He ends up judging a particular brother or sister on a specific matter, or taking a certain line or viewpoint before being in possession of all the hard facts. The lesson is that we are to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (Jam. 1:19).

So here we have a number of valuable guidelines on how we should speak and behave with each other. They will help to ensure that our spoken words are always "with grace" and "seasoned with salt" (Col. 4:6). Indeed, all our words are to be pure, wholesome and well balanced. This is to be our lifetime endeavour and aspiration. And if a situation ever arises that calls upon us to be silent, then we should be prepared to hold our tongue.

Stephen Whitehouse (Watford, UK)

Exhortation

Heating the Frog Slowly

As the story goes, if you attempt to drop a frog in a pot of boiling water it will hop out the minute it hits the water and feels the life-threatening temperature. But if you put the frog in the pot while the water is just at room temperature and raise the temperature gradually, then by the time the frog becomes aware that it has a serious problem it will be too late. The heat of the water will have sapped its strength to such a degree that it can no longer save itself.

Gradualization

What an example of the power of gradualization. The plight of the frog illustrates this phenomenon. It produces a very negative result — at least from the frog's

perspective! However, the principle of gradualization can work for us as well as against us. Major changes occur in our lives little by little, and if they are slow enough, we do not even see them when they occur. True, if they are hurting us, we may not realize it. But, also true, if beneficial changes take only a little effort from us every day, then we do not mind too much. Nothing living remains status quo. We are growing weaker or stronger every day. This is an unavoidable factor in our lives. It is like the law of gravity.

Physical "hot water"

What happens to us if we gain one ounce a week starting at age 30? Two candy bars a week over our normal intake should just about do it. That is only one pound every 16 weeks. Who would notice? No one during the first few weeks, and a one-pound change from one weigh-in to another is not of concern in any event. And four pounds in one year would not raise any alarms. However, in five years we are up 20 pounds. By age 40 we are 40 pounds overweight, and you can do the math from there on. Clearly at some point we will change our eating habits, or our aging body will change them for us in the form of dietary changes mandated by diabetes, elevated cholesterol, high blood pressure, etc. We will either discipline ourselves, or we will be disciplined by events... but we will be disciplined.

In this sense discipline, like gradualization, is also a law that governs our existence like the law of gravity. (In fact, it may help us accept our responsibility for self-imposed discipline if we realize that, at the end of the day, we do not have any choice in the matter... we ***will*** be disciplined. Who would we rather have do it, ourselves or someone/something else?)

We can help ourselves gradually as well. "Bodily exercise profiteth ***little,"*** the apostle said (1 Tim. 4:8). But he did not say it does ***not*** profit. Its importance cannot be compared with spiritual exercise, and certainly we should not spend more time at a gym than we spend in service to our God. But a certain amount of it is important. And it needs to be done faithfully, little by little, but regularly. Nothing can completely stop the effects of mortality on our frames but we can, over the course of time, gradually affect our bodies very favorably if we exercise.

Financial "hot water"

The insidious effect of 18% interest on credit card debt is a classic example of gradualization. Quite a number of brothers and sisters have abused their credit card usage in the course of satisfying the desire to "have more". When family troubles reach the point that they surface at the arranging board level, very often the problems are greatly exacerbated by "maxed-out" credit cards — with the family now owing $20,000 to $40,000 and being totally unable to make the payments. One does not have to be a mathematician to understand the numbers involved, but one does have to ***want*** to understand.

Interest of 18% on $20,000 is $3,600 a year — $300 per month. If that is all you can pay towards your debt you will never, ever pay anything on the $20,000 principal. You will be paying nothing but the interest for the rest of your life. The servant in Israel could, under the law, elect to become a lifetime slave in his

master's household, by having a hole bored in his ear (Exod. 21:5,6). Credit cards give us a modern opportunity to let Visa or MasterCard bore a hole in our ear and make us a servant for life!

And this all can happen to us gradually. Like the frog, by the time we recognize the seriousness of our plight, we can be in so deep that we cannot get out without extreme difficulty. (While we have little sympathy for losses credit companies incur because of their all-too-liberal lending policies, innocent vendors can be hurt as well.) Heeding the oft-repeated commands against covetousness, and implementing in our daily lives the Scriptural exhortations to be "diligent in business" and "consider the ant" and not be as the "slothful man", will keep us out of hot water.

But by gradually putting some money aside each year we can change our lives for the better. Someone once said, 'The poor man never can really comprehend the effects of compound interest.' What if we put that same $300 per month ($3,600 a year) in the bank — instead of in Visa's bank — they have enough! Let us say it earns 5% interest for 20 years. How much would we have? The answer is $118,918. In 30 years, the sum would grow to $239,180. In our bank! Results achieved gradually can help us as well as hurt us.

Spiritual "hot water"

Our real point, however, is how seriously we can be affected spiritually by the gradual deterioration of social values around us, and yet not realize it.

What did Balaam tell Balak and the Moabites to do in order to weaken Israel and render them helpless? He did not tell King Balak to attack Israel. He told him to seduce them with the daughters of Moab: "And the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab" (Num. 25:1). Fourteen hundred years later Balaam's doctrine was still being cited (Rev. 2:14) as an example of sin.

Seduction is leading astray, as from duty or right paths. It is persuasion away from principles, faith, or allegiance. Seduction describes ***gradual*** corruption. We are under continual attack, externally from the pervasive nature of the constant bombardment of the world's godless values, and internally from the dark side of our human nature that resonates all too well with the world's "music".

The insidious nature of these attacks can be seen when we step back and reflect upon the "agendas" being pushed by the entertainment industry. Heterosexual promiscuity is presented as accepted and normal — and the same holds for homosexual activity. Anything said against either is characterized as narrow-minded and bigoted, virtually a violation of all that is good and noble. When the Vietnam war ended and the prisoners came home — some of whom had been in the "Hanoi Hilton" for seven years — they were shocked at what they saw on the television sets in their living rooms, compared with the entertainment they remembered. But soon, like us, they no doubt became acclimated to the "temperature" of the water. It was simply too comfortable to bother trying to do anything about it.

Evolution is seductive. On a CYC outing, the guide — a whale "expert" — explained extensively how the whales had "evolved", as though it were proven science.

If someone had attempted to give an informative talk about whales that assumed the Biblical creation, some law would probably have been invoked to silence him. Evolution is not just presented in upfront ways but also by assuming premises that we, and more importantly our children, may not even realize.

True, few in this country would go so far as to say they do not believe in a God. But as our society gradually makes "God" just a little less relevant, and belief in Him just a little less meaningful every day, then — like a candle gradually flickering and finally burning out — God seemingly fades out and disappears. And when we, or our children, have our rebellious moments (and we do!), then the subtle idea of being less responsible to God can be very alluring.

Similarly, humanism is a philosophy that emphasizes reason, scientific inquiry, and human fulfillment in the natural world. Humanism downplays the importance of belief in God. This philosophy permeates the decisions of governments, and the school systems they oversee.

Tolerance is a characteristic we admire, generally. We Christadelphians live pleasant lives in North America — thanks to the "tolerant" attitude of the government and the people towards religious beliefs, even when those beliefs do not agree with the mainstream culture. When we contemplate what our lives would be like in a Muslim country, we wonder how we would continue to exist.

Tolerance, however, can be a double-edged sword. If we are not consciously aware of the culture of our times, indiscriminate tolerance can lead to indifference, and this in turn can result in skepticism. The Bible abounds with examples of God's patience and mercy but not of His tolerance. He does not "tolerate" in the sense of condoning what is wrong. We are not God, and our kingdom is "not of this world", so it is not for us to "take up arms" against everything in our society that ignores God and His standards. But we must be intolerant of these influences in our own lives and families, because their effect is that, left unchecked, they will gradually seduce us from the Truth!

It is no more possible for us to avoid this world and its influences completely than it is for the frog to stay out of water. But we can be careful about where we swim, and we can pay attention to the "temperature" of the water around us. After all, very few of us are picked up and forcefully exposed to seductive material. We do not hear of people being captured by criminals and forced to sit in front of a computer and watch pornography. Most of us pick the "pots" we swim in, all by ourselves.

It is odd how we Christadelphians tend to think we are not like the world around us. Yet when we come to know brethren from various parts of the world, we may begin to see a relationship between their lifestyles and the prevailing lifestyles of their country. And if we can pause for a moment of honest introspection, we may also see it in ourselves. Paul told Titus, "The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies" (Tit. 1:12). Paul was not writing to the nation of Crete, but to Titus regarding the problems of the brethren on the island (vv. 5-13). It would be as if Paul were to write a letter to the North American brotherhood, saying, "Americans

are too materialistic, and materialism — like covetousness — is idolatry." His point would be that we have the same problems. Our standards may be closer to the culture in which we live than we realize.

Conclusion

We are not frogs! We can make conscious decisions to grow, gradually, in spiritual things, and to help our families grow in the same way. Growing in grace and knowledge is primarily the responsibility of each brother as to himself first, to his wife and children next, and to his ecclesia also.

Every member of the family has his or her responsibilities as well. The mother may have most of the day-to-day responsibility for the children, but the father should consciously consider where his contribution may have its best effect.

Bible schools and study days and CYC activities are all very important. But there is no substitute for regularly investing, every day, a few minutes in our spiritual "bank account" — by reading God's word. We see around us the spiritual dividends of these investments. We may contrast the Scriptural knowledge of children who have grown up in a culture of regular Bible reading, with those who have put little or nothing in that "bank".

We do well to apply the principle of gradualization to the accumulation of spiritual assets. After all, regular investing is also a concept our materialistic culture advertises and promotes! Let us simply apply that concept to our spiritual lives.

Ken Sommerville (Simi Hills, CA)

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (8) Rescued by God's grace in the Lord Jesus

The privilege which came to our notice at the conclusion of our previous study on Ephesians, and the awesome responsibility which accompanies it, both derive from the great truth that the disciples of our Lord form a part of his body. As his representatives, and agents, in their day and generation, they contribute to the full outworking of God's purpose in His beloved Son. This key thought must ever be in mind as we endeavour to follow the Apostle's teaching in the early part of chapter 2.

Dead in trespasses and sins

As we look at the RV of verse 1, we notice that "did he quicken" is in italics, indicating it is not a part of the Greek text. The NIV more faithfully renders the verse: "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins." Then, in verse 2, Paul enlarges on this concept, and the quickening process is not effectively expressed until verse 5, to which we shall come in due course. To bring out the

greatness of God's love and grace, Paul dwells first upon our unregenerate state. Before a disciple embraces the hope of life in the Lord Jesus, he or she is dead... dead in "trespasses and sins". It was a manner of life, brought out by the Biblical metaphor of 'walking'. This goes back a long way: Enoch walked with God, as did Noah (Gen. 5:24; 6:9). Moses asked Yahweh to reveal His ways to him (Exod. 33:13), in response to which Moses was granted the great theophany of Exodus 34. Rather than walking with God, we were literally the walking dead!

A life may be attended by all manner of exciting features, but, whatever its nature, if it is not lived in the Lord Jesus, there can be only one outcome: permanent death. As Isaiah states so comprehensively with regard to those who had exercised lordship over God's people: "The dead do not live; shades do not rise — because you have punished and destroyed them, and wiped out all memory of them" (26:14, NRSV). The psalmist similarly states: "Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish" (Psa. 49:20). On one occasion the Lord said to a man who was seeking a pretext for not following him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:60). This is what the Apostle is saying to the readers of his letter, for such had been their former condition: they had been effectively dead, since trespasses and sins had been their normal way of life (v. 2).

"The prince of the power of the air"

This was "according to the prince of the power of the air", an expression which sounds strange in our ears but one which was evidently current at the time. Thus Robinson comments: "Here again the Apostle adopts the language of his contemporaries. It was the general belief that through the Fall the whole world had been subject to evil spirits, who were dwelling in the air, and were under the control of Satan as their prince".[1] Is this then an accommodation to contemporary thought? There is certainly no other evidence that Paul looked favourably on such an idea. We remember the Lord himself referred to Beelzebub, without surely endorsing any idea that such a being existed (see Matt. 10:25; 12:24,27). Paul proceeds to give his own definition when he adds, "the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience". The term he employs for "worketh" is the same that we have already encountered in 1:20, which gives us an idea of the power of sin, with its diversity of evil works. Regarding the expression "the prince of the power of the air", Paul, if he were writing today, might well have put the expression in inverted commas, to demonstrate he is quoting a current superstition.

The Lord himself stated to the Eleven that the prince of this world would assail him, but to no purpose (John 14:30; cf. 16:11). When we consider the circumstances of the trial and crucifixion of our Lord, we can see the force and relevance of the disciples' reaction in Acts 4:23-31, when Peter and John were released by the Sanhedrin. We note especially verse 26: "The kings of the earth set themselves in array, and the rulers were gathered against the Lord, and against his anointed." These were the evil spirits vanquished by our Lord; they ruled in society and resisted any opposition to their authority (see John 11:49-53). If the Lord threatened their authority, then he must go.

Furthermore, Paul himself comments on the spirit activating the sons of disobedience in 2:3: "Among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." The divine wrath is no intemperate display of anger but God's displeasure with human sin and disobedience. The term "orge" is prominent in Romans; the first occurrence there gives a clue to its meaning: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness" (1:18). However, prevailing over His wrath is God's infinite mercy, as the Apostle shows in Ephesians 2:4,5: "But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved)." Thus, against the sombre background of the unredeemed sinner's desperate plight is the operation of God's prevailing mercy. Romans 5 speaks of the "abundance" of divine grace; here Paul uses the term "rich".

The riches of God's grace

Starting with verse 5, Paul, by a deliberate use of language, demonstrates how the richness of God's grace and mercy operates in those who have faith. We should not miss the fact he now uses "we", for he is ever aware of the grace extended to him personally (once more we recall 1 Tim. 1:12-14). Those who have faith are brought to life "together with Christ". Here we encounter the first of three verbs in which the Greek word "sun" (i.e., "together with") occurs, and this striking feature of Paul's vocabulary deserves our careful notice. It must be evident Paul is using these words to underline the total identity of the followers of the Lord Jesus with the Lord himself. Paul has already declared the church to be the body of the Lord: what happens to the one must also be experienced by the other. The same kind of vocabulary is observable in Romans 6. The word "sun" appears in Romans 6:8 singly, without being compounded with any other word: "But if we died with (sun) Christ..." In the case of the words in which we are now interested, we may render the sense by a simple device: we have been 'with-quickened', i.e., brought to life with him. Thus, when the Lord revived after his death, so (prospectively) did his followers, his body, revive along with him.

Then Paul makes a typical comment: "By grace have ye been saved." There are two key words in the Apostle's language of redemption: "grace" and "faith". The first cannot operate without the other: grace comes from God. We note especially in this connection the salutation in 2 Corinthians 1:1,2: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort." This salutation in its fullness is conspicuous among the opening greetings of the Apostle (the other greetings have already been considered in an earlier article).

"With" Christ!

What is even more extraordinary is that the believer is associated not merely with the Lord's resurrection, but also with his elevation to heaven! Not merely "with-raised" (i.e., with Christ) but also "with-seated" in the heavens, in Christ Jesus (v. 6). If the thought is challenging, it is totally in keeping with Colossians 3:1-3;

the words are familiar, they confirm what Paul says in Ephesians: the present life of the disciple "is hid with Christ in God" (v. 3).

This is no more than what was told Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" (Acts 9:5). The full force of this extraordinary statement may escape us because of its very simplicity. When the Lord completely identifies himself with his persecuted followers, he is no longer the carpenter from Nazareth, persecuted and finally crucified. No, he is the glorified Lord Jesus, to whom all power in heaven and on earth has been given. It is this one who so graciously identifies himself with his followers. The reflection is truly staggering but it lies at the heart of what Paul is endeavouring to bring home to his readers, readers of all ages, and to ourselves if we aspire to be true followers of our Lord.

We now look briefly at Romans 6: in verse 4, we are "with-buried" with the Lord, by virtue of our baptism into his death. Then in verse 5 we are "with-united" in a resurrection like his. Finally, in verse 6, "our old man", that is, our former self, is "with-crucified" with our Lord. Briefly, our baptism as the seal of our faith and willing submission to God's will makes us one with our Lord. However, for us the process is not complete; indeed, it is ongoing, and we need to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18).

As we survey our contemporary world, we can fully appreciate that God's work in Christ is by no means complete. As Paul dictated his letter, he looked forward to the ages yet to come, when God would reveal the riches of His grace towards the disciples — Paul includes himself in this. As always this was to be in Christ Jesus (v. 7). We note once more the concept of "riches", the true and enduring riches. The theme of the call of the Gentiles comes up later in this chapter.

"By grace, through faith"

Then Paul picks up this term "grace" and makes one of his greatest and best known statements: "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves" (v. 8). Indeed, how true this is: what can we do either to save ourselves or the world in which we live? We freely acknowledge we are saved by God's grace. This declaration is important, since the mention of divine grace means the initiative is God's. Our response is faith, not merely an attitude of trust in our Father but the recognition we are called to a new life. Grace is not an ointment to be applied externally to the skin, but a power which should be active in us. The process of salvation is initiated by God and is experienced here and now. At the same time, it is also an ongoing process which calls for growth. In our unredeemed state, what can we do to save the world and ourselves? But, when we have become grateful and loving recipients of God's grace, we can, as we have already discovered, contribute to God's "fullness", the outworking of His purpose in each succeeding generation.

Verse 9 underlines the truth of the previous verse: we are totally dependent upon God's love and mercy. Paul often looked back on his earlier life as a very earnest and committed Pharisee, when he had sought righteousness by strict observance of the Law. One day, however, he had discovered that, in the process, he had be-

come a blasphemer, with blood on his hands. The term "works" speaks of human effort and achievement but the history of mankind, past and present, has shown how fallible men are.

God's workmanship: a new creation

In verse 10 we see that God's workmanship is in direct contrast to the works of men. In the Greek, the term for workmanship is "poieema". In Romans 1:20, it is used to describe God's handiwork in the creation. But as the physical universe can be ascribed only to God, so this is true of the new creation and this word "poieema": "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." This is obviously the new creation, a recurring theme in Paul's letters. There are notable passages in this connection:

> *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God..." (2 Cor. 5:17,18, NIV).*

With this can be compared another passage:

> *"Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation" (Gal. 6:15, NIV).*

The new creation is as much the work of God as the old; mankind marred the image and it was not restored until the Lord Jesus came (see John 1:18; 14:9; 2 Cor. 4:4). This authentic image of the Father was perpetuated in the Son through his being raised from the dead and his becoming, in the eternal sense, the beginning of a new creation (cf. Rev. 1:5,18). This concept is clearly illustrated in Psalm 100:3:

> *"Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his" (NIV).*

The time will come when there will be a new heavens and a new earth, the habitation of righteousness (Isa. 65:17; 2 Pet. 3:13). In the meantime, those who belong to the Lord Jesus have been created in Christ Jesus "for good works", and this was God's purpose from the beginning. His children must "walk" in them, reviving the figure in verse 2. In the Lord Jesus there is a new way of life, and this can be achieved only by a conscious following of the Lord's own example.

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

Note:

1. J.A. Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians,* London, 1903, p. 49.

Bible Study

Rightly Dividing the Word: (7) An Open Mind is Essential

In this series of articles we have seen that "rightly dividing the word" depends on our hearing what God is actually saying to us in the Bible, as well as learning to

understand what He means. This requires of us careful attention to the meaning of particular words and to their context.

The meaning of Bible words is determined by the context in which they are used. Understanding their context is essential to understanding their meaning.

Context includes the flow of thought in a passage and the historical context in which the book was written. We need to ask questions such as, "When and in what historical context were these words first spoken?" "What did the words mean to the people who first heard them?"

Even in the New Testament, it is essential to read the gospels and the Acts first, so as to understand the letters and the Revelation. We must also try to get a general overview of an individual book in order to begin to understand passages in it. A good Bible dictionary or the book, *The 66 Books of the Bible,*[1] will help in this.

We cannot read the Bible casually, as we might a newspaper or magazine, and expect to really understand it. But we can come to understand what God is saying to us, ***if*** we read with prayerful, thoughtful care and attention to the context.

Fuller understanding comes over time through thought, the testing of that understanding in discussions with others, our experience as Jesus' disciples, and reading or hearing helpful expositions. The Lord promises understanding to those who ask, seek, and knock (Matt. 7:7-11). He speaks for those with "ears to hear", those eager to understand. The "measure" that we give to our hearing is the measure that will be returned to us, in greater comprehension (Mark 4:23-25).

We all come from different backgrounds, and we all have had different teachers and varied life experiences. Each of us hears in a unique way. We vary greatly in age and depth of knowledge. None of us is perfect in understanding, though we may be content at a comfortable plateau. Though we all rejoice in "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and father of all", there is much diversity in our views.

That diversity is healthy and can contribute to spiritual growth in the Lord's ecclesia, if we share our diverse views in a humble spirit. We must listen, think, question, and discuss with one another. The object of our Bible classes and discussions is not just to hear one person's knowledge imparted. They must also help us to develop the ability to think through for ourselves what the Bible is actually saying to us and what it means.

We have strong Bible reasons for what we believe and may not, therefore, be very open-minded to alternative meanings of particular passages that challenge our previously-held opinions. We may simply read the Bible in search of proof texts to reinforce what we already believe — particularly if we are contending with those who have a different understanding. This is partly due to our reactionary attitude to false religions around us. We see harmful extremes and, humanly, we tend towards an opposite extreme.

Our understanding of how the Lord uses, today, the Holy Spirit power he has received from God is another area in which we might be narrow-minded. We

know that the Holy Spirit power of God comes into our hearts and minds through the inspired Scriptures. We know, too, that understanding the Scriptures does not depend on our first being given Holy Spirit power. So we may tend to limit how our Lord uses that power to touch, open, and change the minds of men and women in our day.

Yet the inspired psalmist prays, "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from your word. Teach me, O LORD the way... Give me understanding... Make me walk in the path of your commandments... Incline my heart to your testimonies and not to covetousness... Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in your way" (Psa. 119:18,33-37). Prayers like these are answered by the Lord through his Holy Spirit power helping us as we have asked, if our prayers express an honest desire.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God — who gives to all liberally and without reproach..." (Jam. 1:5-8). Yes, we have the "Spirit word" in the Bible, and through it a wonderful source of knowledge and spiritual instruction. Still, we are constantly making decisions in our lives that require wisdom in applying this knowledge and instruction. This is why we find the Apostle Paul praying that help from the Spirit be given to faithful saints in Ephesus (Eph. 1:15-21; 3:14-19) and Philippi (Phil. 1:9-11) and Colosse (Col. 1:9-12). These faithful saints had the gospel and inspired writings, but they still needed the help of God and His Son to have spiritual wisdom, understanding, enlightened eyes, and discernment — and to be strengthened with power in the inner man.

In our preaching of the gospel, we are "God's fellow workers". We try to serve as Paul and others did. We may be great preachers through whom others believe. Yet, it is only "as the Lord gives to every man". "God gave the increase" to the preaching of Paul and Apollos in Corinth. Even today it is not our eloquence or powers of persuasion that give the increase, but rather it is "God who gives the increase" by His spirit power to our "planting and watering" (1 Cor. 3:4-11).

An illustration of how the Lord does this is found in Acts 16:14. There we read that "the Lord opened [Lydia's] heart to heed the things spoken by Paul." It is written that "the king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes" (Prov. 21:1). That truth was taught to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Dan. 4).

It is a Scriptural truth that men and women are no longer given gifts of Spirit power to prophesy, teach, perform miracles, or speak in foreign languages — as they were in the first century and in the days of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. However, even if we mortals have no such powers ourselves, we cannot and should not try to limit in any way just how God and the Lord Jesus continue to use their wondrous Spirit powers in our time. That they do so to help us in understanding, wisdom, and faith, to give increase to our preaching, and to shape world events is certain. For that gracious help, we rejoice in thanksgiving.

An example of "stretching a point" or taking words out of context — to prove what we believe — is our frequent misuse of Jesus' words in Mark 7:15-23. It is

right that we should wish to show that we can't blame our sins on an external, supernatural tempter, and that what defiles us in God's eyes are our own evil thoughts which result in sinful deeds and pride. However, it is going too far to use this passage to say that all our temptations to sin come from within, and none from an external source — as our teachers sometimes do.

Consider the context. Jesus is teaching here about what we eat. He is answering the Pharisees' criticism of his disciples for eating with unwashed hands (defiled, according to their tradition). Nothing that we eat can defile us, Jesus says, because it does not enter our mind. However, there are many things that do enter our minds from without which can defile us in God's eyes by appealing to our lusts and pride: various entertainments, the internet, advertising, worldly books, magazines, newspapers, worldly conversation, gossip, and false teaching.

These all have the potential to adversely affect our minds. Drugs and alcohol also have the potential to enslave us. There are many people in the Bible who succumbed to external temptations that appealed to their desires and so enticed them, as James says (1:13-15). Examples are Eve and Adam, Judah, Balaam, and David.

These examples of Bible teaching about the Holy Spirit, and about what defiles, are intended as a gentle admonition to use the words of God with care and respect for their context. We often hear talks in which many individual verses or just phrases from verses, out of different Bible books, are read or screened — often without attention to their context, which determines their meaning. We seem to be losing, in our zealous use of Scripture to prove our point, the essential gift of explaining the meaning of Bible teaching in its full context.

Brothers and sisters, this ought not to be. We must not treat the Bible as a mere collection of proof texts in support of our beliefs. It is the revelation of the mind and purpose of our Creator. This is His revelation to us. It reaches its perfection in His making known to us the mind and life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Its purpose is to teach us to truly know our God and His Son, so that we are drawn to them in faith and love (John 6:44,45). Sound knowledge of Bible truth gives us this, if it does not make us proud or complacent or condescending to others. God Himself, and our being made in His image, is the ultimate truth. His Son is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6-11).

Like the inspired Bible writer, John, let us not speak of "having the truth", but of knowing Him who is true and of being in Him who is true, in His Son, Jesus Christ (1 John 5:20). May that be the object of our efforts to rightly divide His precious Word.

Bob Green (Cambridge, ON)

(Concluded)

Note:

1. *The 66 Books of the Bible,* by Bro. Norman Owen, published by *The Christadelphian* in 1997, is based on articles published in *The Glad Tidings.* It is beautifully illustrated, indexed with many added details, and provides a very helpful, instructive introduction to each book of the Bible.

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot
(1) Prologue

"He who rejects me, and does not receive my words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48, NKJV).

The fact that the "words" that we speak will judge us "in the last day" is surely a frightening thought. There is great power in the words that we utter, for we know that "out of the same mouth come praise and cursing" (James 3:10, NKJV). Counter to this fearful admonition is the comforting thought that proper use of our words can be spiritually uplifting: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Prov. 25:11, NKJV). Words provide the path for us to learn the Truth and set us on the way to salvation. On the other hand, words spoken in ignorance of God's way, or in hateful anger, can lead us down the "broad road that leads to destruction". Every time we speak there can be huge consequences; a few little words that we utter can commend or condemn us!

That we must be extremely careful about our use of language is surely more or less apparent to every one of us. It is equally unmistakable that our ultimate salvation is tied up in the utterances that come out of our mouths: "Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man" (Matt. 15:11, NKJV).

But what is not so obvious is: In what language are we to define the meaning of our words? Is the Bible strictly talking about only the original text languages? Does the Bible mean that only those who can read and comprehend ancient Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic can truly understand what God intends for us to express? There are many who think that this is the case. I once got into a debate with a clergyman who insisted that only one who had studied ancient Biblical languages was qualified to interpret and teach Scripture. He felt it was beneath his dignity to carry the debate any further when he starting losing his ground based on my quotations from the King James Bible.

Some in our own community rely heavily on interpreting their views based on their studies from Biblical concordances such as Strong's or Young's. While these are certainly powerful aids to help us more fully comprehend the word of God, surely we must also realize that a period of some 1800 years had passed from the age of the apostles till Strong's. Nevertheless, while early believers did not have this resource they still needed to choose their speech and base their understanding of the Word of God in accordance with the Scriptures.

The Reformation made the Scriptures readily available in the vernacular. There can be no doubt that the King James Bible (also commonly known as the Authorized Version) had a profound effect on spreading the Word of God to the common

people further and wider than ever before. It has often been said that the KJV is the only book written by a committee that has made sense! However, it is also no secret that the English language has changed immensely since the KJV was first issued in 1611. I personally don't know anyone who speaks English the way it is written in the KJV. Modern English has become the most expressive and most complex language in the world — and also the one language almost uniformly spoken and understood by educated people throughout the world. The complexity of the English language and its diversity is amply demonstrated by noting the following quotation:

> *The statistics of English are astonishing. Of all the world's languages (which now number some 2,700), it is arguably the richest in vocabulary. The compendious Oxford English Dictionary lists about 500,000 words; and a further half-million technical and scientific terms remain uncatalogued. According to traditional estimates, neighboring German has a vocabulary of about 185,000 and French fewer than 100,000, including such Franglais as* ***le snacque-barre*** *and* ***le hit-parade****.*[1]

This poses the question: if a few little words can condemn, or commend us, how do we really define words so we know exactly what they mean? A corollary to this question must be evident from the quote above, namely that words don't always map one to one in translating from one language to another. How then do we make sure that we are truly understanding and expressing correct thoughts? Let us consider some of the issues that are involved in exactly defining the meaning of a word:

(a) Language is not a static thing. The meaning of a word can evolve and can connote something very different today from what it meant in 1611. In short, the meaning of a word can change with time.

(b) A word might still exist in a scholarly dictionary, but become archaic. Hence its meaning is no longer understood by most people.

(c) The word(s) used to describe something may be very different, even in the same language, depending on local idiom. In short, the same word might define something very different in Vancouver than it does in Ann Arbor.

(d) As we have alluded to previously: in translating from one language to another it may be extremely difficult to find an exactly equivalent meaning for a particular word.

I will illustrate what I mean for each of these issues with some specific examples.

"Evolving" words

Consider the word "barbarian". As used by first century Jews, it generally meant anyone not a Jew, although civilized Greeks were sometimes considered separately. Good examples of this are the way the apostle used this word in Acts 28:4, Romans 1:14, and 1 Corinthians 14:11. The NIV chooses to avoid the word "barbarian" in all these cases, but retains it in Colossians 3:11, where no doubt the translators felt the sense was equivalent to the modern way we would use it in

North America. The modern definition of "barbarian" is generally considered to be "one who is an extremely aggressive or violent person". The word "barbarian" is also sometimes used as a slang expression describing an uncultured, uncouth person. Hence, while the KJV on occasion equates "barbarian" to foreigner, we would be extremely tactless to use the word in that sense today.

Another example is the use of the word "intercourse", which we find sometimes in the writings of our 19th century brethren. In the 19th century the primary (and almost exclusive) meaning of this word was: communication or exchanges between people or groups, especially "conversation or social activity".[2] Obviously, I hardly need to point out that this is not the primary meaning today. Sometimes reading 19th century literature, where this word is used, can lead to acute embarrassment where none was intended.

Archaic words

A few years ago I was conducting a baptism interview of a young lady who had grown up in our Sunday school. She was quite an accomplished young person. She was (and still is) a dedicated Bible student and well read in the Truth, as well as at the top of her class at the university. I asked her to briefly describe how our Lord Jesus Christ was a "propitiation" for our sins? A puzzled look came over her face and she turned to me and said, "I have no idea what you mean by propitiation!" The word simply wasn't part of her vocabulary, nor is it for most people in America. When was the last time you heard that word in common speech, or even from the platform? I recently asked 25 brothers and sisters at random (not all in my own ecclesia) and only two (a brother and sister in their seventh decade) were able to define it correctly.

Apparently the NIV translators agree that the word is archaic; they have used alternate language in all three places that it appears in the KJV.[3] The NKJV on the other hand retains "propitiation" in all three instances. Ironically, most of the brothers and sisters that I queried used the NKJV or KJV, but still didn't know what the word meant — in fact, a significant sample (about half) thought the word wasn't in the Bible. This points out something else about archaic words; namely, if a word isn't in common usage then our retentive memory isn't reinforced by repetition. Thus, retaining knowledge of it fades quickly even when we may have read the word occasionally in our Bible studies. This is especially true for a word such as "propitiation", which appears only three times in the New Testament.

Another archaic word that is a challenge to define, as well as to pronounce, is "concupiscence". This word also appears only three times[4] in the KJV. There is no minority opinion in this case, with both the NIV and NKJV omitting this word. Strong's defines the word as "a longing (especially for what is forbidden)"; an American English dictionary defines the word as "powerful feelings of physical desire".[5] But neither the Strong's nor the common dictionary tell us what the object of that desire was all about. We might suspect that it has to do with sexual immorality, but at least in one case (Col. 3:5) fornication is already mentioned separately in the same verse. Hence, either the translators were being redundant or "concupiscence" means something other than illicit sexual desire.

In the cases of "propitiation" and "concupiscence" we find ourselves dealing with archaic words that only appear a few times, but there are other cases where the translators, in updating the English of the 17th-century King James Version to the late 20th-century American version, had far more numerous challenges. Take the words "transgress" and its derivatives "transgression" and "transgressions". These appear 14, 50 and 47 times, respectively, in the KJV. But they are entirely omitted in the NIV. Finally, the word "wrath" appears an astounding 194 times in the AV, but not once in the NIV.

"Fornication" is another archaic word that is difficult to translate. It appears 32 times in the KJV, but is entirely absent in the NIV translation. It is a difficult word to fathom at times since it can refer to a number of different ideas ranging from general sexual immorality, to promiscuity, adultery or homosexuality. It is a word however, that once led someone to an interest in Christ. I was teaching a particularly unruly class at school one day, many years ago. In my frustration I finally blurted out to the class something to the effect that ***they didn't seem very interested in physics, and that fornication seemed to be the only thing on their minds.*** This appeared to draw nothing but blank expressions from the class, so I dismissed them with the hope that things would be better the next session. But after class one of the students lingered behind and came up to ask me if I was a Bible student. I replied yes and asked what led him to ask such a question. He quickly replied, ***"Because only a Bible student would know the word 'fornication'!"*** This led to a discussion on the Bible and an invitation to attend our ecclesial Bible class, which he did for the next couple of years until he graduated. This was more than 30 years ago; I doubt such word recognition on the part of a young person would be the same today.[6]

These few examples should suffice to illustrate how words eventually disappear from common usage and become archaic. Nevertheless, the ideas expressed by such words have to be replaced by translators — while at the same time somehow not destroying the sense of the text.

Idiomatic expressions

These are words or phrases that have different meanings, even in the same language, depending on the cultural connections. For example, an Englishman faced with a tough situation might describe it with the cricket expression "a sticky wicket" (at least I think that's what he might mean!) — while an American might describe the same situation with a baseball expression, such as "two outs in the bottom of the ninth".

Then again, a can of fizzy beverage is a "soda" on the east coast of the USA, but "pop" in the Midwest. When we lived in Italy I was constantly making idiomatic errors, having learned my Italian from textbooks and not from the street language of Milan where we were living. I found out that using the word "automobile" to retrieve your vehicle from a parking lot attendant would produce nothing but a blank look. To a Milanese an automobile was "una machina", and that doesn't literally translate as "a machine" either! The meaning of "machina" in Milan can only be appreciated if you can also envision the passion with which the word is

spoken. To a Milanese an automobile was (and probably still is) an extension of his soul.

Now what about the Bible? There are a number of idiomatic expressions that sometimes give us fits if we are not steeped in the whole counsel of God's Word. Taking such idiomatic expressions out of context can cause great misunderstanding. Two examples that come to mind are Genesis 4:7 ("sin is crouching at your door") and, of course, the first few verses of the Gospel of John ("in the beginning"). We should not take either of these passages literally, or else we will end up not really appreciating their meaning.

Finding exact equivalents

Lastly, comes the challenge of finding the exact meaning of a word in translating from one language to another. English is probably the world's most expressive language, with many shades of meaning possible for various ideas. Yet there are times when this is not true, and trying to map the text from an ancient language to English leaves the translator with a perplexing shortage of words to express the idea. Two examples of this readily come to mind. The first is the various names of God in the Hebrew of the Old Testament: when translated into English they lose some of their subtlety. The KJV at least gave the reader a clue to the beauty and majesty of the original by using various spelling devices, i.e., "LORD" (all capitals) for "YHWH", "God" for "El", and so on. Modern English versions of the Old Testament have progressively obscured these shades of meaning and often leave the reader virtually ignorant of the variations in the original.

A second example is the English word "love". "Love" is used to interpret three different Greek words. Apparently, just as it is said that Eskimos have numerous words for "snow" (something essential to their culture), likewise Mediterranean people seem to have more words for expressing different forms of passion (something apparently not so readily embraced in the colder climes of northern Europe). In Greek three words express various shades of passion, and these are all wrapped up in the one English word "love". The Greeks use the word "eros" to express erotic love, "phileo" to mean friendship (found in "Philadelphia", meaning brotherly love), and finally "agape", which best translates as deep spiritual love. When more than one of these Greek words appears in the same narrative we sometimes have difficulty deciphering the exact meaning of the text. A good example of this is the dialogue in the Gospel of John (John 21:15-17), where Jesus asks Peter if he loves ("agape") him and Peter keeps answering him that he does love ("phileo") him. The subtle difference in the Greek text is completely lost in the English translation.

Conclusion

Given all these issues about finding the exact meaning of Scriptural words, how then does the Bible convey God's Truth irrespective of time, culture, and language of translation? Do we really need to be specialists in ancient Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic, as the clergy of some orthodox religions claim, in order to properly understand the Word? In the course of this study we will show emphatically that

this is ***not*** the case. The basic principles necessary for our salvation are expressed as conceptual ideas illustrated by various literary forms ranging from history, to biography, poetry, prophecy, and dramatic narrative. This means that, in the end, we can truly understand the things necessary for our salvation regardless of what language we happen to know, or what time in history we were born, or what are our cultural circumstances. We intend to show that ***little words can mean a lot!***

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. Robert McCrum, William Cran, and Robert MacNeil, *The Story of English*. New York: Penguin, 1992.
2. *Encarta World English Dictionary*, 1999 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Developed for Microsoft by Bloomsbury Publishing Place.
3. Romans 3:25 ("sacrifice of atonement"); 1 John 2:2 and 4:10 ("atoning sacrifice").
4. Romans 7:8; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:5.
5. *Encarta World English Dictionary*.
6. *However, the word "fornication" is not totally unknown to our decadent western world. We have just noticed an advertisement for a new cable TV series, premiering this summer, entitled... "Californication"! Surely a "sign of the times", and a warning: Editor.*

Difficult Words in the King James Version

Words have their histories, like men. Like them, they live and die. A word that meant one thing may, hundreds of years afterwards, mean something very different. A word may, at last, cease to be used at all. In the King James Version (that first appeared in 1611) there are many words that now, after the lapse of almost 400 years, have changed their meanings or have altogether gone out of common use. Others have ***somewhat*** *changed their meanings. The following are some old-fashioned and difficult words to be found in the King James Version, with their present-day meaning:*

- "Abomination": An object that is disgusting or contemptible, particularly an idol.
- "Acquit": To hold guiltless.
- "Ague": A fever.
- "Alleluia": Praise the LORD!
- "Ambassage": The same word is translated "message" in Luke 19:14.
- "Apothecary": One who makes perfumes or ointments.
- "Asswaged": Sank down, subsided.
- "Astonied": Astonished, or surprised.
- "Audience": The Hebrew word means the ear. Abraham spoke in the ear of the children of Heth; we might say "in the hearing of". "To give audience" means to listen.
- "Barbarian": An alien or foreigner.
- "Barbarous": Foreign.
- "Baser": "Certain lewd fellows of the baser sort" (Acts 17:5); that is, wicked men who hung about the market place; vile men of the rabble.
- "Bewrayeth": Betrays.
- "Bishoprick": Guardianship; the office of a bishop, or overseer.

- "Breeches": Pants, or trousers.
- "Brutish": Stupid.
- "Buffet": To strike with a clenched fist.
- "By and by": At once, immediately.
- "Carriage": That which is carried: baggage. We now say luggage.
- "Casement": Window.
- "Chapiter": The head or top of a column.
- "Charger": Dish, bowl, or plate in the OT (Num. 7), where silver "chargers" are mentioned. But in the NT (Matt. 14; Mark 6) the Greek word "pinax" means platter
- "To be at charges": To be responsible for paying.
- "Cleanness of teeth": Famine.
- "Cockle": A weed resembling wheat (Job 31:40).
- "Contemn": To despise or mock.
- "Convert": To turn again.
- "Coulter": Iron agricultural tool.
- "Dam": A mother.
- "Divers": Diverse, different, or varied.
- "Effectual": Effective.
- "Emerods": Tumors; hemorrhoids.
- "Ensample": Example.
- "Ensue": Pursue (1 Pet. 3:11).
- "Eschew": Avoid; turn aside.
- "Espy": See, behold.
- "Exactor": Overseer.
- "Fain": Gladly.
- "Fens": Marshes (Job 40:21).
- "Fetch a compass": To make a circuit.
- "Fillets": Curtain rods placed between columns (Exod. 27:10).
- "Fitches": A kind of grain.
- "Flagon": Bottle; vessel.
- "Fuller": Launderer; one who washes clothes.
- "Garner": Granary, barn.
- "Gin": Snare or noose.
- "Graven": Engraved.
- "Grisled": Spotted or speckled.
- "Hart": Deer.
- "Hireling": A day laborer, or contract laborer.
- "Hoary": White.
- "Incontinent": Unbridled; uncontrollable.
- "Inditing": Overflowing, boiling over.
- "Inordinate": Without restraint; immoderate.
- "Instant": Insistent, steadfast, urgent.
- "Jot, Yod": The smallest Hebrew letter. Equivalent to "iota" in the Greek. Both correspond roughly to the English letter "I", but the "yod" is often transliterated "J" in our Bible. The names Jerusalem, Jesus, Isaac, Isaiah, Judah, Israel, John, James, Jacob, etc., all began with this letter.
- "Kine": Cows, cattle.
- "Knop": An old way of writing "knob". In connection with the tabernacle, the knops were carved imitations of the buds of flowers.
- "Lade": Burden, load.
- "Latchet": The thong attaching the sandal to the foot.
- "Laver": Washbasin.
- "Lees": Sediment.
- "Let": In a few passages only, it means 'hindered' (Exod. 5:4; Isa. 43:13; Rom. 1:13; 2 Thes. 2:7).
- "Lewdness": Villainy, wickedness, crime.
- "Liketh": Pleases.
- "Listeth": Chooses.

- "Lively": Living.
- "Lucre": Gain.
- "Mansion": Abiding place.
- "Mattock": Hoe; spade.
- "Maul": A club (Prov. 25:18).
- "Meat": Food of any kind. In the RV the words "meal offering" have been substituted for meat offering. This expresses the sense better.
- "Meet": Sometimes this means: agreeable, fit, proper.
- "Mess": Portion. (Soldiers were once — and still? — served meals at the "mess hall".)
- "Mete": To measure.
- "Meteyard": The English means to measure by the yard, or a yard measure. The Hebrew (Lev. 19:35) is best translated by the word "measure" only.
- "Minish": Diminish.
- "Minister": Servant.
- "Mite": A very small coin.
- "Mote": A minute particle of dust; a speck (Matt. 7:3).
- "Mufflers": Veils (Isa. 3:19).
- "Murrain": Pestilence, plague.
- "Necromancer": One who inquires of the dead, a "medium".
- "Neesings": Sneezing (Job 41:18).
- "Nether": Lower.
- "Nethermost": Lowest.
- "Not a whit": Not the least bit.
- "Occupy": To do business, to trade.
- "Occupiers": Traders.
- "Offence": In many places, a stumbling block, "skandalon" (the original of our word "scandal").
- "Offscouring": Scum; filth.
- "Ouches": Sockets; settings for gems.
- "Overlived": Outlived.
- "Paps": Breasts.
- "Paramours": Lovers.
- "Peradventure": Perhaps; it may be.
- "Pilled": Peeled, or stripped of skin or bark.
- "Poll": To cut hair.
- "Potsherd": A piece of broken pottery.
- "Pottage": That which is prepared in a pot.
- "Prating": Babbling, chattering.
- "Presbytery": An assembly of elders.
- "Presently": In the present moment; now.
- "Printed": Engraved, "inscribed" (RV).
- "Privy": Aware of (sometimes).
- "Proper": Goodly, comely.
- "Proselyte": "One who has come to", therefore a convert to Judaism.
- "Provender": Food for livestock or cattle.
- "Provoked": Stirred up, stimulated, encouraged.
- "Quick": Alive.
- "Quicken": To make alive.
- "Quit": Behave, act.
- "Ranges": Ranks in 2 Kings 11:8.
- "Rank": Fat in Genesis 41:5-7.
- "Ravin": Plunder.
- "Reins": The kidneys, regarded as the seat of joy, pain, etc.
- "Reprobate": Refuse.
- "Rereward": Towards the rear; rear guard.
- "Ringstraked": Streaked with rings.
- "Riotous": Gluttonous.
- "Satyr": Male goat.
- "Scall": An eruption on the head or face.

- "Scrabbled": Scrawled, or scratched (1 Sam. 21:13).
- "Scrip": A small bag or wallet.
- "Seethe": To boil.
- "Sherd": A shred, potsherd, or broken piece of pottery.
- "Silverlings": Pieces of silver.
- "Sith": Since.
- "Sleight": Trickery, deceit.
- "Slow bellies": Idle gluttons.
- "Sod, sodden": Boil, boiled.
- "Sottish": Foolish.
- "Staggered": "Wavered" (RV).
- "Stomacher": Robe (Isa. 3:24).
- "Strawed": Strewed, scattered.
- "Surfeiting": Intoxication, overindulgence.
- "Taches": Hooks, fasteners.
- "Tables": Writing tablets covered with wax.
- "Tabret": A small tambourine.
- "Tell": To number, count.
- "Temperance": Self-control.
- "Tempt": To test, try, put to the proof.
- "Tetrarch": Ruler over a fourth part.
- "Thought": "Anxiety" in Matthew 6:25.
- "Tire": Turban; head ornament.
- "Tired": Adorned with a turban or headdress; attired.
- "Tittle": The very small mark or "point" added to one Hebrew letter to distinguish it from another.
- "Torment": To torture.
- "Trow": To think, imagine.
- "Trump": Trumpet.
- "Twain": An old form from the Anglo-Saxon "twegen", meaning "two"; hence the Scotch "twa", and the English "twainty" or twenty.
- "Unction": Anointing.
- "Unperfect": Imperfect.
- "Untoward": Not toward; that is, inclined in the opposite direction.
- "Utter": Outer (sometimes).
- "Vagabond": A wanderer.
- "Vile": Worthless.
- "Ward": Prison; custody.
- "Ware": Aware.
- "Wax": Grow, increase.
- "Wen": A running sore.
- "Whet": Sharpen.
- "Whit": A little bit, a small particle. "Every whit", wholly. "Not a whit", not at all.
- "Wilily": Craftily.
- "Wimples": Cloaks (Isa. 3:22).
- "Wise": Way. "On this wise", in this way.
- "Wist": Knew.
- "Wit": To know.
- "Withs": Cords, ropes (Judg. 16).
- "Wot": Knew.
- "Wroth": Angry, wrathful.
- "Yokefellow": Fellow-laborer.

(Selected, and adapted)

"The work of translating the Bible presents special difficulties. Since the Scriptures are a source of information and inspiration, Bible translations must be accurate as well as felicitous. They must be suitable for rapid scanning as well as for detailed study, and suitable for reading aloud to large and small audiences. Ideally, they should be intelligible and even inviting to readers of all ages, of all degrees of education, and of almost all levels of intelligence. Such an ideal is, of course, virtually impossible to attain" (Bruce Metzger).

Letters

"Greater lov'd ye canna' be!"

Dear Bro. George,

I think you should appoint me as your Scottish editor! Your title of the golfing piece [July issue] would be better rendered, "Will ye no' come back again?... greater ***loo'ed*** ye cannae be...."

For all that, I enjoy the magazine very much! God bless!

Bro. Hamilton Wilson
(Glasgow Kelvin, Scotland)

Dear Bro. Hamilton,

*Ach mon... wud na' tha greet Robbie Burns hae sed, "For **a'** that...." — no' "For **all** that"?*

Ne'erth'less, good point. Your editor this side of the Atlantic is a southern boy — much like Bobby Jones himself (he was a Georgian, and I'm, as you may have guessed, a Texan). Y'all may recognize that, to a Texan, even the northern United States presents a linguistic challenge. Canada is another challenge yet — and then England is surely a further challenge of the third order.

That leaves the spoken word of the Scots as a linguistic conundrum of at least the fourth degree of difficulty.

Never mind Hebrew and Greek: we native speakers of that variegated tongue known as "English" have more than enou' on our plate, just trying to understand one another!

George

"Decently and in order"

Dear Bro. George,

Thank you for all the time you put into the *Tidings,* and for all the interesting articles you have provided us.

In response to the May editorial entitled "Decently and in order": I am unclear as to the connection between God meeting with man in the tabernacle/temple of the Old Testament, and the memorial meeting that was instituted in the New Testament to remember our Lord's death and resurrection.

It is my understanding that, through Jesus' death, the Holy of Holies was opened up to all believers, and we now enjoy ongoing and open fellowship with the Father and the Son at any time and in any place.

I can't think of where in Scripture the breaking of bread is considered to be our specific time to fellowship with our Father. Remember Jesus' sacrifice, yes, and

praise and worship our Father, but my understanding is that our fellowship is always there. This is why we don't carry our sins with us all week to be forgiven at the breaking of bread. Rather, this is an ongoing everyday process.

I don't think that the Mosaic mode of worship of the Old Testament can really be transposed onto our remembrance service of our Saviour.

As an aside, I would also like to comment on the state of mind necessary for the memorial meeting. I do agree that it is important to give our best, but as a mother of two young children, sometimes it is nigh on impossible to be mentally calm and focused when the emblems are passed around. We do our best to maintain peace and quiet, and this often absorbs us entirely. For this reason, I praise God that my access to Him is open at any time and not just on Sunday morning.

Sincerely,
Rachel Perrott

Dear Sis. Rachel,

Thanks for your letter.

The connection I sought to make was with the words themselves — "decently and in order". Seeking out the Hebrew equivalent for the Greek "setting in order" (1 Cor. 14:40) led to the detailed descriptions of the numerous features in the Old Testament worship of Yahweh. But I did not mean to imply that there was an exact correlation between the tabernacle/temple worship and the Memorial Meeting. Nevertheless, there are surely points of comparison. For example, in the tabernacle worship, man might come into the presence of God through offered sacrifice; likewise, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ makes it possible for us to come into the presence of God today.

As there are points of comparison, so — as you say — there are points of contrast. Even though the Memorial Meeting is a very important service, it is not the ***only*** *time one may approach God, or seek forgiveness of sins. But it is — because of its being commanded, and because of its regular repetition in our ecclesial life — a very special time, and one that ought not to be neglected, if it is at all possible to attend and participate.*

Some differences of opinion fall into the category of an "either-or" discussion. But I don't think this is one of those. This is more of a "not only — but also" discussion. In other words, we do not have to choose between coming into God's presence at the Memorial Meeting, or not coming at all. Instead, we may not only beseech His forgiveness at the breaking of bread, along with our brothers and sisters, and in generally quiet meditation; but we may also seek His blessing morning and evening, in a bustling household or a secluded park. God is always there.

However, for most of us, and for most of the time, the Memorial Meeting is the best place (even if not the only place!) to approach the Throne of Grace. And, considering the Old Testament examples cited, it is surely a more effective "meeting place" when Paul's advice ("decently and in order") is followed — as much as is reasonable.

George

Current Events

News from the Promised Land

The Old City of Jerusalem, 40 years later

Four decades after the battle that liberated the Old City of Jerusalem during the Six Days War, Israeli leaders still refer glowingly to Jerusalem as the "eternal, undivided capital" of the Jewish state. But the motto is accurate only as myth. Even as they celebrated the 40th anniversary of the war, a growing number of Israelis are voicing the once unthinkable: Jerusalem may never truly be united. The city is now Israel's poorest metropolis; ambitious young people prefer making their living in the country's high-tech corridor along the Mediterranean. A tremendous gap in the standard of living divides Jerusalem's Arabs and Jews, who only rarely mix. A concrete barrier cuts through the city, locking more than 50,000 East Jerusalemites outside the wall. Not a single foreign nation keeps its embassy there anymore. "The story of Jerusalem is a story of decay and deterioration," says historian Tom Segev. "All these dreams of 1967 were actually illusions."

Overall, roughly 300,000 Jews have left the city since 1967. According to a demographic study released in June by the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 17,200 people left Jerusalem last year, while only 10,900 moved in. With Arab birthrates rising faster than Jewish ones, demographers predict the Jewish-to-Arab ratio in the city will be roughly even within 20 years.

Both the rising violence and the demographic trends led Israel to construct the long, winding barrier that now surrounds and divides Jerusalem. Yet the wall creates new problems. According to a Red Cross report, the Israeli government has shown a "general disregard" for Palestinian human rights by carving out "isolated Palestinian enclaves" in the city. The demographic realities, combined with the resentment created by the wall, are "like a small atomic device," says Jerusalem rights lawyer Danny Seidemann. "It can blow up at any minute," adds Segev.

> *"I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling... When all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves" (Zech. 12:2,3).*

Faking antiquities

(Jerusalem, May 2007) Testimony in a Jerusalem district courtroom is giving a rare glimpse into the shadowy world of Biblical antiquities.

Three of Israel's most respected experts in ancient archeological treasures are on trial, charged with 18 counts of fraud, receiving money through deception, damaging antiquities, and other violations of Israeli antiquities laws.

The defendants are accused of faking a range of artifacts, including the burial box of Jesus' brother, a wine decanter used in Solomon's Temple, and ancient seal impressions and inscriptions — some of which were sold for hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Since the trial began in September 2005, witnesses have described furtive encounters with Arab grave-robbers, international smuggling, and large transactions based on a handshake. Lawyers involved in the case expect court proceedings to continue for at least another year.

Oded Golan, the first accused, came to worldwide attention in 2002 as the man behind a sensational discovery that rocked the world of Biblical antiquities: a first-century stone ossuary, or burial box, with an ancient Hebrew inscription identifying it as the last resting place of "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus."

The ossuary was exhibited in Toronto and hailed by scholars as the first physical link ever discovered to the family of Jesus. But when the two-foot long limestone box returned to Israel in March 2003, it was seized by the Israel Antiquities Authority and submitted to a committee of experts to determine its authenticity.

Meanwhile, the Antiquities Authority was already investigating Golan in connection with another item, the Joash stone. This was a black stone tablet with an ancient Hebrew inscription that appeared to record the renovation of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem by King Joash in the ninth century BC. If genuine, it would be the first physical evidence of the temple ever recovered.

The committee of experts was asked to rule on both items and in 2003 announced that both were modern fakes. Golan was arrested on suspicion of violating Israel's antiquities laws and repeatedly interrogated while police raided his apartment and two other properties in Tel Aviv. There they seized a range of tools and materials that they said could be used to fake ancient artifacts.

In 2004 the Israeli police indicted Golan and two others. Charges against the two others were later dropped. Shuka Dorfman, director of the Israel Antiquities Authority, described the charges against Golan and his alleged colleagues as "the tip of the iceberg." "These forgeries have worldwide repercussions," he said. "They were an attempt to change the history of the Jewish and Christian people."

Shaul Naim, head of the two-year police investigation, said: "This was fraud of a sophistication and expertise which was previously unknown. They took authentic items and added inscriptions to make them worth millions."

Naim said forgers managed to fake inscriptions, decorations, and even the patina (the thin sediment created over centuries by moisture collecting on the items). "We believe that there are many more items in museums and collections around the world which are yet to be identified," he said.

Golan rejects all the charges against him and accuses the Israeli authorities of a witch-hunt, insisting that all the items are genuine.

"There is not one grain of truth in the fantastic allegations relating to me," Golan said in an interview.

Committee protests dig at Temple Mount

The Waqf Muslim religious trust is digging a ditch from the northern side of the Temple Mount compound to the Dome of the Rock as a prelude to infrastructure work in the area, generating protests from archaeologists.

The dig has been approved by the police, but the Israel Antiquities Authority declined to respond to the Waqf's excavations and would not comment on whether one of its archaeologists had approved the move.

The Committee for the Prevention of Destruction of Antiquities on the Temple Mount, a political group comprised of archaeologists and intellectuals, criticized the use of a tractor for excavation at the Temple Mount "without real, professional and careful archaeological supervision involving meticulous documentation."

Speaking for the committee on July 10, archaeologist Eilat Mazar said, "There is disappointment at the turning of a blind eye and the ongoing contempt for the tremendous archaeological importance of the Temple Mount."

At the beginning of the year, Israeli excavations near the Temple Mount, part of a plan to rebuild the Mugrabi bridge walkway, near the Robinson Arch, led to violent protests from Arabs in Israel and around the world.

The Pharaohs' Fortress

The largest known fortress from the days of the pharaohs has been unearthed near the Suez Canal, archaeologists announced in August.

The massive fortress, discovered at a site called Tell-Huba, includes the graves of soldiers and horses and once featured a giant water-filled moat, scientists said.

The discovery dates back to ancient Egypt's struggle to reconquer the northern Sinai Peninsula from an occupying force known as the Hyksos. The campaign against the Hyksos was depicted in etchings on the ancient walls of the Karnak Temple, 450 miles south of Cairo.

Archaeologists said the new find shows those stone-chiseled tales to be surprisingly accurate. "The bones of humans and horses found in the area attest dramatically to the reality of such battles," said Zahi Hawass, director general of Egypt's Supreme Council for Antiquities. "Previously, the area was known only from depictions in temples elsewhere in Egypt. We had no firsthand evidence of what was happening there during the period of the pharaohs."

The discovery was part of a broader effort called the North Sinai Archaeological Project, which was started in 1991 to identify and protect archaeological sites that were threatened by an industrial agriculture project.

The fort, called Fort Tjaru (or Tharo), was unearthed by a team led by Abdul Maqsoud of the antiquities council. The fort dates from the 18th and 19th Dynasties (estimated as somewhere between 1560 to 1081 BC).

Bible Mission News

Truth Corps 2007 Vacation Bible School Activity

With the encouragement and aid of the Portland, OR, Ecclesia, the Truth Corps was invited to participate in a Vacation Bible School for children aged five to twelve. The School ran for a period of five days during the second week of the team's stay in Portland.

The theme that was selected was "Bible Heroes". The first step was to select the Bible characters to be used for the classes each day from the list presented to the team. Truth Corps members volunteered to present the lessons, organize the games, and do the crafts.

Then the timeline for the week was established, using the volunteers associated with the particular activities.

The morning began with registration, where we ensured that the parents identified themselves and provided names of those who would be picking up their children. After registration on the first day, we established some ground rules for the children. These were written on a large sheet of paper and hung on the wall, so that they could be reviewed at any time.

The daily program consisted of a 45-minute Bible story and worksheets. This was followed by a short snack break. The groups then split for outside games and inside craft activities, lasting for 30 minutes. The crafts were based upon the Bible story for the day and, where possible, the theme was also incorporated into the games.

The last period of the morning for all groups was devoted to practicing for a play. This lasted for approximately thirty minutes.

Several families came to the VBS who had had no previous contact with Christadelphians. We were very pleased to have the children return each day eager to participate in the activities. This was a testimony to the enthusiasm and hard work of the Truth Corps.

The highlight of the week came on Friday evening, when a carnival and potluck was held. The ecclesia handled all the food requirements, and the Truth Corps organized the games and the play that was presented at the end of the evening. Several of the games were based upon the Bible characters considered during the week. This included "pin the hair on Samson", throwing beanbags at Goliath, a pie-eating contest, and face painting.

The Portland Ecclesia had a number of costumes that were used to present a full dress-up play based on the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel, complete with a fiery altar.

Although it was difficult to obtain an accurate head count, it was estimated that at least 60 adults, together with children, attended. It was exciting to note that several of the visiting parents contributed food for the potluck and stayed for the whole program.

In all, the Vacation Bible School appeared to be a great success, as well as spiritually uplifting for all who participated. The undersigned would be happy to forward a copy of the VBS schedule to anyone who is interested.

Bro. Bob and Sis. Diana Stodel
rwstodel@direct.ca

2007 Truth Corps members and their team leaders:
Back: Brad Butts, Myra Luckey, Diana Stodel, Bob Stodel
Middle: Nathan Crawford, Becky Hill, James Robinson, Amanda Baines
Front: Katie Schlageter, Ethan Bearden, Sarah Bennett, Jeff Lange

"My Experiences": Truth Corps 2007

During their stay at the Idyllwild Bible School at the end of July, we asked this year's Truth Corps members what Truth Corps has meant to them. They have been involved in a Vacation Bible School in Portland, OR, and contact follow-up and preaching efforts in Verdugo Hills, CA; Ozone Park, NY; and Westerly, RI.

Here are their comments, which we hope will inspire more young people to volunteer for next year's team(s), more ecclesias to think about ways to use these enthusiastic young people, and more volunteer leaders to work with them.

"Truth Corps has changed my perspective on what it really means to be God's servant. Service involves the big things like preaching, the little things like pulling weeds, and the completely unnoticed things like keeping your mouth shut at the proper time. It's done both when knocking on doors and when sitting beside people in airplanes, when standing on stage and talking at midnight. Truth Corps has meant I understand that being a servant to God consumes your life" (Bro. James Robinson — Hamilton, ON).

"Truth Corps has been an amazing experience so far. I have grown so much spiritually thanks to the remarkable fellowship I've been blessed with, within the team and the ecclesias we've visited" (Sis. Katie Schlageter — Westerly, RI).

"Truth Corps has meant many things to me. It strengthens your inner character and causes you to create bonds with people young and old. It gives you a new appreciation for God's Word. Ultimately, it bolsters your faith in God and your reliance on Him" (Bro. Nathan Crawford — Bedford, NS).

"Truth Corps has truly been a gift from God. Every activity you do is focused on the Lord, and really helps you to think more like Christ. It has helped me refocus my life, strengthen my trust in God, and make some really awesome friends. Truth Corps has caused me to look for the prize ahead, the Kingdom. I can't wait until that day when we will never be separated from our spiritual family" (Bro. Jeff Lange — Norfolk, VA).

"Truth Corps has been one of the greatest experiences of my life. For years I was afraid to go out and preach, but after the first couple of days in Truth Corps I am now excited to go out and preach. I have also formed bonds with people I have met, and I love spending time with all of those on the team. Personally, I have also grown spiritually. I have spent the last month focused entirely on God, and it has helped me tremendously in the focus with which I now see my life" (Sis. Becky Hill — Austin Leander, TX).

"Truth Corps gave me real enthusiasm to preach the good news of the Kingdom, because it helped me to appreciate how exciting the promise of the Kingdom is to those who only see the hopelessness of the world today" (Sis. Sarah Bennett — Victoria, BC).

"Truth Corps has been an amazing experience for me because I have been able to bond with seven young people, close to my own age, as well as two more experienced leaders so far. I have learned many things that I never could imagine, like actually being able to talk about the Word of God to complete strangers. I've also learned that many personalities and opinions can work together. We have become a family, and this experience has brought us so much closer to each one. Each person has changed my life for the better" (Sis. Amanda Baines — Sussex, NB).

"It is love, friendship, bonding — a summer of leaving the pains and sorrows of the world and giving it to God, in his service. It is doing something right in my life. It is the greatest experience in my life thus far" (Bro. Ethan Bearden — Austin Leander, TX).

The ecclesias, and all who have met the Truth Corps and participated in various activities with them, thank them all for taking their summer to work with us.

Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA Publicity

Past and present Truth Corps members at 2007 Idyllwild Bible School

Thisisyourbible.com Website

This month's update on the website brings more good news. The featured question of the month during July was "What do you think about the Bible?" Over **600** people responded, and **466** replied that they believed the Bible is the infallible word of God. Then **323** people took the time to download a pamphlet on the divine origin of the Bible. That pamphlet is only a part of the **2,769** pamphlets that were accessed in July.

During the month there were also **170** questions submitted. These kept Brothers Mike LeDuke and Peter Forbes very busy. The questions generally fall into one of four categories: Bible study, life issues, first principles, and questions about Christadelphians.

Around the middle of July, we were pleased to hear of another baptism as a result of the Thisisyourbible.com website. Bro. Francis Muleso was baptized in South Africa. We think he attended seminars but dropped off, and then discovered the website and started asking questions. He was also sent the DVD but didn't do the correspondence course. Bro. Mike LeDuke answered his questions, and encouraged him to be baptized, as his knowledge level seemed to be quite good — while Bro. Peter Forbes tipped off the local South African CBM to follow up regarding the baptism. We have included a couple of pictures of our new brother.

Baptism of Bro. Francis Muleso in South Africa

Next month we'll follow another couple who were baptized this year. We marvel at how God continues 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 online tutor
- Hand out the business cards available in your ecclesia — let us know if you need more
- Advertise the website in your local newspaper, or as a link on your ecclesia's website

Jan Berneau

A Visit to Costa Rica, and A Wedding in Panama

The ecclesial circumstances and preaching initiatives vary greatly in Latin America. During the month of July we were able to visit two countries in Central America — Costa Rica and Panama — where ecclesias have existed for many years.

Miriam and I arrived at the airport in Alajuela, Costa Rica, on Saturday afternoon, July 14. There we were met by brother Francisco Ramirez. Afterward, his wife (Sis. Gladys), one of their daughters (Ana Leonor), and their granddaughter (Elizabeth) greeted us when we arrived at their home.

The ecclesia in Santa Barbara organized a special Bible class that evening, and there was almost full attendance by members, plus a number of teens and children. The class included lessons from the life of Phinehas, and especially Numbers 25 — the need for decisive action in crisis situations.

Bro. Luke and Sis. Jessica Moss, from the Morecambe Ecclesia, UK, joined us for the trip, arriving Saturday evening. They wanted to gain firsthand exposure to the ecclesial situations in Latin America. They both have some Spanish language abilities, and hope to improve their use of the language.

We were involved with a full day of activities on Sunday — breaking of bread, Sunday school, special CYC in the afternoon, and an advertised special lecture in the evening. The exhortation subject was "A Sound Mind", the CYC topic was "Friendships", and the lecture title was "Is Jesus God or the Son of God?" There was good attendance all day (see accompanying photo), along with refreshments and a delicious noon meal! Monday and Tuesday were spent visiting families and discussing a host of ecclesial matters.

On Wednesday, July 18, we moved to Panama, arriving about mid-day. This was a special week for the Colon ecclesia, since Bro. Luis and Sis. Vanessa Sobers were taking care of final preparations for their daughter's wedding. On Saturday, July 21, Sis. Nishla Sobers married Bro. Ian Neblett (Toronto East, ON), whose family was originally from Guyana.

During the Wednesday afternoon, the four of us took the almost two-hour bus ride across the isthmus from Panama City to Colon for the Colon Ecclesia's Bible class. Due to the wedding, there were brothers and sisters arriving that week from different parts of North America. Bro. Clive and Sis. Christine Drepaul from New York attended the Colon Bible class as well. Bro. Clive and I both gave shortened Bible class talks for the members and visitors.

Bro. Ken Curry, from the Toronto East Ecclesia, led the wedding service. It was very uplifting to see two young people, from different parts of the world, become one together in the Lord. Their first day together on Sunday was partly spent with the Panama City Ecclesia at the Remembrance Service, luncheon and special lecture! We also attended the Panama City Ecclesia on Sunday, as did many other visitors from the wedding, which really boosted the ecclesia's numbers. The hall was almost full!

On an average the ecclesial attendance on Sunday is around eight, so the members really appreciated the support, and welcomed us warmly in fellowship, along with a nice meal between the breaking of bread and the lecture! Miriam and I returned to Ontario on Monday, July 23, while Luke and Jessica stayed a few extra days to visit the ecclesia and see some more of Panama.

The ecclesia in Costa Rica and the two ecclesias in Panama appreciate visits very much. They welcome, in particular, Spanish-speaking brethren. The Colon and Panama City ecclesias have only three speaking brethren in each ecclesia. If you are interested in helping in this regard, please contact the undersigned in order to coordinate scheduled visits.

Don Luff
CBMA Linkman,
Panama

The Costa Rica ecclesia with visitors
Sis. Miriam and Bro. Don Luff,
and Sis. Jessica and Bro. Luke Moss

"Risk is an essential part of redemption — an essential element of the Christian Gospel. The old story about Jesus at heaven's gate has a ring of truth to it: After his ascension, Jesus comes with the clouds of heaven and arrives at heaven's gate, where he is met by an angel. The angel looks down at the fledgling pre-Pentecost Church and asks,

'What will you do if it doesn't work out?'

Jesus replies,

'I have no other plan.'

The salvation of the whole world rests precariously at that moment in the hands of a few dozen frightened men and women whose track record is less than encouraging. It is a risky endeavor but one God [along with His Son] is willing to take. Human freedom inevitably involves risk, just as it inevitably involves gradual change and learning (and even a lot of mistakes) rather than instant perfection, but the risk is worth it" (Francis Bridger, ***A Charmed Life****, p. 100).*

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

AUSTIN LEANDER, TX

Since our last reporting in June 2006, we have had many visitors from Texas ecclesias. From outside the state, we have had the following visitors: Bro. Dan and Sis. Janet McDonald, and Bro. Aaron McDonald (North Industry, OH), Bro. Philip Morgan (Wanatah, IN), Bro. Ian Prentis (Bedford, UK), Bro. David and Sis. Shawn Bell, and Sis. Pauline Horninger (Detroit Milford Road, MI), Sis. Joanne Haltom (Detroit Royal Oak, MI), Bro. Eldon and Sis. Em Roscoe (Los Angeles, CA), Sis. Pat Sanchez, Sis. Tiffany Bevans, and Sis. Tina Hall (Reseda, CA). We also thank the following brethren for their exhortations: David Styles (Shelburne, ON), Rick Hollenbeck, Sr. (Abilene, TX), Jorge Garcia (Houston Wilshire, TX), Mark Wade (West Houston, TX), and George Booker (Austin South, TX).

We welcome to our ecclesia Sis. Edith Scott, who has been in isolation in Tennessee. We welcome, by transfer from Austin South Ecclesia, Bro. George and Sis. Barbara Booker, and Bro. Adam Booker.

WE also welcome, by transfer from Austin South, Bro. CHRIS and Sis. ALICE MATTHIESEN — who were only very recently baptized there (February 4 and March 4, respectively). The Matthiesens' children, Kayla and Nathan, will also be a welcome addition to our Sunday school.

It is with great joy we have welcomed the following back into fellowship: Sis. Audrey Carlin, Sis. Anita Roberts, and Bro. Lyndell and Sis. Lisa Lucas.

In June Bro. James and Sis. Kristie Blattner were blessed with a daughter, Rylee. Also in June, Bro. Mack and Sis. Lori Lucas celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary with a luncheon at our ecclesial hall.

We enjoyed a fall fraternal gathering in December with classes led by Bro. Dean Bailey (Vernon, BC). We were pleased that Sis. Andrea and their daughters were able to accompany him as well.

In March, our ecclesia hosted its spring break youth weekend at T4C. We thank Bre. Jorge Garcia and Kevin Daniels for leading the classes.

Bro. Ethan Bearden and Sis. Becky Hill had the benefit of spending their summer on Truth Corps. We welcome them home after this very beneficial time.

Fred Bearden

BARRIE, ON

Since our last news, the Barrie Ecclesia has been blessed with the baptisms of DAVE and LIZ YEAMAN on September 4, 2004. We rejoice with Bro. Kevin and Sis. Kim Cooper in the births of their two daughters, Annie, August 18, 2004, and Willow, May 21, 2006. We pray that God will bless them, and watch over our new additions to our ecclesia.

The following members have transferred here: Bro. Grant and Sis. Hannah Abel (from Shelburne, ON); Bro. Mike and Sis. Carol Norman (Toronto Church St., ON); and Sis. Sandra Galyish and Sis. Virginia Gould (Port Elgin, ON).

Bro. Dave and Sis. Trudy Perks and Bro. Al Hack have transferred to Toronto West. Bro. Reid and Sis. Pat Ferguson, Bro. Jason Grant, Bro. Aaron Grant, and Sis. Thelma Himmer have transferred to Orangeville. Sis. Muriel Drew and Sis. Margaret Knight have transferred to Peterborough.

We are very excited about receiving ASK support to run the 2008 long-term campaign in the Orillia area. We will be hosting an ecclesial open house on September 22 for interested friends and neighbors, and we welcome anyone who would like to stop by. Our ecclesial sign on Highway 11 is seen by an average of 35,000 vehicles daily, and we continue to post weekly messages to stimulate minds. We remind everyone of our close proximity to Highway 11 and Cottage Country, and welcome any brethren and sisters who are able to visit us.

We have had numerous visitors during the past months. We extend our thanks to all who have visited us, and to the brethren who have exhorted us.

We thank Bro. Walter Perks for serving as recording brother for the past decade. The undersigned is now the recording brother. Please forward all correspondence to 2609 Grand Tamarack Crescent, R.R. #3, Orillia, ON L3V 6H3, or email ghabel@rogers.com.

Grant Abel

BEDFORD, NS

Recent visitors have been Bro. David Pearce, Bro. Ken and Sis. Wendy Dickson (Sussex, NB); Bro. Stephen and Sis. Joan Bennett (Victoria, BC); and Sis. Vanessa Thomson (Halifax, NS). You are cordially invited to our study day with Bro. Brian Luke (Adelaide Brighton, AU), Saturday, October 20, 2007, 1:30 pm to 7 pm (supper included) at Grand Lake Community Centre, Oakfield, NS. Contact Bro. Michael Carr 902-820-2532, email buxtoncarr@hotmail.com. The street number for the undersigned is now 31 Borden Street.

Ronald A. A. Hill

BRANTFORD, ON

We commend by transfer Bro. Bob and Sis. Kathy Green to the Cambridge, ON, Ecclesia as of July 29, 2007, as members in good standing. They have been members of the Brantford Ecclesia for many years and will be missed. We hope their continuing sojourn will be fruitful with the Cambridge brethren.

We remind brothers and sisters that the Brantford Thanksgiving Fraternal Gathering will be held October 6, 2007, at the Copetown Community Centre, starting at 12:30 pm. Bro. Brian Luke is to speak on "The Last Days of the Apostle Paul". For details contact Bro. Mike Moore at michael.l.moore@roger.com.

Don Luff

CALGARY, AB

Sis. Cheryl Lario has requested that her ecclesial membership be transferred to the Kamloops ecclesia. We commend her in love to the brethren and sisters there, and thank her for her help and company in the years she attended the Calgary meeting.

We wish to inform everyone that, God willing, we are moving to a new meeting hall effective September 16. The new address is Southwood Community Centre, 11 Sackville Drive SW, T2B 0T7, Calgary, AB.

If you have plans to visit us here, please give one of our members a call for directions to the new hall.

Paul Aback

COLON, PANAMA

We are pleased to report that on Saturday, July 21, Sis. Nishla Sobers of the Colon Ecclesia was united in marriage in Panama to Bro. Ian Neblett of the Toronto East, ON, Ecclesia. Nishla is the daughter of Bro. Luis and Sis. Vanessa Sobers of the Colon Ecclesia. Bro. Hamilton and Sis. June Neblett are Ian's parents who live in the Toronto area, although originally from Guyana. We pray for God's richest blessings on their life together as members of the Toronto East Ecclesia. Both the Colon and Panama City ecclesias are grateful for the many visiting brothers and sisters from different parts of the Western Hemisphere who attended both ecclesias.

Don Luff

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We rejoice in the baptism of ZACHERY NELSON on July 28, 2007. Zachery, the son of Bro. David and Sis. Laurie Nelson, was baptized by his grandfather, Bro. George Faust. We wish our Bro. Zachery God's blessing on his walk to the kingdom.

We are very pleased to welcome by transfer Sis. Sarah DiLiberto from Randolph, NJ, and Bro. Michael Robinson from Kitchener/Waterloo, ON. We look forward to our time together.

We have recently enjoyed the fellowship of the following visitors: Sis. Mildred Leake (Torquay, UK); Sis. Pamela Herring (Bogalusa, LA); Sis. Edith Machado (Southern NH); Sis. Charlotte Wilson (Adelaide, AU); Bro. Clem and Sis. Kay Wigzell (Enfield, AU); Bro. Jim and Sis. Patty Robinson (Kitchener/Waterloo, ON); and Bro. Matthew Link (Washington, DC). We thank Bro. Clem Wigzell for his words of exhortation.

David Link

HAMILTON GREENAWAY, ON

The brothers and sisters of Greenaway mourn the loss of our Bro. Richard Spiers, who fell asleep in the Lord this past July. He will be well remembered for his insightful exhortations, a cheerful sense of humor, and his faithful playing of the organ for many years. We pray for our heavenly Father's blessing of comfort and consolation for Sis. Beryl, daughter Kay, and family. May the Master return soon to raise his own who now sleep in the dust of the earth.

Tom Thorp

MOORESTOWN, NJ

With sadness we report the falling asleep in Christ of our Sis. Bessie Cummins on September 26, 2006, at the age of 84. Sis. Bessie was baptized into the saving name of Christ in December 1939, and had been a member of our ecclesia since that time. On March 28, 2007 our Sis. Dorothy Binch, mother of our Sis. Kathy Roesch and Bro. Ed Binch of Avon, IN, fell asleep in Christ. Sis. Dot was a quiet yet very faithful member who enjoyed spending time with our young people. We will miss both of our sisters as they await the Lord's coming.

We joyfully report the baptisms of RAY and JANICE O'HARA on November 12, 2006. A neighbor — with whom we were having a weekly Bible class — invited them to

join our discussion. The original contact has since gone on another path. However, we see how God has used His outstretched hand to gather in this couple to His flock. Sis. Jan is confined to a wheelchair and has overcome several obstacles in coming to our hall, which is less than ideal for handicapped access. We plan to make several improvements to make our 100-year-old building better suited to her needs.

We are also happy to report the baptism of MARY LYNN CHEETHAM on February 11. She is the youngest daughter of our Bro. Rick and Sis. Lynn Cheetham. We are encouraged by these recent baptisms as we look to bring in the harvest prior to the return of our Lord.

We welcome by transfer from the Enugu Ecclesia in Nigeria, our Bro. Jachin Chukwuani.

On August 3, our Bro. Dan Langston, formerly of the West Houston, TX, Ecclesia, and Sis. Kimberley Cheetham, the youngest daughter of our Bro. Dave and Sis. Ann Cheetham, were united in marriage. We pray that God will bless their walk together toward the kingdom.

In November 2006 we had our annual CYC weekend, with classes led by Bro. Matthew Colby and Bro. Levi Gelineau. About 130 CYC members attended, as we maximized our hall capacity. It was a great weekend for our young people to share. In May 2007, Bro. John Pople (San Francisco, CA) led our study day and Sunday Mid-Atlantic Fraternal Gathering. We thank these brethren for their wonderful words to us. We also thank the numerous visitors who have joined us over the last year, and welcome all who are in the Philadelphia area to spend time with us.

Our meeting has been involved in several preaching activities since our last news. In the fall we had a free car wash for anyone driving by our hall. The vehicle occupants were invited to get out of the cars for refreshments. During this time we were able to introduce ourselves, discuss our faith, and distribute leaflets. We also had a spring Bible seminar series and follow-up classes. We are hopeful our efforts will be fruitful in proclaiming the gospel message.

We have also had several ecclesial activities, such as touring a full-size re-creation of the Mosaic Tabernacle in Lancaster, PA, viewing the Egyptian King Tut exhibit in Philadelphia, pumpkin picking in the fall, and our spring Sunday school picnic. Spending fellowship time together outside the hall has been a blessing.

Rick Cheetham

PORT MARIA, JAMAICA

For four consecutive evenings in June, our ecclesia sponsored a Marriage and Family Life seminar. We hosted it in the ballroom of the Casa Maria Hotel, the largest in our area. With the assistance of a team of five brothers and sisters from the USA and well-prepared notes, the Bible teaching on the topic was powerfully presented and discussed. The response from the public was most encouraging. The formal proceedings closed at 9 pm every night, but some participants were always deep in discussion with us until about 10:30. On the last night we even ran out of chairs, and a few had to stand for a time. This venture in witness has brought us into contact with around 30 new friends hungry for guidance from the Word of God.

Dorothy Isaacs

SAANICH PENINSULA, BC

We have enjoyed a wonderful year in our ecclesia here on Vancouver Island. We have two new healthy and happy babies to announce. On November 1, 2006, Bro. Kevin and Sis. Rebekah Hunter were blessed with a baby girl, Skyler Rowan. On January 11, 2007, Bro. Richard and Sis. Esther Morgan were blessed with a baby girl, Megan Suzanne. We are grateful to our Heavenly Father for these two gorgeous little blessings.

People of all ages from our ecclesia and our sister ecclesia, Victoria, came out to support the annual "Run for the Everlasting Cure", November 25, 2006. It was a very moving experience, joining together in prayer for those who suffer in our midst, locally and worldwide. We were so reminded of our greatest desire and need of the return of our Saviour, when all tears will be wiped away and sorrow and pain will be no more. We were able to pray for a number of our own relatives, friends and members as well as those for whom ecclesias worldwide were praying. The rain and snow held off, the sun shone, and we were able to enjoy a lovely 5 km run/walk around the waterfront — with vistas of Mount Baker in Washington and the little islands to the east of us. As we walked or ran, each of us thought of someone for whom we prayed, who struggled just to get through the day, who was undergoing cancer treatment, or who was waiting for a diagnosis. We were all struck by the majesty of our God, and the need to give our burdens to Him. To end the morning, we met together at the hall, shared in some refreshments and signed get-well cards.

Many ecclesias all over the world shared in this event — many in Canada, and in the USA as well as England, Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand, Ecuador, and El Salvador... just to name a few.

We are a bit behind in posting photos from 2006, but we hope to update it soon. If you have some photos from your event that you would like included on our website — www.christadelphia.org/rftec/ — please contact Kevin and Rebekah Hunter at bible@christadelphia.org.

We thoroughly enjoyed our ecclesial study day in February, led by Bro. John Mannell (Toronto West, ON) on the topic of "Behaviour in the House of God: A Study of 1 Timothy". John gave us three very stimulating and thought-provoking classes, an adult Sunday school class, and an exhortation over the weekend. We were able to enjoy the fellowship of many from surrounding ecclesias. We especially thank his wife, Sis. Eleanor, and their young children for lending him to us over the weekend of study, and we hope that they are all able to come as a family the next time.

We are very pleased to announce that MARK DANGERFIELD, son of Bro. Gordon and Sis. Beth Dangerfield (Victoria, BC), was baptized into the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ on December 24, 2006.

Furthermore, on July 31, 2007, at the Western Bible School (Menucha), we were delighted to hear a wonderful confession of faith from CHLOE KENZIE. Chloe has grown up in our Sunday school and has been considering baptism for some time now. She has followed in the footsteps of her Saviour in being immersed in the waters of baptism for the remission of sins.

We also are pleased to announce that we have a wedding to look forward to, as Sis. Kayla Fredrickson and Bro. Mark Dangerfield have announced their plans to marry, God willing, this coming September. We ask God's blessings on them both as they make this important commitment and pray that we are able to support them spiritually, in the years to come before our Saviour returns.

After more than three years away in Qatar, we are very happy to have Bro. Austen and Sis. Crystal Kenzie return to us. They have been living and working in Qatar and have just relocated to the island. They quickly settled in again and now we can't imagine our ecclesia without them, though the small ecclesia in Qatar must surely miss them.

God willing, we will be sending off, with prayers for God's guidance, Bro. Kevin and Sis. Rebekah Hunter and family as they return to Quito, Ecuador, later this summer. They hope to fulfill another year or two of missionary support to the ecclesia there.

We have a couple of upcoming events: the Vancouver Island Bible Camp held the last week in August and the Victoria Fraternal the first weekend in September. Bre. Peter King (Worcester, UK), John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA), John Launchbury (Portland, OR) and Peter Niven (New Zealand) will be leading the studies at the Bible school. We invite all to attend and share in fellowship and study of God's word.

Please mark November 24, 2007, on your calendars. God willing, this is the annual "Run for the Everlasting Cure", an ecclesial prayer and 5 km Run/Walk for those suffering in our midst from cancer or other such diseases. Please think about supporting this event as an ecclesia or CYC; your prayers are needed.

David Snobelen

TREASURE COAST, FL

With a mixture of sadness and hope, we announce the falling asleep of our Bro. Linwood Carhart, of Stuart, FL, who passed away on August 10. He is survived by his wife of 12 years, Sis. Carolyn Carhart, and predeceased by his first wife and the mother of his children, Sis. Norma Boyd Carhart. He also leaves to cherish his memory his daughters, Sis. Kay Carhart and Sis. Laura Morgan, with her family, of the Richmond, VA, Chapel Ecclesia, and his stepson, Bro. Greg Wrobel and his family of the Atlanta Area ecclesia.

Linwood was a member of the Norfolk, VA, Ecclesia for most of his life, until moving to Florida 12 years ago. While in Virginia, he participated in the ecclesia, served the Williamburg Christadelphian Foundation, and worked with the Virginia Youth Camp. He was also an active brother in the Treasure Coast Ecclesia, and for many years was the sole speaker.

Contact information for his family: Carolyn Carhart, 8780 SW Fishermans Wharf Drive, Stuart, FL 34997; Kay Carhart, 8404 Bronwood Road, Richmond, VA 23229, kaycarhart@yahoo.com; Laura Carhart Morgan, 1607 Swansbury Drive, Richmond, VA 23238, laura.morgan@capitalone.com; and Greg and Vicki Wrobel, 5090 Victoria Park Drive, Loganville, GA, gjwrobel@yahoo.com.

VICTORIA, BC

Sadly, we report that two of our elderly sisters fell asleep in Christ recently. Sis. Sherole Varnel came to the truth late in her life and suffered from ill health and was confined to home over much of the time she was with us. She was 83 years old. Sis. Connie Jones was married to Bro. Ken for 67 years, passing from us April 9, 2007, just shy of her 93rd birthday. She was baptized August 31, 1952, at the Church Street Ecclesia in Toronto. Bro. Ken and Sis. Connie moved to Victoria in December 1996. Sis. Connie will long be remembered for her quiet, caring example of faith and love. We are thankful that our sisters died in the hope of the glorious coming kingdom.

We have commended Sis. Nyssa Hracs to the Saanich Peninsula Ecclesia on May 7,

2006, and Sis Cathy Hlina to the Vernon Ecclesia on July 20, 2007.

We welcomed Bro. Ben Cawston back into fellowship on April 15, 2007. The last few months have seen some of our members move away and a few members join us in Victoria. We said goodbye to Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Beth Lawrence on May 1, 2007 (transferring to Prince George) and to Bro. Ben and Sis. Helen Cawston on June 24, 2007 (transferring to Vernon). We are confident that these two couples and their children will be appreciated in their new ecclesias.

We welcomed Bro. Clive and Sis. Jennifer Daniel by transfer from Vancouver on December 24, 2006, Sis. Becky Brown by transfer from New Westminster April 29, 2007, and Bro. Ivan and Sis. Bertha McArthur by transfer from Vernon June 24, 2007. We also welcome Bro. Art and Sis. Sharon Wood who transferred from Vancouver July 15, 2007.

We are very happy to announce the marriages of Bro. Andrew Dixon and Sis. Rebekah Hutchison on June 2, 2007, and Bro. David Higgs and Sis. Kessia Bennett on June 9, 2007. We pray that they will be richly blessed in their lives together.

We are saddened to report that the following are no longer in fellowship: Sis. Angii Gunville as of March 25, 2007; Bro. James Parrott as of December 17, 2006; and Bro. Joe Myren as of January 14, 2007. We pray for a change in direction and their return to fellowship.

Thanks to Bro. John Pople for speaking at our March 9-11, 2007, study weekend on "Road to Atonement", and Bro. Stephen Hornhardt for his talks at our April 14-15, 2007, study weekend on "In Expectation of Messiah", and also at the CYC conference in April.

Our annual fraternal gathering is planned for August 31 through September 2, 2007, when Bro. Peter King will be speaking on "Isaiah — Prince of Prophets". We are also planning a study weekend for November 10-11, 2007. The speaker will be Bro. Christian Russell (Verdugo Hills, CA); his topic is unconfirmed at this time.

Our new recording brother is Clyde Snobelen, email csnobelen@csll.ca and phone 250-652-3318. All correspondence should now be directed to his attention.

Art Hibbs

Texas Youth Conference

Preparations are underway for the third annual Texas Youth Conference (TYC) — to be held, Lord willing, December 29 through January 5. The study subject will be Philippians. You may register by going to www.t4c.net and clicking on the TYC link.

"Fellowship is friendly association for the promotion of a common object — with more or less of the imperfection belonging to all mortal life. To say that every man in that fellowship is responsible for every infirmity of judgment that may exist in the association is an extreme to which no man of sound judgment can lend himself. There will be flawless fellowship in the perfect state. Perhaps it is the admiration of this in prospect that leads some to insist upon it now. But it is none the less a mistake. This is a mixed and preparatory state in which much has to be put with when the true principles are professed" (Robert Roberts).

Minute Meditation

Fired with Enthusiasm

"If you aren't fired with enthusiasm, you will be fired with enthusiasm," Vince Lombardi once said. Vince Lombardi was a famous football coach who was passionate about his game, and demanded that his players share his zeal and enthusiasm. Any player who didn't play his heart out for the team did not last long.

It is interesting that the word enthusiasm comes from two Greek words, "en" (which is our word "in") and "theos" (the Greek word for "God"). So to be enthusiastic means to have God inside. We who believe in God have every reason to be enthusiastic because of the wonderful hope that God has given us. The question is, just how fired with enthusiasm are we? Are we excited about the Truth, about our hope of being granted an immortal body in the Kingdom of God, and about our belief in the soon coming of our Lord? If these things do not fill us with enthusiasm, what would it take for us be fired up for the Truth? It is sobering to think that if a human employer would fire us for lack of enthusiasm, what about our Heavenly Employer?

We live in a world that is growing more and more desperate. The Bible forecasts a time when "men's hearts [will be] failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth," and we can see how accurately this description applies to our age. Men who are in the know understand how precarious is the situation our world is in. Mankind now has the ability to destroy the human race off the face of the earth. Global warming threatens to submerge coastal regions and islands as the polar icecaps melt; although the problem is being discussed in high places, it is mostly all talk with little effective action being taken. Hatred and violence are increasing, especially hatred of the Jews. The president of Iran has denied that the Holocaust ever happened and has vowed to wipe Israel off the map. There is no doubt that the morals of the world are sinking to the levels of the days of Noah, and of Sodom and Gomorrah. Truly this wicked world is ripe for destruction. As Jesus points out in Luke, it is a time of distress of nations, with no way out.

Jesus tells us about the days in which we are now living: "The nations are angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth." If it were not for our hope, we could be filled with doom and gloom, but because we know that the Lord will destroy those who would destroy the earth, we have a hope that the world does not have. Once baptized, we have been purchased, says Peter, by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we belong to him and he is our commander-in-chief and our Lord. Not only is he taking care of us now, but also he is preparing us for positions of responsibility in the future age — when we will inherit the promises and reign with him in the

kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world. Are we excited about the future, when the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea? We should be filled with enthusiasm because we have so much to be enthusiastic about.

Enthusiasm is contagious. Are we a carrier? Are we spreading our enthusiasm for the Truth to all around us? We have so much to be thankful for. Jeremiah described the fire that was in his heart this way: "If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,' there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot." Knowing what we know, and seeing how events are right on track for the Lord's return, how can we not enthusiastically share our hope with others? We know that the Lord will bring peace and righteousness to this troubled wicked world in which we now live.

We don't have much more time to show the world and our Lord just how enthusiastic we are about the Truth and the things that are about to take place. On Vince Lombardi's team, those who lacked enthusiasm were in danger of being fired. We belong to Christ, and we want to stay on his team. Let us fill ourselves with the true meaning of enthusiasm — God within! Just as Jeremiah could not hold God's message in, let us share our hope with our friends and neighbors. We know that "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Let us reach out to those outside and share the gospel with them so that they can repent and not perish.

Like Jeremiah, we should have in our hearts a fire burning so hot that we cannot contain our enthusiasm. Then we will share our hope of the kingdom with others. Let us enthusiastically spread the message to all we meet, hoping that we will infect them with the same excitement that we feel about the return of our Lord. He will make right all the things that are wrong in this world. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

SEPTEMBER

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). Contact Bro. Michael Carr 902-820-2532 buxtoncarr@hotmail.com

20,21 Pittsburgh, PA CYC study weekend. Bro. Jay Mayock (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON): "Into the Land of Promise: Lessons from the Children of Israel". Contact Sis. Sarah Telles 724-334-2333 sarah.telles@gmail.com

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

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
P.O. Box 530696 • Livonia, MI 48153-0696
Periodicals Postage Paid at San Dimas, California

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 waltdodrill@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

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 70 **October, 2007** **No. 9**

Editorial — What I don't know (Part 2) 419
Exhortation — "Crucify Him!", *David Caudery* 423
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:
(9) Jew and Gentile one in the Lord Jesus, *Tom Barling* 426
Article — The Search for Wisdom, *Colin Edwards* 431
Bible Study — Little Words that Mean a Lot:
(2) Forgiveness, *John C. Bilello* 434
Music in Worship:
The Trumpet's "Uncertain Sound", *Bob Burr* 441
"We give Thee, but Thine own", *Joan and Ken Curry* 443
CD Recordings by Sister Julia Baines 444
Reflections:
The Oyster, *Ann Crouse* 445
Calming a Quarrel, *George Booker* 447
Famous Last Words:
(12) Abraham, *Chris Sales* 448
"Out of her poverty, she put in everything" 449
Jesus' Unlikely Conversions:
(3) The centurion, *Wesley Booker* 450
Letter — Johnson Family Cemetery 452
Current Events — Jerusalem Escape Tunnel 453
Bible Mission News — Bolivia, Missionaries in the Field,
Thisisyourbible.com..... 455
News & Notices 460
Minute Meditation — Halftime, *Robert J. Lloyd* 465
Coming Events 467

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Editor: George Booker

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060) is published monthly by The Christadelphian Tidings, 42076 Hartford Drive, Canton, MI 48187-3360. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID at San Dimas, California. POSTMASTER: Return Service Requested to The Christadelphian Tidings, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696.

Tidings Publishing Corporation: Joe Hill (Chairman), John C. Bilello, Peter A. Bilello, Steve Cheetham, Ken Curry, Clive Drepaul, Mark Giordano, Tony Isaacs, Ted Sleeper, Phil Snobelen, Ken Sommerville, Jeff Wallace.

The Tidings is published on the 25th of the month for the month following. Items for publication must be received by the 10th of the month. Correspondence to the Editor: George Booker, 2500 Berwyn Circle, Austin, TX 78745-3559. E-mail: editor@tidings.org. Administrator: Rose Madge: rm_madge@yahoo.com. Production Editor: Kathy Hill. Home page: www.tidings.org. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF. Copyright © 2007 by The Tidings Publishing Corporation. Reproduction in whole, or in part, without permission is prohibited.

Subscriptions

United States: $20, Canada: $28. Checks payable to ***The Tidings*** and sent to P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to the same address. Changes of address and other subscription matters to Rose Madge at the above address or by e-mail at rm_madge@yahoo.com. **Australia: $39.** Mail checks to Fran Caudery, 35 Jeffery Street, Blackburn, VIC 3130. **New Zealand: $39.** Mail checks to John Beer, P.O. Box 559, Te Awamutu 3840. **South Africa: 140 ZAR.** Mail checks to Anthony Oosthuizen, P.O. Box 50357, Durban 4062. **United Kingdom: £14.** Mail checks to Malcolm Cross, Grange Farm, East Cottingwith, York YO42 4TB.

More springs in the garden...

This [proverb] is found in so many tongues, that it can hardly be ascribed to one rather than another:

"More springs in the garden than the gardener ever sowed."

It is a proverb for many, but most of all for parents and teachers, that they [indulge] not themselves in a false dream of security, as though nothing was at work or growing in the minds of the young under their charge, but what they themselves had sown there; as though there was not another who might very well be sowing his tares beside and among any good seed of their sowing. But this proverb has also its happier side. There may be, there often are, ***better*** *things also in this garden of the heart than ever the earthly gardener set there, seeds of the more immediate sowing of God. In either of these aspects this proverb deserves to be laid to heart.*

R.C. Trench

Editorial

What I Don't Know (Part 2)

Last month I discussed some of the things in the Bible that I don't know. This month we shall consider more (continuing with the numbering system started last month).

2. What will happen tomorrow:

> *"Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1).*
>
> *"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (James 4:13,14).*

Far from knowing the day or the hour, the time or the season, when Christ will return [see Editorial, last month]... I don't even know "what will happen tomorrow", even in the most mundane matters — even in those matters with which I am personally concerned. Such is the extent of what I ***don't*** know.

But the fact that I ***don't*** know these things (if I will but admit it to myself) teaches me something extraordinarily important. It teaches me to avoid the proud, presumptuous attitudes of the Israelites described by Isaiah. The prophet pictures them calling to one another:

> *"Come... let me get wine! Let us drink our fill of beer! And tomorrow will be like today, or even far better" (Isa. 56:12).*

They are the same sort of which the apostle Peter writes, the last-days scoffers who say:

> *"Where is the 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (2 Pet. 3:4) —*

implying they can count on everything continuing on the same, day after day, and year after year. What folly!

What may I learn from "what I don't know"? I may learn:

a. to avoid setting dates as though I have some "private line" to God's inner counsel;
b. to refrain from planning out my life to the last detail, thus leaving room for God to give me guidance and direction (by whatever method He might use);
c. to hold with a light grasp all material "things", which are temporary and passing away (1 Cor. 7:30,31; 1 John 2:17), and to cling more fiercely to all spiritual things, which even if unseen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:18); and

d. to value life, each day, as a gift from God, and an irreplaceable opportunity — rather than simply one more day to "build bigger barns" (Luke 12:16-21) in preparation for a "tomorrow" that may never come!

I ***do*** know something much more profound than exactly what will happen tomorrow, or the day after. I know that — whatever happens — "the Lord's will" ***will*** be done:

> *"Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that' " (James 4:15)!*

I do not know what tomorrow holds, but I do know ***Who*** holds tomorrow!

I think that's a fair trade-off.

3. How the "seed" planted by the farmer grows in the earth:

Firstly, there is the natural wonder of the planted seed, and its growth:

> *"A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how" (Mark 4:26,27).*

Secondly, since the sowing of seed is the basis of Christ's parable, neither can I know how the "seed" of God's word, once planted in human "soil", grows to produce faith and righteousness, to His honor and glory. Like the farmer, even if we plant the seed and water it diligently, it is not within our power to determine whether it sprouts and produces fruit. No matter who plants or waters, or how they do it, God alone gives the increase as He chooses (1 Cor. 3:6). And he does so in His own time and in His own way.

And, thirdly — such a wonder is the parable of the "seed" in the Bible! — God intends this transformation and growth of the planted seed to give us one more picture. Dimly though we might perceive it, the process describes how the natural body, dead and buried, becomes — in God's own time — the spiritual body, revived and immortalized!

> *"What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body" (1 Cor. 15:36-38).*

How simple it sounds! But still we can scarcely comprehend its meaning.

So, while I do not know how the seed germinates and multiplies, one thing I do know: it is not by my wisdom or effort — nor even by the wisdom of the greatest botanist or geneticist — that it is accomplished. It is only by the power of God.

4. What I ought to pray for

> *"The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (Rom. 8:26).*

First of all, let's have a bit of explanation. Instead of "the Spirit itself" (KJV), most modern versions render "the Spirit ***himself"*** (the NIV, cited above, as well as the RV, RSV, and NEB). There seems to be no textual reason why the newer rendering should not be allowed. The only problem in this translation would be a presumed support for the personality of the Holy Spirit, and the belief in a three-person 'Trinity'. But if we understand that "the Spirit" may refer to Christ, then the "himself" is perfectly natural.

May Christ be referred to as "the Spirit himself"?

a. Christ is called "Spirit" in other New Testament passages, such as 1 Corinthians 15:45 ("The last Adam [became] a life-giving spirit"). It is to this verse John Thomas refers when he writes of Christ, who "as the Quickening Spirit, makes intercession for (believers) according to the Divine Will — Rom. 8:26,27" (*Eureka,* vol. 2, p. 356).

b. That this view was held by at least some of the other pioneer Christadelphians is shown by the first verse of one of Bro. David Brown's hymns (Number 174 in the new book):

"We come, O God, to bow
Before Thy throne;
To pay our solemn vow
Through Thy dear ***Son.***
He is our High Priest there
To incense faithful prayer;
Hear, gracious Father, hear
His spirit's groan" *—*

which is of course a further reference to Romans 8:26.

c. In the letters to the seven ecclesias in Asia Minor (e.g., Rev. 2:7,11,17, etc.), Christ refers to himself repeatedly as "the Spirit".

d. Romans 8:26, in which "the Spirit" intercedes for believers, is parallel to verses 27 and 34, where Christ is undoubtedly the intercessor. The Holy Spirit, as a separate entity, can no more be the intercessor for believers than can the mythical Virgin, "Mary, Mother of God"!

e. The "sighs of compassion" (Rom. 8:26) are a reflection of Christ's humanity and intense fellow-feeling with us. Related Greek words elsewhere describe such feelings: "Then some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk... Then he spit, and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep ***sigh*** said to him... 'Be opened' " (Mark 7:32-34). "The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. He ***sighed*** deeply..." (Mark 8:11,12).

We have good reason, then, to see Jesus Christ as the one who "helps" or "sympathizes with" us in our weaknesses (cp. Heb. 2:18; 4:15; 5:2), as well as our only mediator and intercessor (1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Cor. 8:6; Gal. 3:19,20; Heb. 7:25; 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). So there is good reason also to see him as "the Spirit" in Romans 8:26.

Continuing, then, with Paul's words:

"We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us."

This brings us to the "thing I don't know". I don't (always? ever?) know exactly for what I should pray. For example, should I — in an intense trial — pray for that trial to be removed, or should I pray for greater faith and strength to withstand it? Should I pray for recovery for the sister who is grievously ill, or for her peaceful departure in "sleep"? How can I know for certain which is the will of God? It may be either. In such uncertainties, must I always guess rightly before my God will hear my prayer? Or must I never articulate any particular prayer, for fear it will be against God's will? Must I always pray, simply and without embellishment, "Dear Father, may all things be according to Your will..."?

Here, I believe, "what I ***don't*** know" is offset by "what I ***do*** know" — that Christ — "the Quickening Spirit" in Dr. Thomas' words — will himself intercede for me. He will do this with "groans that words cannot express" (NIV), "with sighs too deep for words" (RSV), or perhaps "in sighs of compassion ***that I cannot hear."*** My feeble attempts to pray may well be inadequate to express all that I know, or all that I wish, or all that I hope for. But when that is the case, then ***he — my Savior, my intercessor, my friend*** — will, like the priest that he is, take the offering of my prayer, imperfect as it is, and prepare it properly to be placed on his Father's "altar"... so that it will be an acceptable gift to Him. This I believe.

"As the priest arranged upon the altar the sacrifices of men, so our Lord rearranges our feeble utterances so that they are in accordance with the will of God — if in faith we pray through him" (Cyril Tennant, ***Prayer: Studies in Principle and Practice****, pp. 93,94).*

*****

There are yet more things that "I don't know"... Lord willing, we shall consider them next month.

George Booker

*****

A kindergarten teacher was observing her children while they were drawing. She would occasionally walk around to see each child's work.

When she arrived at one little girl who was working quite seriously, she asked what she was drawing.

The little girl answered, "I'm drawing a picture of God."

The teacher thought for a moment, and then said, "But no one knows exactly what God looks like."

Still working industriously, the little girl didn't even look up, but briskly replied, "They will in a minute."

Exhortation

"Crucify Him!"

Eight times each year we read of the crucifixion of our Master. Can this story lose its impact for us? The accounts invite our imaginations to start exploring... We ponder how these people who had heard his gracious words, witnessed many remarkable miracles, acknowledged that "never man spake like this man" — how they could have been persuaded to cry, "Crucify Him!" Perhaps most of them had not, but nevertheless they had stood dumb, uncertain, as the envious leaders stirred up the mob leaders to cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" But it had to be, and the Almighty, in His foreknowledge, caused the "right people" to be in the "right place" at the "right time." Mass emotion can be a frightening thing — as the world keeps witnessing.

We can look at these events intellectually, focusing our minds on why it had to happen and what the event accomplished. We can see that Christ's death, as the climax of the offerings under the Law, had to take the form of a sacrifice. We can also see that the mortality of the Messiah, who was one with us, had to be demonstrated while the clash of wills — his and his Father's — took place. His obedience to the end completed a sinless mortal life. But are these factors the essential heart of the message of the Cross?

The appreciation of these factors came later. The conversions and conversations recorded in the opening chapters of Acts strongly suggest that the natural emotions that led to the cross were then counterbalanced by heart-felt spiritual emotions. These emotions were manifest in those whom the Lord was drawing to himself, so as to become the first fruits of the ingathering into Christ.

Purging the conscience

This point is wonderfully apparent in the Letter to the Hebrews. In the ninth chapter, after describing the appointments in the tabernacle and the duties of the high priest and what they symbolized, the writer draws a pointed contrast between the offering of Christ and the offering of animals (vv. 1-13). This leads to the writer's conclusion: that the offering of Christ was to "purge (or cleanse) your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (v. 14). He makes the same point in the next chapter where, after stating that we can enter the spiritual holy of holies, he tells us what that will accomplish! "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" (v. 22).

The record in Acts explains how this happened. For the Jews, the collective and individual memories of the crucifixion itself provoked a supreme and overwhelming emotional reaction. Just as baptism (and what it symbolizes) is the "answer of a good conscience" (1 Pet. 3:21), so a contemplation of the sacrifice of Christ must act upon the emotions as well as the intellect. Indeed, the former should

be the greatest! All too often we are afraid of emotions, but we push them to the back of our thinking at our peril. The cross cannot be appreciated purely in the dimension of intellectual understanding; in fact, this ought to be a secondary factor, following on after the emotions have been engaged.

Consider the text of Acts. The speech of Peter on the day of Pentecost was intensely personal. Look at how many times "you" and "ye" occur. Jesus was "a man attested by God *to you*, by miracles, wonders and signs which God did through Him *in your midst*, as *you yourselves also know... you have taken* by lawless hands..." (2:22,23). Peter culminates his speech in v. 36: "God has made this Jesus, *whom you crucified*, both Lord and Christ." The result was that "*they were cut to the heart.*" This is what Peter, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, intended — this challenge to their emotions, their consciences. He had gone through the same traumas of mind for the three heart-wrenching days of soul-bitterness after he denied he ever knew his Lord.

"First... repent!"

Notice the response of Peter when they cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" He does not respond by saying first, "Be baptized" — but by crying, "Repent!" Meditate on the absolute dimension of repentance they felt, those who had been "cut to the heart" on that day of Pentecost. The overflow of joy and commitment that was experienced in the early weeks and months of the first ecclesia surely gave evidence of the full degree of their repentance. We read, "All who believed were together and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all, as anyone had need. And so [they continued] daily in the temple... with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God..." (Acts 2:44-47).

Turning away from iniquities

Likewise in Acts 3. Peter concludes a straight-from-the-shoulder message about the reality of the death and resurrection of their Messiah by saying, "Repent therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out" (v. 19). He then declares, "To you first, God having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent him to bless you, *in turning away every one of you from your iniquities*" (v. 26). So the purpose of the crucifixion was much more than to create a meaning for their baptism. It not only afforded them the blotting out of their sins, but also and especially provided them the impetus to "turn away" from their former fleshly ways of thinking. The purging of conscience was intended to be permanent.

Is this point too simple and obvious? Do our minds tend to pass over it? Perhaps. We so like to move on, into the meaning and symbolism of our Master's atoning sacrifice. But is there a point we are missing here? The relevant Scripture texts in Romans, Hebrews, and other letters were written to believers so that they could understand the meaning of all the ways of God more perfectly. They were not written to potential converts for them to digest fully ***before*** they were ready for baptism.

When Peter was sent to preach to Cornelius, the Holy Spirit fell on the hearers to the astonishment of Peter — this caused him to baptize them. Notice that the

last point Peter was making before the Spirit was manifested, was, "To him all the prophets witness that, through his name, whoever believes in him *will receive remission of sins*" (10:43).

Paul's discourse at Antioch in Pisidia includes strong emotional appeals. Notice how it concludes (Acts 13:37-41). After stressing the resurrection of Christ, that he saw no corruption, Paul says, "Therefore let it be known to you brethren, that through this man is preached unto you *forgiveness of sins*; and by him everyone is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses." First and foremost, Paul's appeal was an appeal for an emotional appreciation to realize how they could become right (justified) before God. Paul's quote from Habakkuk (Hab. 1:5; Acts 13:41) is obviously appropriate in challenging the emotional rejection of those who despised Paul's message.

Trembling!

Paul's tactics with Felix fit into this pattern. As Paul "reasoned about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid (AV, he trembled)" (Acts 24:25). We would like to know more of Paul's reasoning, but undoubtedly it targeted the emotions of Felix, challenging him to put himself in "the right" before God! He was not capable of facing that challenge! How many of us are? We are not challenged openly or audibly, but we are challenged in our thought processes and meditations! How easy to turn an inner deaf ear to that challenge.

Every time we sit and wait for the emblems to be passed to us, we need to meditate on the nature of the emotions the sacrifice of our Master arouses in us. And having meditated and partaken of the emblems, we remember that Paul wrote, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). This proclaiming, or shewing forth, is an acknowledging to ourselves and our fellow brethren and sisters that we are *remembering*. But what are we remembering? The subsequent actions and attitude of the first Christians in Jerusalem demonstrated what they remembered.

Will our actions and attitudes, after we leave this place, demonstrate what we remember?

David Caudery (Dandenong, VIC, Australia)

Felix

"Felix was a naturally violent and headstrong man, used to exercising power, and getting his own way. If men revolted against his authority, he destroyed them. If the High Priest remonstrated with him, he had him put to death. If he fancied another man's wife, he took her. But if he wanted to be a Christian, he would have to get down off his high horse and learn to control his passions. 'Except a man be converted, and become as a little child', the founder of Christianity had laid down, 'he cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven.' And neither Felix nor anybody else is exempted. There is no place for people on hand-made pedestals in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God" (Len Richardson).

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (9) Jew and Gentile one in the Lord Jesus

"Circumcision" and "uncircumcision"

Having already brought out the unique privileges of those who have accepted the Lord Jesus, and having also emphasized the need for good works (in Eph. 2:10), the Apostle addresses the Gentiles among his readers, and reminds them they had been called the uncircumcision by circumcised Israelites (v. 11). He then proceeds in verse 12 to remind converted Gentiles of what their previous position had been, and to this we shall presently come. The whole issue of circumcision had threatened to be divisive as soon as Gentiles accepted the gospel (see Acts 15:1), and we can understand why: it was instituted by God, who required Abraham to submit to circumcision himself, and who also required circumcision to be a continuing practice for subsequent generations (see Gen. 17:9-14). After the birth of the Lord, his mother Mary faithfully saw that he was circumcised the eighth day (Luke 2:21, see also Gal. 4:4).

But long before, it had been recognized that circumcision in itself, despite all the privileges by which it could be attended, was potentially meaningless. Moses stressed this in the wilderness: he called upon the people to circumcise the foreskin of the heart and no longer to be rebellious. This same call was later taken up by Jeremiah (in 4:4) and by Paul in Romans 2:29. These reflections and passages were considered at an earlier stage in our studies (see *Tidings,* July, 2007, pp. 277,278).

One might well ask with Paul: what advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Paul answers his own question: "much in every way!" First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God (see Rom. 3:1,2, NIV). There could surely be no more resounding endorsement of the unique value of the Old Testament than this.

Paul then turns to what is tantamount to boasting on the part of so many Jews: the latter knew they are members of a people who practice circumcision by divine appointment (as we have brought out above), and that was why their descent from Abraham became too often a subject of pride on their part and of disdain for the uncircumcised Gentile. Yet, as Paul declares, it was a practice carried out by human hands (v. 11). At the same time, in verse 12, the Apostle goes on to spell out the position of the Gentiles.

Understandably, the subject of circumcision occurs also in Colossians, because the heresy in the Lycus valley had a Jewish origin. There Paul boldly affirms the baptized believers had been "circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11), while in Philippians the Apostle uses withering terms to describe the

advocates of the circumcision made with hands: "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision" (Phil. 3:2).

We recall "dogs" was an expression which orthodox Jews could employ about Gentiles (see Matt. 15:26, where the Lord uses the word ironically). Paul's "concision" can carry the sense of "mutilation". Having thus suitably stressed the vanity of pride merely in being circumcised, but also emphasizing what Gentiles had been deprived of by not being circumcised, Paul then spells out in detail the position of the Gentile before he had embraced the hope of life in the Lord Jesus. First, as we would expect, they had been separate from Christ, and this is a reminder from the Apostle of what it had meant for him before the Lord made his dramatic revelation on the Damascus road. Then, the Apostle declares the uncircumcised Gentiles had been "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel" ("excluded from citizenship in Israel": NIV), by which declaration the unique status of Israel is reaffirmed.

We recall in this connection how the Lord Jesus, in a truly remarkable declaration to the Samaritan woman, affirmed that Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim in Samaria could no longer compete in claims that they were the places where God was to be worshipped. Rather, Jesus said, true worshippers, everywhere, would worship the Father "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). At the same time, the Lord was careful to declare, "salvation is from the Jews" (v. 22). It is thus that the Lord and his apostle are united in their teaching.

Strangers from the covenants of promise

Because they had not been circumcised Israelites, the Gentiles had known nothing about the "covenants of promise", and as such they had been in a hopeless position, without hope and without God in their lives. The reference to the covenants is highly significant. There is a first clue of their importance in the divine purpose in the opening verse of the New Testament: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). Indeed, we are justified in affirming it is impossible to understand God's purpose in the Lord if we are ignorant of the Old Testament covenants.

There is independent witness to this in the earliest apostolic teaching in the Book of Acts. David figures prominently in Acts 2, for there we find a first mention of him in verse 25, in connection with the physical resurrection of the Lord. Then, in verse 30, Peter asserts that God had sworn by an oath to David that one of his descendants would occupy his throne (see 2 Samuel 23:5, where the expression "everlasting covenant" occurs; see also 2 Samuel 7:12-16).

As for Abraham, he figures in Acts 3 and there is a precise mention of the covenant God made with him. To his audience the apostle declares: "Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the families be blessed" (v. 25). The further comment by Peter is enlightening: "Unto you first God, having raised up his Servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

This interpretation of the nature of the blessing to be bestowed upon Abraham and his posterity is significant in the highest degree: the covenant is universal in its scope and relates not to material blessings but to the forgiveness of sins. Could there possibly be a more explicit anticipation of the saving work of the Lord Jesus? That this is not confined to Israelites, but to all who share the faith of Abraham, is a fundamental New Testament message. John the Baptist denounces roundly any pride in physical descent from Abraham (Matt. 3:9). Likewise, the Lord, full of admiration for the centurion's faith, effectively declares that those who share his faith will be with the Lord in his kingdom (Matt. 8:10,11). This pronouncement is confirmed by Paul in the chapter on faith (see Rom. 4).

It is thus that so often we can discern the unity of God's Word. A sustained study of the Scriptures serves to deepen and confirm our conviction in their truth. When the Gentiles to whom Paul is specifically addressing himself in Ephesians 2:12 became increasingly familiar with apostolic teaching, they would appreciate the wonder of the new world to which they were being introduced.

Brought near in the blood of Christ

Paul proceeds to inform his Gentile readers that, before they had been baptized into the saving Name of the Lord, they had been "far off" (v. 13), but now they have been brought near "in the blood of Christ". Thus Paul stresses the universal character of the cross, in reconciling the world to God (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19). The expression "far off" occurs in Isaiah 57:19; and the same expression recurs in Ephesians 2:17. We hope to give it more extended treatment when we come to that passage.

"Our peace"

When the Apostle, following the mention of the blood of Christ, declares the Lord to be "our peace", he is again evoking the passage in Isaiah 57: "I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him that is far off and to him that is near" (v. 19). While peace can be a situation in which there is no war, what Paul here is thinking of is the removal of the estrangement between God and mankind, an estrangement that arose because of human transgressions. This applied with full force to the Israelites, for interestingly we read in Isaiah 59:2: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." It is the same prophet who twice declares, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 48:22; 57:21).

The one who is called "Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6) is the same one of whom it was prophesied that "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). We encounter here a special use of the term "peace": it speaks of the alienation between God and mankind through human sin and its removal in the person of our Lord, both by his blameless life and his eventual submission to the cross. Thus the unity of mankind with their God has been brought about by God, acting through His Son. There is a recurring expression in John's Gospel: "lifted up" (see 3:14,15; 8:28) and then in 12:32,33: " 'And I, if I be lifted up from

the earth, will draw all men unto myself.' But this he said signifying by what manner of death he should die." This latter momentous declaration was made in the presence of Greeks who had sought to be introduced to him (vv. 20,21). It was by this chain of passages that the Lord throws a flood of light upon the strange episode in Numbers 21:9. There the Hebrew word for "standard" (RV) is "nes", and it recurs in Isaiah 11:12: "And he shall set up an ensign ('nes') for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel..." That standard or ensign was the Lord Jesus, and he understood perfectly the significance of that strange episode in the wilderness and its relevance to his own work of redemption.

The dividing wall of hostility

When Paul wrote his Ephesian letter, the Temple and its associated ceremonies had been superseded. However, Herod's imposing architectural achievement was still commanding the wonder of Jew and Gentile. There was a highly visible sign of the distinction between Jew and Gentile, the so-called wall of separation (RV), "the dividing wall of hostility" (NIV) (see 2:14). Jack Finegan has much useful information concerning the Temple of this period, and he draws on Josephus for some of his information: "Proceeding... toward the second court of the Temple, one found it surrounded by a stone balustrade three cubits [about 4 and a half feet] high and of exquisite workmanship; in this at regular intervals stood slabs giving warning, some in Greek, others in Latin characters, of the law of purification, to wit, that no foreigner was permitted to enter the holy place, for so the second enclosure of the Temple was called". [1] Finegan then recounts how Clermont-Ganneau found an inscription in 1871 testifying to the truth of Josephus' description. It is now in a museum in Istanbul and, according to Finegan, part of a similar inscription has been subsequently discovered.

Paul was very familiar with the barrier between Jew and Gentile; apart from the time he spent at the feet of Gamaliel, he had subsequently spent time in the Jewish capital. It was the unfounded suspicion that Paul had taken Trophimus beyond the barrier which led to the riot in Jerusalem, and the whole train of events which led eventually to his confinement in Rome, and the writing of the Ephesian letter (see Acts, especially 21:27-29).

When we reflect on the fact that Ephesians was written in the early 60s AD, and Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed in AD 70, history had fully vindicated Paul. Indeed, by the end of the century, the great prophecy uttered by our Lord shortly before his death had become a historical reality (see especially Matt. 21:43). One wonders how the Judaizing party in Colosse and elsewhere reacted to the momentous events that marked the time covered by Acts and later during the first century.

Abolishing in his flesh the law

We pass on to the consideration of verse 15 (in Eph. 2), where the Apostle enlarges on the teaching of verse 14: the distinction between Jews and Gentile, enshrined in the ordinance of circumcision and the practice of the Law, had been abolished by the Lord "in his flesh". This reminds us of the real humanity of our Lord (cf.

Heb. 2:14), where — while in a nature identical with ours — he had encountered sin and vanquished it. Thus he had also triumphed over the ordinances which, as Paul himself testifies, had served to exhibit human sinfulness (see Rom. 7:13). It was in this way, by triumphing over the very commandments separating Jews and Gentile, that he removed the distinction, as we have already seen, and so created "one new man". We must not forget that these same vital truths figure in a crucial chapter (see Col. 2:13,14). In the Lord everything is ***"new"*** (a word which, if explored, would occupy much space).

As we work through Ephesians, and also look at Colossians, we can perceive how the situation of the Judaizers is exposed in all its weakness. When the two letters were read out to the disciples assembled in the home of Philemon (see Phm. 2 and Col. 4:16), we can only hope they had the humility and the grace to acknowledge their errors. As already mentioned, historical events were to undermine their case.

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

Note:

1. See Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past (The Archaeological Background of the Hebrew-Christian Religion),* Princeton University Press, 1954, pp. 246,247). Understandably, all modern commentators mention the discovery of the inscription so hostile to Gentiles. Armitage Robinson, in the commentary already quoted in this series, has a long passage on the discovery (see pp. 59,60). He informs us it was made in 1871 when Clermont Ganneau (sic) was acting for the Palestine Exploration Fund. He quotes this particular inscription which is in Greek characters: "NO MAN OF ANOTHER NATION TO ENTER WITHIN THE FENCE AND ENCLOSURE ROUND THE TEMPLE. AND WHOEVER IS CAUGHT WILL HAVE HIMSELF TO BLAME THAT HIS DEATH ENSUES."

"I advise you, in whatever you read, and most of all in reading the Bible, to remember that it is for the purpose of making you wiser and more virtuous. I have myself, for many years, made it a practice to read through the Bible once every year. I have always endeavored to read it with the same spirit and temper of mind, which I now recommend to you: that is, with the intention and desire that it may contribute to my advancement in wisdom and virtue. My desire is indeed very imperfectly successful; for, like you, and like the Apostle Paul, 'I find a law in my nature' to be imperfect, so I know that it is my duty to aim at perfection; and feeling and deploring my own frailties, I can only pray Almighty God, for the aid of His Spirit to strengthen my good desires, and to subdue my propensities to evil; for it is from Him that every good and every perfect gift descends. My custom is to read four or five chapters every morning, immediately after rising from my bed. It employs about an hour of my time, and seems to me the most suitable manner of beginning the day" (John Quincy Adams, sixth President of the United States, ***Letters to My Son****).*

[Elsewhere it is recorded that President Adams read the Bible primarily in the original Hebrew and Greek.]

Article

The Search for Wisdom

Mining is an ancient art. It requires knowledge, skill, the necessary equipment and the zeal to seek and to find. It is labour-intensive, it is heavy industry, and it is a work for strong hands and good muscles. However, it also requires a keen brain, a sharp eye and a knowledge of geology to be successful. Mining is not for the fainthearted, nor for the work-shy. It is for men who are prepared to risk all in the pursuit of the ultimate goal. Searching for wisdom is like searching for silver. Both objects are difficult to find but worth the effort.

The search for wisdom is a lifelong activity, the component parts of which occupy a large part of the teaching of the book of Proverbs. Some of these are listed in the long conditional sentence which forms the first part of Proverbs 2. The sentence begins with the phrase: "My son, if..." and ends with: "then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." In other words, if you do 'x and y' then 'z' will follow. We are told elsewhere that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; therefore, if we would seek to find wisdom then we need to follow the instructions given to us. The instructions are as follows:

To receive (the Word of God):

1. incline your ear,
2. apply your heart,
3. cry after it,
4. lift up your voice,
5. seek for it, and
6. search for it (Prov. 2:2-4).

The first four instructions have to do with the response of the senses. They describe the action of the mind and the heart in regard to the things of God:

a. to receive the Word of God,
b. to hide it within the mind by learning its words, phrases and messages,
c. to apply the ear with concentration in order to apply the heart to the things of God, and finally
d. to cry and lift up the voice in prayer and praise.

The last two items on the list are of a different order, for they are linked to the work of mining. The search for wisdom is like searching for silver, like going on a "mining expedition".

While there are very few references in the Scriptures to mining, one significant passage is contained in the Book of Job:

> *"Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold which they refine. Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted from the ore. Men put an end to darkness and search out to the farthest bound the ore in gloom and deep darkness. They open shafts in a valley away from where men live... As for*

the earth, out of it comes bread; but underneath it is turned up as by fire. Its stones are the place of sapphires and it has the dust of gold... Man puts his hand to the flinty rock, and overturns mountains by the roots. He cuts out channels in the rocks, and his eye sees every precious thing. He binds up the streams so that they do not trickle, and the thing that is hid he brings forth to light" (Job 28:1-11, RSV).

We have in this passage a detailed description of mining. However, it is interesting to note that the process of mining is compared, even in Job, to the process of searching for wisdom:

"Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold" (vv. 12-17).

Wisdom is even more difficult to search out than silver; its value, consequently, is even greater.

The search for wisdom is like a "mining expedition", but for far greater riches, and with far greater difficulties and far greater cost. It is therefore important that we know what wisdom is. Like the miner, it is imperative that we learn how to recognize the precious metals, or at least, the characteristics of the ore-bearing rock. Or, to change the figure, we need to be able to recognize the characteristics which demonstrate wisdom.

What is wisdom? It cannot be easily defined; it is multi-faceted, discerned in different ways by different people. However, there are certain features which, once described, can be easily identified by all of us.

Wisdom is essentially practical, seen in the workshop rather than the study, seen in others but rarely in oneself. Wisdom is demonstrated by contact with other people rather than in isolation. Wisdom is the product of instruction. It is an awareness of the lessons taught in the school of life and a willingness to learn from them. Wisdom is learned by looking at life and seeking to modify one's own life accordingly.

Wisdom is insight — the ability to discern between good and evil. It is also an awareness of the consequences of particular actions. It is relatively easy to perceive the difference between good and evil, but it is much more difficult to think ahead regarding the possible outcomes of different courses of action.

Wisdom is wise behaviour — shrewdness and good judgment in the face of foolishness. When all others are committed to a course of action which is foolhardy, the wise person maintains his composure, his judgment, and his principles.

Wisdom is understanding — the ability to decide what is important and what is unimportant. It is distinguishing between what is central and what is peripheral.

Our beliefs are important, and what we say and do is important. But what society — our employers, politicians, and the like — deem to be important is often unimportant. Wisdom perceives the difference between these things and seeks to ensure that a true perspective is maintained.

Wisdom is 'knowing the ways of God'. By learning about God, His thoughts and actions, we learn to adopt a different response. We learn to be wise by fearing His Name, not in the sense of being frightened, but by learning to respect the guidance in His Word.

How can we find wisdom? How can we search more effectively to find that which is more valuable and elusive than silver?

Look to the Master, to the Lord Jesus Christ, he who was the personification of Wisdom. Listen to his words, think about his responses, watch his actions, and try to follow in his footsteps. It was predicted of him that: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding... and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears" (Isa. 11:2,3).

These characteristics enable one, on the one hand, to quickly discern the ways of God and, on the other, to respond slowly to what is seen and heard about our fellow men and women. The search for wisdom requires:

1. more listening and less talking,
2. more thoughtful consideration for others, and less carping criticism,
3. more thankful praise of each other, and less self-congratulation.

In other words, wisdom is the motivation of the spiritual life, the driving force for the person who would be like his Master.

Just as the miner requires knowledge and skill, the necessary equipment and — above all — a preparedness to risk all in the search for silver and gold, so does the disciple in the search for wisdom. The total commitment, the absolute resolution, the utter preoccupation with one is a parable of the other.

No wonder that the book of Proverbs places such stress on wisdom:

"*Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom*" *(Prov. 4:7).*

Colin Edwards (Newbury, UK)

"How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver!" (Prov. 16:16).

"Make no mistake: each one faces this choice. It would be tragic if this rather simple proverb were to be recited at the judgment seat, and we were informed that we chose gold rather than wisdom. How would you respond in your defense? Do you think he would be sympathetic if you 'explained' how it all got too complicated and involved, and that it just didn't quite work out as planned? He might well say you despised his advice. He might well say his way was too simple for you. He might well say, 'Depart from me; I never knew you!' " (Barry Bowen).

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot
(2) Forgiveness

"For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee" (Psa. 86:5).

Our thoughts for this particular essay will focus on the word ***forgiveness.*** When our Lord Jesus Christ taught us how to pray, the principle of *forgiveness* was the centerpiece of his teaching. Notice how the prayer covers all the main Biblical principles, from:

(a) honoring the Lord our God in its opening words (echoing the greatness of His being, spoken of many times in the Old Testament: Exod. 20:1-7; Psa. 8:1,9; 36:7; 148:13; 150:2; and many others), to
(b) praying for His kingdom to come (e.g., Rev. 22:20), to
(c) asking Him to meet our simplest needs (daily bread — not steak!), to
(d) keeping us from sin (e.g., 1 Cor. 10:13), to
(e) imploring Him for forgiveness, *as we forgive others.*

We cannot help but notice that Jesus is instructing us that his *forgiveness* towards us is "conditional", in the sense that it is entirely dependent on our willingness to grant *forgiveness* to others. With all the depth of meaning condensed into the Lord's Prayer, it is instructive that the only point that Jesus chooses to expand upon is the one on *forgiveness*.

"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14,15, NKJV).

It is obvious that this is a first principle because, if the Lord God does not forgive our trespasses, we surely will not be in the kingdom. We will be cast aside at the Judgment Seat, and the same quality of mercy that we offered to those who sinned against us will be poured out upon us.

There is a very strong emphasis on *forgiveness* in the teachings of our Messiah. Yet in my life experience it has been one of the hardest lessons for me to learn personally. My observation convinces me that *forgiveness* is also one of the most difficult virtues for others to practice when they feel sinned against. The disciples also had a hard time accepting the principle of *forgiveness*; this led Peter to ask the question:

"Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" (Matt. 18:21).

There is an apparent justification for Peter trying to limit *forgiveness* to "seven times". Under Jewish custom, in the first century, the number seven stood for completeness (i.e., the seven days of creation); hence forgiving seven times seemed

a reasonable way to deal with a sinner. We shouldn't be critical of the disciple's expectation that seven was a perfectly respectable number of times to offer *forgiveness*, because forgiving even once is an extremely difficult task for most of us to accomplish. Before examining the response of the Lord Jesus Christ to Peter's query, it would pay for us to look further at Peter's cultural environment.

Jewish "forgiveness"

It would be grossly unfair to assume that the Jews were less forgiving than others, and that Peter was looking for a way out — so as to limit the quality and quantity of his *forgiveness* (some Christian commentators have insinuated this). Nothing could be further from the truth, because *forgiveness* was, and is, hallowed as an extremely important first principle for faithful Jews. The Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, is the most sacred holiday in the Jewish calendar. Even if a Jew doesn't feel much like going to synagogue on any other day of the year, one might expect to find him or her there on this most holy day. To realize how important Yom Kippur is to contemporary Jews, and exactly what it means to their religion, I quote from a recent source:

> *"The holiday [i.e., Yom Kippur] is important because it is about asking for forgiveness from those you have wronged in the past year. The Jewish new year Rosh Hashanah... marks the beginning of the Days of Awe. Shifron added that during this time forgiveness should be asked from the people you've wronged in the past."* [1]

First century Jews were also strongly influenced by the teachings of the famous Rabbi Hillel who was a partial contemporary of our Lord Jesus Christ.[2] One of his most often repeated teachings reflects concern not only for one's own well being, but also for the welfare of others:

> *"If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?"*

A modern derivative on Hillel's philosophy has specifically tied this to *forgiveness*:

> *"It also helps me to put the issue of forgiveness in the framework so many have borrowed from Hillel: 'If I am not going to forgive, who will?' (Not God.) I can't necessarily wait for the other person's apology. If I am only for myself — focusing solely on my own resentments, and not on the needs of my family or colleagues or community — what am I? And if not now, when will I be ready? When will enough time have passed for necessary scar tissue to have formed, but not too much so that the scar is too impenetrable?"* [3]

Hence to claim that *forgiveness* is a principle owned only by Christians is a misconception. Certainly the Apostle Peter must have been taught the virtues of *forgiveness* in his upbringing.

Roman "forgiveness"

The Romans on the other hand had little use for the concept of *forgiveness*. Preserving honor and wreaking vengeance for perceived sins against one's person

were the rule. It is no accident that the English word "vendetta", for vengeance, is carried over from the Italian — who had adopted it from the Latin *vindicta*.[4] Unfortunately, many people still follow "vendetta" rather than *forgiveness* when they have been wronged. There is an old Sicilian[5] folk saying that goes something like this: *"When you set out on vendetta dig two graves!"* The implication being that you will probably also need one for yourself. Indeed this is often the consequence of our unwillingness to offer *forgiveness*; it not only harms others, but it can also be self-destructive. A person who harbors revenge is eaten up inside, and his life becomes bitter. He doesn't know how to let go and move on with his own life. In the end the person who has wronged him has won!

Modern "forgiveness"

Many of the ills that cause conflict in our world today come from the thirst for revenge rather than *forgiveness* — such tragedies as the bitter Israeli/Arab conflict, ongoing world terrorism, the atrocities in the Balkan wars, and many others. These stem from wanting an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, rather than the loving *forgiveness* embodied in the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ:

> *"You have heard that it was said, **'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'** But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also..." (Matt. 5:38-42, NKJV).*

One of the few positive examples of literally obeying this teaching of our Master under the most trying circumstances was the *forgiveness* offered recently by the Amish community. After the shocking slayings of the young girls at the Nickels Mines, Pennsylvania, one-room schoolhouse on October 2, 2006, ABC.com reported: "Amish Say They 'Forgive' School Shooter". The story went on to say:

> *"It didn't take long for us to learn that the Amish families most affected by this tragedy have responded in a way that might seem foreign to most of us: They talk about Monday's school shooting only in terms of forgiveness."*

I wonder how many of us would react this way if we were faced with comparable circumstances.

"How many times?"

We return to Peter's question. In answer, Jesus, as he so often taught in the Gospel message, takes a principle of the Law of Moses and expands it so that the spirit is now one that is completely reflective of the character of the LORD God. God's mercy is without limit; likewise, seventy times seven suggests the uncountable number of times that we are expected to forgive. Surely we do not want God to forgive only seven of our trespasses! If that were the case we are lost and our life has been in vain. The emphasis in Jesus' teaching is completely on mercy not justice: *"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7).*

The beatitudes have nothing to say about justice, although I sometimes think that we interpret this passage as meaning: *"Blessed are those who offer justice, for they shall obtain justice."* In the KJV Bible the word "justice" is completely absent from the New Testament text (it appears 28 times in the Old Testament). We should be

extremely thankful that the Lord God offers us mercy, not justice, as is evident from the well-known passage in Romans 6:23:

> *"For the **wages** of sin is death, but the **gift** of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

We cannot justly earn eternal life; it can only be obtained as a wonderful gift, by the mercy and grace of our Lord.

Forgiveness without repentance?

Nevertheless, one might recoil at the idea of offering *forgiveness* without repentance. As if to say: *'Doesn't Isaiah teach that the wicked must forsake his way and return... before the LORD can have mercy (Isa. 55:7)?' Or, 'Only those who are rebuked and who repent may be forgiven (Luke 17:3,4)!'*

Certainly for *forgiveness* to profit the sinner, there must be true repentance. But *forgiveness* can benefit the wronged person even if the sinner hasn't repented (cp. Matt. 5:38-48; John 8:1-11).[6]

The very act of offering our *forgiveness* may turn that sinner around. In the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessing is upon the person being merciful — whether or not the person receiving mercy appreciates it. He will have to answer to God for his sins, of course: "Vengeance is mine, saith the LORD!" But we don't have to demand it ourselves before we offer forgiveness.

The greatest example of this offer of unmerited *forgiveness* is that given by our Lord Jesus Christ as he was dying on the cross:

> *"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34, NKJV).*

What had the Jews, who had falsely accused him, or the Roman authorities, who condemned him for expediency, done to deserve his *forgiveness*? Jesus was content to leave it in the Father's hands — and so should we.

The parable of the "Wicked Servant" offers us further insight into the weakness of human nature in dealing with *forgiveness* (Matt. 18:23-35). In this parable the king forgives his servant a huge debt equivalent today to billions of dollars.[7] The servant throws himself completely at the mercy of his king, and with great compassion the king releases him of all debt. Unfortunately, immediately the servant is faced with similar difficulty with one of his own colleagues who owed him an extremely trivial sum.[8] The comparison in the relative debt is staggering, as it was meant to be. The Lord Jesus Christ is drawing an exact analogy: we are the "wicked servant", and our debt of sins is monumental compared to the sin any individual can commit against us. However, human nature is very deceitful; just like the wicked servant we can be blind to our own failings yet see very clearly the mote in the other fellow's eye (Matt. 7:1-5).

'What sin?'

This failure fully to perceive our own sins is evident even in a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14).

We are no doubt familiar with the story of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11; 12). King David was carried away with lust and committed adultery. He then (mis)used his power as ruler of Israel to betray the trust of his loyal servant Uriah. David's subterfuge was responsible for the death of Uriah. He was as guilty of murder as if he had struck the fatal blow himself. Furthermore, there is no Scriptural evidence that David showed any remorse; he seemed perfectly content to cover up his crimes ***until*** Nathan confronted him. I have no doubt that David would be out of fellowship in our ecclesial world today. Would we reach out to such a person, as God did through the prophet Nathan? Or would we simply sit back and say: '*When that brother or sister is ready, of a free will, to acknowledge his or her crimes, and repent,* ***then*** *we will think about it*'?

King David was blind to the horrible sins he had committed in his lust for Bathsheba. He had to be forced to confront his corrupt acts through a parable told him by the prophet Nathan. David's indignation at the act of a rich man robbing a poor man is powerfully voiced:

> *"So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, 'As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die!' " (2 Sam. 12:5, NKJV).*

He was apparently oblivious to the fact that he was, in effect, passing sentence upon himself. One can only wonder what the expression must have been on David's face when the prophet made the pronouncement:

> *"Then Nathan said to David, 'You are the man!' " (v. 7).*

To David's everlasting credit he doesn't do what we have so often seen in public affairs in our own age, i.e., attempt to equivocate or — worse yet — cover up. The cover-up has often turned out to be more horrendous than the original crime.

The steps of forgiveness

In Psalm 51 we gain a powerful insight into the mind of David in reaction to Nathan's indictment. This psalm is a primer in how we can recover from our sins. Notice the progression of David's thoughts.

a. He pleads for mercy, not justice, knowing that he is entirely unworthy of the latter (v. 1).
b. He acknowledges his sin (v. 3).
c. He realizes that ultimately all sin is not only against others, but an affront to the Lord God (v. 4).
d. He puts aside pride and pleads for God's *forgiveness,* acknowledging the weakness of human flesh (vv. 5-8).
e. He asks God not only to forgive his sins, but also to forget them, i.e., *'blot out all mine iniquities*'.

This is a lesson we can all take to heart. We have not truly forgiven until we can also forget any abuse we have taken. We are promised that this is exactly what God will do:

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19, NKJV).

It would be incongruous indeed if in the kingdom age our sins were forgiven yet we were to be constantly reminded what they were. Likewise, we have never truly forgiven someone until we completely put the pain of the sin out of our thoughts and move on with our lives.

The final verses of Psalm 51 plead for a renewed spirit, and teach us exactly what frame of mind we need in order to be forgiven by both man and God:

"Renew a right spirit within me... The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart — These, O God, You will not despise" (vv. 10,17, NKJV).

We all sin, but we should not despair. The Scriptures teach us that, with only one exception, all sin can be forgiven. The only exception, of course, is *blasphemy against the Holy Spirit* (Matt. 12:31). In that case a person has denied the authority of God, and under such circumstances one cannot ask for the power of *forgiveness* while at the same time refusing to believe in the omnipotence of the LORD.

The key points

To summarize the key points that we have learned about ***forgiveness*:**

1. It is a first principle (Matt. 6:14,15).
2. It is conditional — we will only receive as much we give (Matt. 6:12).
3. It can be given irrespective of any repentance by the party offending us (Luke 23:34).
4. It must be offered even under the most trying circumstances (Matt. 5:38-42).
5. It will only benefit the one committing the sin if accompanied by repentance (Psa. 51).
6. It is possible to forgive all sins except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:31).

"But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth (Psa. 86:15, NKJV)."

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. http://www.idsnews.com/news/story.aspx?id=37968
2. The actual dates of Rabbi Hillel's birth and death are somewhat obscure, and various sources are not in agreement. The best estimate I have found is that he probably passed away in 10 AD, when Jesus was a young teenager.
3. S. Cohen, "Forgiveness — The Challenges of Living with Ambivalence", Autumn 2002 issue of the *JRF Quarterly Reconstructionism Today*.
4. *Compact Oxford Dictionary of Everyday English.*
5. Some sources claim that this is a Chinese folk saying, but my Italian grandmother would have disagreed. The Chinese also claim to have invented spaghetti!
6. The woman is caught in the act of adultery (what about her male companion?). It is clear that

Jesus forgives her and counts on this generosity turning her life around. There is no evidence in this story of the woman first repenting before Jesus took her side of the case.

7. We are not told whether this was a gold or silver talent, in either case the sum was huge. From WEB notes: "A talent is a weight of about 34 kilograms or 75 pounds." As of May 22, 2007, gold was trading at $659 per oz. and silver at $13.10 per oz. This would place the current value of 10,000 talents at almost $8 billion for gold and approximate $157 million for silver. Note: Other sources give the weight of a talent from 60 to 90 pounds.
8. "Authorized Version 'penny', Matt.18:28; 20:2,9,13, a Roman silver coin… worth about 16 cents" *(Peloubet's Bible Dictionary, The John C. Winston Co., Philadelphia, PA, 1947 ed., p. 146).* Using Peloubet's valuation the servant owed about $16. Values from 14 cents to $20 have been placed on this coin from other sources. The important point is that the amount was trivial compared to 10,000 talents.

"They need praying for!"

*In **Christianity Today**, psychiatrist Robert Coles told an amazing story of a girl who had learned to pray for those who were hostile to her. Coles was in New Orleans in 1960 when a federal judge ruled that the city schools must be integrated. A six-year-old girl, Ruby Bridges, was the only black child to attend the William T. Frantz School. Every day for weeks as she entered and left the building, a mob would be standing outside to scream at her and threaten her. They shook their fists, shouted obscenities, and threatened to kill her. One day her teacher saw her lips moving as she walked through the crowd, flanked by burly federal marshals.*

When the teacher told Coles about it, he asked Ruby if she was talking to the people. "I wasn't talking to them," she replied. "I was just saying a prayer for them."

Coles asked her, "Why do you do that?"

"Because they need praying for," came her reply.

* * * * *

"Forgiveness is unlocking the door to set someone free and realizing you were the prisoner!" (Max Lucado).

* * * * *

"Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hate. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness" (William Arthur Ward).

* * * * *

"My salvation will be complete only when I cease to resent God's forgiveness of those who have hurt me" (John Leax).

* * * * *

"Never does the human soul appear so strong as when it forgoes revenge, and dares forgive an injury" (Edwin Chapin).

Music in Worship

Section editors: Ken and Joan Curry
Markham and Eglington
P.O. Box 90525
Toronto, ON M1J 3N7

The Trumpet's "Uncertain Sound"

"If the trumpet give an uncertain sound,
who shall prepare himself for the battle?"
(1 Corinthians 14:8)

The trumpet has a very long history, having been used in ancient Egypt, the Near East, and Greece. The trumpet used by Israel at the time of Moses (and in other nearby countries) was used as a signaling device sounding only one or two tones. During this period the trumpet's few tones were used for signaling, announcing, commanding, and military purposes. Today a trumpet can be sounded to give recognizably different signals, and is also used for musical purposes.[1]

When Israel was in the wilderness, silver trumpets were used for signaling the people to prepare for certain specific actions. Depending on the occasion the calls produced were different. For example, both trumpets were blown when all the assembly was called together and "...for the journeying of the camps" (Num. 10:3-7). But different sounds were produced for each occasion. When Israel was to break camp, the trumpet produced a penetrating sound, called "an alarm" in the King James Version ['a loud noise': Strong's] that summoned camps from the east or west to set out.

> *"When you blow an alarm, the camps that are on the east side shall set out. And when you blow an alarm the second time, the camps that are on the south side shall set out. An alarm is to be blown whenever they are to set out. But when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow a long blast, but you shall not sound an alarm" (Num. 10:5-7).*

Only one trumpet was blown to call Israel's tribal leaders together.

> *"But if they blow only one (trumpet) then the chiefs, the heads of the tribes of Israel, shall gather themselves to you (Moses)" (Num 10:4).*

Similarly the trumpet was used to issue both a call to arms (1 Sam. 13:3) and to stop fighting.

> *"So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more" (2 Sam 2:28).*

It was essential to know, from the sound, what message was intended.

In the New Testament, in the early church, the Holy Spirit was actively at work through a variety of supernatural gifts bestowed on individuals.

> *"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (1 Cor. 12:4-7).*

Unfortunately, in Corinth, what should have been a blessing had become a source of rivalry, discord and disordered meetings (1 Cor. 14:33,40).

One of the most coveted of these gifts was that of "tongues". Impressive as it was, however, it was without meaning to the speaker:

> *"For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful" (1 Cor. 14:14).*

Speaking in tongues was also without understanding to the hearers:

> *"For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries" (1 Cor. 14:2).*

However, if the tongue could be interpreted, then it was of benefit:

> *"Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret... If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church: and let him speak to himself and to God" (1 Cor. 14:13,27,28).*

It was as meaningless as listening to someone whose language we haven't learned or as unrecognizable as the efforts of an incompetent player on lute or flute or military trumpet:

> *"Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?" (1 Cor. 14:6,7).*

Paul stressed the need to concentrate on what benefited the community:

> *"The one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation... When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up" (1 Cor. 14:3,26, ESV).*

Words are for meaningful and, if possible, helpful communication. Sounds without meaning are jangle or gibberish. Is it always our aim to be understood? If we are teaching, preaching or talking in private, are our words and illustrations understandable to our hearers? Do we consider their needs and their existing knowledge and interests? Is our message relevant, comprehensible and helpful?

For, as Paul reminds us, "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Cor. 14:8).

Bob Burr
(Barnt Green, Birmingham, UK)

Note:

1. *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music,* Editor, Don Randel, 1986, p. 880.

"Worship must be intelligible. The great things are essentially the simple things; the noblest language is essentially the simplest language. In the end only what satisfies my mind can comfort my heart, and only what my mind can grasp can bring strength to my life" (William Barclay).

"We give Thee but Thine own"

William Walsham How wrote the words for the hymn "We give Thee but Thine own", which is Hymn 175 in the 2002 Christadelphian hymnbook. William How was born in England in 1823 and died in 1897. At the time of the Industrial Revolution a substantial number of people left rural areas in England and moved to the cities in order to obtain employment in factories and dockyards. Many of these people endured long work hours with little remuneration. Child labor, poverty and difficult living conditions were common issues for working-class people in London in the mid-nineteenth century. William How took an active interest in assisting many of the poor people with whom he came in contact.

William How was prompted to write the words of Hymn 175 by David's prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:14:

> *"But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee."*

David's prayer was offered in thankfulness to God for the willing offerings made for the house of God. David recognized that it was because God had first abundantly blessed him and the people of Israel that they were now able to give back to God. What they gave were contributions for the House of the LORD that Solomon, David's son, would build.

With the words of David in his heart and the dire, physical distress of numerous people on his mind, William How wrote the words of Hymn 175. In our hymnbook there are only two verses, but How wrote six verses for this hymn:

We give Thee but Thine own,
Whate'er the gift may be;
All that we have is Thine alone,
A trust, O Lord, from Thee.

May we Thy bounties thus
As stewards true receive,
And gladly, as Thou blessest us,
To Thee our firstfruits give.

O hearts are bruised and dead,
And homes are bare and cold,
And lambs for whom the Shepherd bled
Are straying from the fold.

To comfort and to bless,
To find a balm for woe,
To tend the lone and fatherless
Is angels' work below.

The captive to release,
To God the lost to bring,
To teach the way of life and peace,
It is a Christ-like thing.

And we believe Thy Word,
Though dim our faith may be;
Whate'er for Thine we do, O Lord,
We do it unto Thee.

This hymn is sung to at least three well-known hymn tunes. The tune used in the 2002 hymnbook was written by Sir Arthur Somervell and is called "Windermere", after the town in the United Kingdom where he was born.

Joan and Ken Curry

Resources:

1. www.cyberhymnal.org
2. *Then Sings My Soul,* Book 2, Robert J. Morgan, 2004, pp. 100,101

CD Recordings by Sister Julia Baines

Sis. Julia Baines has produced two CD recordings of music she has written on Bible themes. The titles of these CDs are "Meditations of My Heart" and "On Eagles' Wings". All proceeds from the sale of these recordings go to benefit brethren and sisters in mission areas, and is donated to various branches of the CBM.

For further information contact Sis. Julia by email at christad@nbnet.nb.ca

or write to:

8 Jordan Mountain Road, Mount Hebron, NB, Canada E4G 1G7

Reflections

The Oyster

Developing strength in adversity

Some gardeners start their plants inside to get them established. Then, when the danger of frost is over, they transplant them to the garden outside. My little seedlings have been growing in a plastic hothouse and are now too big. They will most certainly wither if they don't get more earth to develop fully. My plants have enjoyed the warmth inside and the special care they have received, but they can't stay "strong" unless their roots grow and spread out. I must transplant them soon.

We are like the delicate sprouts! When we first come to a full understanding of the truth, we are like seedlings without much strength, babes in Christ, roots not fully developed (as in Matt. 13:21, some never get strong roots). New babes in Christ need special attention from their brothers and sisters. Some ecclesias have classes for the newly baptized, and appoint or divide among themselves the duties of overseeing their growth. Eventually though, the new ones will need to learn to derive their strength from God through their own Bible study — thus turning to God for their greatest strength.

Seeds are like oysters

Just as seeds have shells, so do the oysters in the sea. Remarkably, there are more similarities. Oysters are soft-bodied animals. They have two hard, protective shells and they spend their entire life in one underwater location, usually near land. Precious pearls are sometimes found inside oysters, but not in all. Pearls are formed when a grain of sand or some other irritating substance gets inside the oyster's shell. A shiny substance called "nacre" coats the intruding irritant over and over, and after years of this layered substance, the oyster forms a lustrous pearl! Pearls are rather soft and they absorb as well as reflect light, whereas mineral gems differ in that they are usually hard and only reflect light.

The layers of the nacre build up around the grain of sand, making little crystals of a mineral called "aragonite". These crystals overlap and break up light that falls on them into little "rainbows of color". This gives the pearl its iridescence. Cultured pearls are ones that have been specially planted — a tiny pellet inside the oyster. When the oysters are about seven years old, they are opened up to harvest the cultured pearls.

Shape of pearls

When pearls are evaluated, the shape is just as important as the color. The round ones are the most sought for necklaces. The button-shaped and the drop-shaped pearls are used for earrings. Matching pairs are more valuable than unmatched pearls. All pearls have flaws!

What does this teach us?

We are told by Paul the Apostle in Acts 14:22 that it is through ***much tribulation*** that we enter the Kingdom of God. This is like the oyster that finds an irritating grain of sand inside (a trial) and immediately it covers it over and over again with its special ingredient of nacre (prayer). Oysters will slam their shells shut whenever an enemy approaches, and they will stay shut for up to two weeks. Likewise, we too must learn to turn from temptation that will cause us to sin.

Proverbs 24:10

We are told, ***"If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small."*** Just as the pearl with the irritating grain of sand, our adversities may be small, but after layers and layers of prayer, our character will develop into one that reflects Christ. We become a lustrous pearl of great price! Just as little seeds grow into large trees, if we learn to deal with our adversity, depend on God for our strength, surround ourselves with support, and avoid the enemies that surround us, we will become a strong tree. False friends, wolves in sheep's clothing, may deceive us, but by separating and "slamming our shells shut" as does the oyster, and choosing what is beneficial for our salvation, we will condition our hearts and our behavior and become strong in Christ.

Reactions to life

It is obvious that we must make good choices early on in our discipleship to become strong followers of Christ. We must know the commandments and practice them. We must decide to do the Bible readings... to support and encourage others... to choose good friendships in the truth... to consider our employment and how it affects us or if it conflicts with our walk in Christ.

All decisions are important, and especially our reactions to trial and temptation. We will be judged by our character... by the pearl we have become. The pearl developed in adversity, through much tribulation, will become valuable in the Kingdom of God. Its beauty will never fade. It will be like its Latin name, "unio" — unity! — for it will express unity in diversity. No two pearls are exactly alike — each is different.

We look forward to that time when we shall be united as one in Christ — reflecting the glory of God, becoming that one pearl that adorns the gates of New Jerusalem, where the nations will be ushered in to learn about and worship the LORD.

> *"And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Mal. 3:17).*

Ann Crouse
(North County San Luis Obispo, CA)

> *"The heroes of the Bible make up such a group of pearls as never before in history were strung upon one string. Christianity is the only queen that ever wore such a collection of pearls" (Anonymous).*

Calming a Quarrel

"A patient man calms a quarrel" (Prov. 15:18).

How does one go about calming a quarrel? By being patient. As this verse implies, several actions are very useful:

1. Start out by refusing to get angry: far better to have no answer, no response, and no action whatsoever... if it cannot be carried off without returning anger for anger. The perfect — and perfectly logical — response, if offered in an angry manner, is worse than no response at all.
2. If necessary (and it often can be), ***wait*** until you have rid yourself of all vestige of emotion before attempting to solve the problem. (The old adage, "Count to one hundred", was invented for this!) If this cannot be managed at the time the "quarrel" begins, it is better to say nothing at all, or to walk away, than to retaliate in any way.
3. Never, ever bring in extraneous matters: this only adds fuel to the fire. If your "antagonist" speaks with a funny accent, or reads the NIV instead of the KJV, or simply forgot your birthday after you remembered his... then just forget it: it doesn't help to mention that now! And...
4. If it will help — or even if you don't think it will — concede all but the really important issues. Like Paul in the storm-tossed sea, throw overboard all the excess baggage. Be prepared to say you are "wrong" on a dozen unimportant matters (or to agree, at least, that those matters are of no consequence to the main issue). This makes it easier to achieve the important objective.

Why can't all this be done?

Is it a matter of pride? If so, then surely humility is better than pride.

Is it a matter of one's 'reputation'? If so, then isn't a reputation for patience and calmness and love far better than a reputation for always being right, and being eager to prove it?

Is it a matter of simply ***needing*** to win? Then remember Christ's teaching about "peacemakers" (Matt. 5:9), and "turning the other cheek" (Matt. 5:39; Luke 6:29).

And while contemplating whether such action (or inaction!) can work, or whether you can do it, then spend a bit of time remembering Christ's example — especially at the most crucial point of his life, his trial. There he was beset by hateful men, with grossly unfair charges, determined to see him dead. What did he do?

> *"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' [Isa. 53:9]. 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" (1 Pet. 2:21-23).*

George Booker
(Austin Leander, TX)

Famous Last Words
(12) Abraham

Our last article looked at the last words of Sarah, as she restored order and harmony to the ecclesial family by "casting out the bondwoman and her son." Paul picks up her words to remind us that we are the children of promise, not the children of bondage. We need to be harsh with ourselves, casting out from our life all that might offend or grieve.

The last recorded words of Abraham are found in Genesis 24:2-8, where he gives charge to his steward concerning finding a wife for Isaac. What a crucial time this was! The promised seed had not yet produced the next generation — yet the line of the "seed of the woman" had to continue. Choosing a suitable wife for Isaac was extremely important. Abraham was too old and frail to accomplish the task, so he gives a charge to his faithful steward.

It is interesting to note that this man may be the very same steward named Eliezer, who in Genesis 15:2 was considered by Abraham to be the heir, since Abraham at that point had no son. Now he was being asked to seek a wife for the true heir and preserve the lineage. He could have been jealous like Ishmael, since Isaac had in a sense replaced him. However, the record bears out his faithfulness, as he puts his own needs second to the needs of his master. It may have been this loyal example that Jesus so often referred to when he called upon us to be "faithful stewards" in our Master's house.

> *"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?" (Matt. 24:45).*

We also are called to suppress our own desires in order to serve others.

Abraham wisely instructs his steward in the ways of God. In Genesis 24:7 he tells him that God will "send his angel" before him to make his journey prosperous. Abraham must have emphasized the importance of this mission, explaining to his servant the truth about God's promises. He assured him that God would guide him. Eliezer later demonstrates his own personal belief in Abraham's God. In verse 12 he prays to God. He acknowledges the work of God in his mission in verse 27, and in verse 40 he echoes Abraham's words about the guiding angel sent to prosper his journey.

It is interesting to note that the steward's words in verse 27 contain the first Bible occurrence of the word "truth" (which means faithful or sure). The steward could see that the truth of God's promises to Abraham necessitated finding a faithful wife for Isaac. He had now personally experienced God working in his life to fulfill that truth. (As an aside, what a wonderful woman Rebekah must have been to fulfill the "test" set up by Eliezer. Giving a stranger a drink is one thing, but volunteering to water his camels too! How many sisters reading this article *[Editor: or brothers, for that matter]* would have been successful candidates?)

Jesus says we must worship God in "spirit and truth". Truth is a rare commodity in today's world of 'tolerance', 'non-discrimination', and 'ecumenism'. The popular

notion of 'situational' or 'circumstantial' ethics means there is no absolute truth, but a kind of moving target of 'truth'. Right and wrong are said to depend upon the situation or circumstance in which we find ourselves. In fact, it's seen by the world as wrong to believe in absolute or divine truth. It's said to be a sign of intolerance, fanaticism and bigotry. But for believers Truth must be valued and guarded. Jesus came to bear witness to the Truth (a statement he made in reply to Pilate's scoffing "What is truth?"), and he has asked us to likewise witness to the Truth, by letting our light shine.

In Abraham's "Famous Last Words" we learn to acknowledge the working of God in our lives through His ministering angels. We see an example of walking and working with God. We are reminded to value Truth and allow it to rule our lives — guiding us as we face decisions in our walk Zionwards.

Chris Sales
(Shelburne, ON)

"Out of her poverty, she put in everything" (Mark 12:44)

"Weary with contention, the Master had left those to whom he had spoken in the Porches, and, while the crowd wrangled about his Words or his Person, had ascended the flight of steps which led from 'the Terrace' into the Temple-building. From these steps — whether those leading up to the 'Beautiful Gate,' or one of the side gates — he could gain full view into 'The Court of the Women,' into which they opened. On these steps, or within the gate (for in no other place was it lawful), he sat down, watching the multitude. The time of sacrifice was past, and those who still lingered had remained for private devotion, for private sacrifices, or to pay their vows and offerings. Although the topography of the Temple, especially of this part of it, is not without its difficulties, we know that under the colonnades, which surrounded 'the Court of the Women,' but still left in the middle room for more than 15,000 worshippers, provision was made for receiving religious and charitable contributions. All along these colonnades were the thirteen trumpet-shaped boxes ('shopharoth'); somewhere here also we must locate two chambers: that of 'the silent', for gifts to be distributed in secret to the children of the pious poor, and that where votive vessels were deposited. Perhaps there was here also a special chamber for offerings. These 'trumpets' bore each inscriptions, marking the objects of contribution — whether to make up for past neglect, to pay for certain sacrifices, to provide incense, wood, or for other gifts" (Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*).

Probably it was here that the poor widow paused, with two little coins in her purse (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4). It may be suggested that, on this occasion, she put one coin into one of the boxes for the service of the LORD, this being her usual custom. But this time, she paused also over the "shophar", or trumpet-box, for gifts to the poor. She knew what poverty was like — she had felt the sting of being poor herself, of not quite having enough to eat. So this time she took the second

small coin out of her purse, the only coin she had left, and put it into the "poor box" — then quickly hurried away, but not before the Lord noticed.

What happened when she arrived home? Only a day or so earlier the rich man Zacchaeus had vowed to the Lord Jesus that he would give half of his wealth to the poor (Luke 19:2-8). Is it possible that some of that great contribution to the poor found its way, in short order, to the poor widow who had given all she had in the Temple that very day? And so:

> *"He [or she!] who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and [the LORD] will reward [her] for what [she] has done" (Prov. 19:17).*

[Thanks to Bre. Harry Whittaker and Anthony Oosthuizen for suggesting these brief thoughts.]

Jesus' Unlikely Conversions: (3) The centurion

> *"With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, 'Surely this man was the Son of God' " (Mark 15:37-39).*

Consider how often a Roman soldier might have witnessed criminals dying on crosses. It would have become a common event, and a person might easily become callous about the nature of death. But there was something different about this man, this Jesus of Nazareth, and this day was so different from all the other days of judgment.

This soldier was a centurion, a Roman officer in command of 100 soldiers, more or less.

Apparently what the centurion saw made a huge impression on him and the other soldiers under him. The differences were significant:

a. the demeanor of Jesus,
b. the words of Jesus,
c. the darkness, so unusual, from noonday to mid-afternoon, and
d. the earthquake: was it a sign of God's anger?

According to Luke these men had begun by joining in the general mockery of the suffering 'criminals', but now they feared exceedingly and declared that this man was surely innocent.

And finally — "Truly this man was the Son of God." How could the centurion have understood this? Presumably, he was on duty when the priests shouted at Pilate: "He ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." And then too he would have heard Jesus cry from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Later, the centurion and his soldiers might have been delegated to guard the tomb of Jesus. If this were the case, they would surely have been in the best position to know the truth about the resurrection. But even if the centurion was not part of

that detail, he might easily have heard something of the fragmentary story from those who were there: that is, they were not sleeping; the angel rolled away the stone; and the body was no longer there in the tomb they had been guarding.

So what else could it be but that his Father had raised him from the dead?

Was it a coincidence that the first Gentile to accept the truth and respond by baptism into Christ was a centurion — Cornelius — along with his family? There is no specific evidence that directly links the centurion in Mark 15 with Cornelius, except their occupation and their faith, but it is surely a possibility.

But back to the main point here: given the circumstances we know, as well as what we can surmise, the centurion who presided at Jesus' crucifixion might well have been another unlikely convert. If this man did soon become a Christian, it was in large part due to the amazing strength of character and godliness of our Lord Jesus as he hung dying on the cross.

Wesley Booker
(Austin South, TX)

The Bridge Builder

An old man, going a lone highway,
Came at the evening, cold and gray,
To a chasm, vast and deep and wide,
Through which was flowing a swollen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
The sullen stream had no fears for him;
But he turned when safe on the other side
And built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,
"You are wasting strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the close of day;
You will never again pass this way;
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide —
So why build a bridge at eventide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head:
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
"There followeth after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm that has been naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He too must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I'm building the bridge for him."

(Will Allen Dromgoole)

Letter

Johnson Family Cemetery

It is interesting that so many Christadelphians, Johnson family members and others, are buried in the cemetery on the Pedernales. It is quite natural, though, when it is realized that the first family members interred there were indeed Christadelphians. Public interest in the place, of course, has to do with political prominence of some of the family members, notably the late President, and not with a connection to a small and obscure religious group.

I am reminded that some prominent brothers and sisters from the past are buried there — including Bro. Sam Johnson, of course, and also Bre. S. H. Oatman and T. F. Keele. Among them too was Bro. Clarence Martin, married to one of Bro. Johnson's daughters. Bro. Martin was in early life a prominent attorney and judge, and he abandoned political ambitions in accepting the Truth.

A Bro. and Sis. Isaac Forsythe, buried there, happen to be the grandparents of the late Sis. Marie Banta and Sis. Ellen Styles of Michigan — so it is a small Christadelphian world.

I have had some correspondence with descendants of Bro. S. H. Oatman — who are not Christadelphians. They were puzzled as to why their great-grandfather was buried in the Johnson family cemetery. They had conjectured that possibly Sis. Oatman had been Lyndon Johnson's nanny. But it was nothing like that. The Christadelphian members of the Johnson family were well aware that Bro. Clement Oatman had led their father and grandfather to the Truth. Bro. Sheppard Oatman was Bro. Clem's nephew and had himself been an active teacher of the Word.

There are also other cemeteries in central Texas where numbers of Christadelphians are buried. Any casual observer must notice the sentiments engraved upon many of the headstones. I have particularly noticed this in cemeteries in Rockdale and Lampasas County, Texas, where numbers of Christadelphians rest. The engraved sentiments are characteristic expressions of our hope, and reminders that the dead in Christ will soon live again. In their quiet way these burial places — whether in Brooklyn, N. Y.; Pomona, California; England; or Australia, witness to the hope of believers who have lived in these last centuries.

Joseph Banta (Austin Leander, TX)

"It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart" (Eccl. 7:2).

"The best course is to buy a house across a road from a cemetery and look at it every morning. Reminding yourself where it all ends anyway, you'd never get upset about anything again" (Mildred Davis).

Current Events

Ancient Escape Tunnel Found in Jerusalem

In late August, while searching for ancient Jerusalem's main road, Israeli archeologists have seemingly found the drainage channel that some Jews used to escape the Roman army in AD 70.

It is supposed that, under threat from Romans plundering Jerusalem 2,000 years ago, a number of the city's Jewish residents crowded into an underground drainage channel to hide. Later, they fled the chaos of the city, walking through this tunnel, and emerged unnoticed just south of Jerusalem.

The ancient tunnel was recently discovered buried beneath rubble, a monument to one of the great dramatic scenes of the destruction of Herod's Temple.

The channel was dug beneath what would become the main road of Jerusalem, said the directors of the archaeology dig, Ronny Reich of the University of Haifa and Eli Shukron of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Shukron said excavators looking for the road happened upon a small drainage channel that led them to the discovery of the massive tunnel.

The walls of the tunnel — made of great stone slabs three feet thick — reached a height of ten feet in some places. They are covered by other heavy stone slabs that were the road's paving stones. Several manholes are visible, and portions of the original plastering remain, Shukron said.

Pottery shards, vessel fragments, and coins from the appropriate time period (the late first century) were also discovered inside the tunnel, attesting to its age, Reich said.

The discovery of the drainage channel was quite illuminating in itself, said Reich. It showed how the city's rulers considered the welfare of their citizens in developing an infrastructure that drained the rainfall and prevented flooding.

But of course, what makes the channel especially significant is its role as an escape route for Jews desperate to flee the conquering Romans.

The Second Temple — as it is commonly called — was the center of Jewish worship during the second Jewish Commonwealth, which spanned the six centuries preceding the Roman conquest of Jerusalem. Its expansion was the most elaborate and the most famous construction project of Herod the Great, the Edomite ruler of the Holy Land at the time of the birth of Jesus.

In his *Wars of the Jews,* the Jewish historian Josephus wrote that, as the Romans destroyed the temple in AD 70, numerous people took shelter in a drainage channel and lived inside it until they fled Jerusalem. Many thousand people lived in Jerusalem at the time, but there seems to be no way of knowing how many used the channel to escape.

About 100 yards of the channel have been uncovered so far. Reich estimates its total length will reach more than half a mile, stretching from the Temple Mount compound south to the Pool of Siloam, and thence to the Kedron Valley itself.

[Compiled from an Associated Press report, September 9, 2007.]

*****

In his blog, Dr. Leen Ritmeyer (the foremost world authority on Jerusalem archaeology) comments: "Parts of this drain have been investigated by Charles Warren (1867-1870) and other sections have been excavated by Bliss and Dickie (1894-1897), Johns (1934), Kathleen Kenyon (1961-1967) and Benjamin Mazar (1968-1978). The section found by Mazar below Robinson's Arch was vaulted and believed to have been a relay of the original drain which had been cut by the southwest corner of Herod's Temple Mount...

"Warren also investigated a much earlier drain, lower down in the Tyropoeon Valley, so that we know of two different drainage systems. Together with the relay mentioned above, there are three different phases in this drainage system, which indicate three different building phases in the construction of the Temple Mount...

"The present excavators have not yet provided a map of the excavated drain, but only said that it was between the Temple Mount and the Siloam Pool... As the excavators have been digging in the vicinity of the Siloam Pool, the newly found drain is likely to be located just north of the pool. This find received a lot of media coverage because of the remarks made by the excavators that this drain may have been used by people who tried to escape the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD."

Jerusalem — 3,000 Years of History

"Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, has always been a lodestone and a source of inspiration to people of different religions and to people from many cultures throughout the world.

"Many have longed to reach it — pilgrims, curious travelers, commanders of armies, and artists who have been enchanted by the city. They have visited it, have been captivated by its charms, have imprinted their impression upon it, and have created a marvelous and unique blend of influences.

"Since the time of King David, Jerusalem has written a central page in the history of mankind. The annals of this marvelous city are also fascinating chapters in the history of the world's nations, and exploring these also opens a window upon diverse art works of spectacular beauty.

"Jerusalem has not infrequently found itself at the center of regional and global disputes. I hope the day is not distant when Jerusalem, the 3,000-year-old city, will be a model for the solution of conflicts and a symbol of tolerance and co-existence" (Ezer Weizmann, President of the State of Israel).

Bible Mission News

Bolivia — Missionaries Helping Missionaries

People like babies. There is something about the helplessness of an infant that brings out the best in all of us — the protective father figure, the nurturing mother, the amusing uncle or the affectionate aunt.

Brother Jacob and Sister Fiona Styles, who have just moved to La Paz, Bolivia, to work for three years on behalf of the CBMA, have two youngsters to deal with. One is an endearing nine-month-old boy — Zadok. With his big blue eyes and shock of red hair — in this land of ubiquitous black hair and brown skin — he opens the door to more conversations about the truth than any amount of leaflets. ¡Qué lindo! (How handsome!) ¡Qué bello tu pelo! (How beautiful is your hair!) After such greetings, the conversation inevitably moves to the question: what are you doing here? Thus the ice is broken, and a conversation about the Bible begins.

The other "baby" Jacob and Fiona have to nurture is the ecclesia in La Paz. This is not a comment on the maturity of the brothers and sisters but on the age of the ecclesia. It is just over a year old. Our recent visit to La Paz was, primarily, to help the Styles settle in to this fascinating but often bewildering city as well as convey 16 months' worth of local and ecclesial knowledge in less than a week. The secondary purpose — but equally important — was to encourage the ecclesia as it takes its first steps.

It was something of an intense week: how do you cram over a year's worth of local knowledge and experience into a few days? Well, it's not really possible — but we certainly gave it our best shot. Thus our "mission trip" consisted of house hunting; buying a mobile phone; locating the various places that Jacob and Fiona will later need to go — for example, to get an internet connection set up, leaflets printed, furniture and household goods bought; pointing out good places to eat, to shop, or to play with children; introducing them one moment to a good pediatrician and the next to the guy who can sort out their visas; getting a bank account set up; finding them a Spanish teacher; and so on. Beyond all these practical issues to be addressed was, of course, the introduction to the ecclesia and contacts and the work to be done in La Paz: the correspondence course; Sunday school; personal classes; ecclesial meetings and activities; outreach efforts. All this, in their first week, and at 3,500 meters (12,000 feet) high! The poor Styles must have hardly known what had hit them, but to their credit they have not flinched from the daunting tasks ahead of them: getting settled and getting to work in such a new and exciting environment.

Meanwhile the folks in La Paz are delighted with the new injection of support and energy. They have done a great job of keeping things going over the past year, supported by regular visits, emails and phone calls from CBMA workers. The weekly translations of the CIL exhortations and studies, sent to them by email, have been a tremendous help. However, an ecclesia of only five members — one of whom is living overseas in Madrid, and none of whom were baptized before February 2006 — can only do so much to move things forward. This is where Jacob and Fiona come in. Their first priority is to start learning Spanish so that they can fit into the ecclesial environment and work alongside the brethren and sisters here. As their Spanish improves, their task will be to bring their ecclesial and Bible experience to the established group and to focus on reaching other Truth-seekers in La Paz, so that the Word of God might grow and prosper in Bolivia.

Nurturing a baby with all its trials and fears can be daunting. It takes time, energy, dedicated care and attention — to be given consistently and unremittingly. Often the development of the child is barely perceptible in the week-in, week-out, month-in, month-out effort. The same can be said of caring for an ecclesia. The Styles will face many challenges; so we pray for God's blessing upon them as their family, in both senses of the word, develops and grows.

Bro. Steve and Sis. Sally Jefferies (CBMA support workers for Bolivia)

(Note: the Jefferies are members of the Pershore Ecclesia in the UK and served as missionaries in La Paz from April 2005 to August 2006.)

Left to right: Bro. Steve and Sis Sally Jefferies, Sis. Fiona and Bro. Jacob Styles, with Zadok Styles

Missionaries in the Field: What equals 2 + 6 + 3 + 2 and possibly more?

We are pleased to announce that we now have 13 missionaries (including their families) in the field as of the end of August. The most recent additions in South America are:

Quito, Equador — Bro. Kevin and Sis. Rebekah Hunter (along with their four children) returned in August after spending a year or so at home. They plan to remain in Quito for at least a year, God willing, in order to support the ecclesia of 16 members and further the preaching activities in that country.

La Paz, Bolivia — Bro. Jacob and Sis. Fiona Styles (along with their 9-month-old son Zadok) arrived safely in mid-July from the Newcastle, Australia, Ecclesia. They have rented an apartment, started intensive Spanish language training and are becoming familiar with a new culture. God willing, they will assist the five-member ecclesia there, with its continuing preaching efforts throughout the country that Bro. Steve and Sis. Sally Jeffries were involved in before they returned home last year. One of the biggest initial challenges, though, is becoming accustomed to the 12,000-foot altitude!

In North America we are pleased to announce that Bro. Troy and Sis. Annette Haltom have relocated to the Moulton, AL, area and will be assisting the ecclesia there since Bro. Wesley Booker returned home.

Finally, we have the possibility of several other brothers and sisters joining the missionaries in these as well as other areas. So, through July, our budget was pretty well on track, but now that we have several missionaries in the field again, and the promise of more, we ask that you keep us in mind. You can either go to our website www.cbma.net to donate or look on the Addresses for Bequests and Donations page [page 459] to make donations by check.

Jan Berneau

Thisisyourbible.com Website

The featured question of the month on the website during August was: "What does the Bible say about Jesus Christ?" About the same number of people responded to the survey **(approximately 600),** and the great opportunity that presents itself is that **430** answered that Jesus is God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. Thankfully, over **300** people took the time to download the pamphlet "Jesus: God the Son or Son of God?" It is exciting to see that there are still so many opportunities out there. We are able to monitor all sorts of statistics on the website each month, and the number of visits and of unique visitors is up over 300% compared to this same time a year ago.

We are also pleased to announce that Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT) has joined the TIYB team as Education Director. Bro. Jim will be revamping existing con-

tent and adding new content. This will include adding new levels of courses and improving and upgrading the current ones.

Now for the next baptismal story promised last month. This is a story about how the website works best when partnered with the efforts of personal contacts and an ecclesia. The first personal contact was Bro. Jim Glover (Reseda, CA), the TIYB tutor was Sis. Delores Fisher (Pomona, CA), and our students were (our now Brother) John and (Sister) Connie Palazzo (Reseda, CA). It seems that Bro. Jim worked together with John, where they each managed different departments. After several years of working together they started talking about religion, and this went on for months. As in many cases, once they got to the hard questions, John decided he was going to prove Bro. Jim wrong in his beliefs. John's first studies were with his wife and young boys — from the baptismal questions and *Christadelphian Instructor* that Bro. Jim had given him.

Then John and his family started attending a Bible seminar at the Reseda Ecclesia; there he picked up a card advertising the TIYB website. His tutor was Sis. Delores Fisher, who lives in isolation about 45 minutes from any ecclesia in southern California. So at the same time they were attending the Bible seminar, John would be online taking the correspondence courses with Sis. Delores. When the courses were completed, and the seminar was over, the next logical step was baptism. Bro. Rich Yung then took over the one-on-one classes, and Bro. John and Sis. Connie were baptized in March of 2007.

Sis. Delores writes: "Online correspondence is truly a grand way for a fast convenient lesson exchange. John always seemed to want his lessons coming quickly. After each lesson I would always send him an email letter of encouragement with discussions on how each lesson could apply to our lives. Additionally we had another source that benefited him and myself... that was sharing the same Internet provider. In the evenings when we were both online we were able to use the 'buddy chat' line for in-depth conversations dealing with the joy of belonging to the family of the Lord through baptism into his Name. My testimony is — being a Bible tutor with the great TIYB program is a grand fulfillment in one's life."

Next month we'll follow someone else who was baptized this year — and marvel at how God continues to work to call those who are looking for the way.

Want to help?

- Visit the website and find out what it's all about (www.thisisyourbible.com)
- Become an online tutor
- Hand out the business cards available in your ecclesia — let us know if you need more
- Advertise the website in your local newspaper or as a link on your ecclesia's website

Jan Berneau

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 online 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

BROOKLYN, NY

There have been some heart-warming occurrences this summer, of which the baptisms of ALEX CORBIN and ANASTASIA DUESBURY are most encouraging. Both young people are children of faithful families at our meeting and have grown through Sunday school and CYC.

Upstate Family Camp was the next significant activity, hosted by the Metro ecclesias and supported by over forty campers who spent a wonderful week at Lake Taghkanic. The theme was "Today's Youths — Tomorrow's Ecclesias", and the five presentations were well received, triggering lively discussions each morning. The topic breakdown was "Passing the Baton": Bro. Casmon; "Ambassadors for Christ": Bro. Tyrone; "Choosing a Partner": Bro. David; "Ecclesial Life": Bro. Gideon; "The Goal of the Kingdom": Bro. Clive.

Hosted by the South Ozone Park Ecclesia, Truth Corps came to the city, led by Bro. Bob and Sis. Diana Stodell. Brooklyn Ecclesia was able to give some support; additionally, we had the team for one day of witnessing and outreach, leaving us with about twelve new contacts!

Family rejoicing occurred at a different level, when many of us were at the Gamboa Rainforest Resort in Panama, celebrating with Bro. Ian Neblett and Sis. Nishla Sobers on their wedding day. While in Colon we did Bible classes, one with Bro. Don Luff which was a happy "coincidence". At Panama City we met the other small struggling ecclesia at the Memorial Meeting on two Sundays. At the second Sunday, Bro. Luke, Bro. Don's Latin American buddy, ministered the word in English and Spanish. Those of us who were lovingly accommodated at Sis. Alda Lackwood's home have tasted the blessing of her relocation from the US.

Sis. Alda's son, Bro. David, and his family are now completely relocated in Georgia. Bro. David and Sis. Sarah Corbin and their three girls have also relocated to Georgia. They will be attached, along with Bro. Alex from North Carolina University, to the Atlanta Ecclesia.

Clive Drepaul

MENDOCINO, CA

These past few months we have truly been blessed. EVERETT and ANNE CREEKMORE, were baptized on May 17, and August 8, 2007, respectively. Bro. Everett had been studying for more than a year. Our ecclesia has been diminishing in numbers as our young people go back to college in other parts of the state; it is truly a blessing to welcome our new brother and sister into fellowship around the table of our Lord.

Many of our brethren attended Calaveras and Idyllwild in July. The Gaston family and Sis. Gail Walker went to Kids' Camp and said it was great. As always our brotherhood works endless hours preparing classes, activities, food and social functions to bring hundreds of families and friends together in fellowship. We know there are too many names to mention, but we extend our thanks to all who helped out. Over the past few months we have also had family nights of swimming at the Creekmores' pool and bowling.

Many visitors came our way these past few months: Bro. Don Robinson; Bro. Kelly and Sis. Kristy Robinson and children; Sis. Millie Robinson; Bro. Darius and Sis. Annette Clark and family; Sis. Susanna Yoshida and her son; and Bro. Steve Pursell and his daughter. Bro. Tom Hawksworth and family celebrated Sis. Alice Hawksworth's ninety-second birthday, quite a momentous occasion. Bro. John Tom Hawksworth visited, and Sis. Shari Bainbridge's parents also attended.

We are looking forward to the bridal shower for Sis. Allison Cedarholm and Bro. James Brown this month; many of us will travel for the wedding to be held September 1, 2007, Lord willing. Sis. Pricilla Gaston will bring back Sis. Velma Barber, Sis. Charline Hawksworth's mother, from Texas. After this homecoming, she will be attending our meeting.

We will have our sixth Lake Camp September 21-23, 2007. This year we will be at Clear Lake where we plan classes, a barbecue, boating and lots of fun. Bro. Terry Phenicie will lead an activity about kites. It should be a fun, spiritual weekend. Hope to see you there.

Debra Phenicie

MERIDEN, CT

In recent months we have enjoyed the fellowship of brothers and sisters from Atlanta North (GA), Baltimore (MD), Boston (MA), Echo Lake (NJ), Hudson (NH), Maple Ridge (BC), Moorestown (NJ), Norfolk (VA), Oregon Coast (OR), Pittsburgh (PA), Sarasota (FL), Southern New Hampshire (NH), South Ozone Park (NY), Wachusett (MA), Washington (DC), and Westerly (RI). Our thanks are extended to Bre. Jim Boyko (Boston), Ron Hicks (Washington), Bruce Waite (Oregon Coast), and Joseph Badlu (South Ozone Park) for helpful words of instruction and exhortation. Bro. Andrew and Sis. Louise Taberner of the Boston Ecclesia visited us, with their daughter, India, in May. Bro. Andrew led our spring study weekend on "The Promises of the New Covenant". Bro. Mark and Sis. Jean Giordano visited in July, and Bro. Mark led a special Bible class on the Second Coming of Christ. We are grateful to Bro. Andrew and Bro. Mark for their ministrations on our behalf. Sis. Sue Demarest, who is a member of the Meriden Ecclesia in isolation in North Carolina and mother of our Bro. Dan Demarest, also visited us at the Lord's Table this past year.

Last September, Bro. Jimmy and Sis. Laleeta Hart and their family, Sis. Romona, Lisa,

and Marcy, made a life-changing move from Kilcoy, Guyana, to the United States. They are now settled in Hartford, CT, and have become members of the Meriden Ecclesia and Sunday School. We are delighted to have them with us. We welcomed Sis. Debby Ferraiolo back into fellowship in April and are happy to have her with us again. In July, Bro. Gary and Sis. Janet Chodkowski transferred membership from Meriden to the Springfield (MA) Ecclesia. We commend them to the love and fellowship of our brothers and sisters in Springfield.

We have lost some beloved members during the past year. Bro. Wesley Smith, a "real fixture" of the Meriden Ecclesia since the days of World War II, fell asleep in Christ last October. Our sympathies are with Sis. Rosamond and their family. Sis. Inez Houle, sister of our Sis. Dot Phillips, fell asleep in Christ in April. She was baptized in Meriden in 1980 and lived in isolation in New Hampshire. Sis. Ethel Schneider, wife of our late Bro. Henry (Harry) Schneider, fell asleep in Christ in June. Ethel and Harry were members of the Meriden Ecclesia from the time they were baptized together in 1947. Our sympathies are with Ethel's family as well. Sis. Lali Hart's father died last October, and Bro. David Stiles' father died this past June. Our hearts are with them, too, in their family losses.

At the time of this writing we are looking forward to the start of our 2007 Learn to Read the Bible Effectively Seminar. This year's effort will center in nearby Middletown, CT. May God grant an abundant blessing on our effort to share His Truth with others in this area.

Jim Harper

NANAIMO, BC

We are blessed by the transfer of Bro. Joel and Sis. Diane Siegler from the Vernon, BC, Ecclesia. We pray that, as they join with our small ecclesia's walk toward the kingdom, it will prove to be a mutually rewarding and uplifting experience.

Tom Alexander

SIMI HILLS, CA

It was another busy summer in southern California. Our ecclesia hosted the Prepare To Preach program during the week of July 8-14, 2007. Thirty-five young people from all over North America spent a week in training, the better to present their beliefs to those around them. Half of these people plan to spend January in South Africa helping with the 2010 Project. Bre. John Pople (San Francisco, CA) and Shane Kirkwood and Adam Byrnes (Australia) led the program, and it was well received by all who attended.

We enjoyed a study day on June 9 by Bro. Brian Luke, "The Friends of Jeremiah".

We welcome by transfer Bro. Erik, Sis. Sharon, Sis. Michelle, Sis. Robin and Michael Sternad from the Sacramento, CA, Ecclesia. We are also happy to welcome back into fellowship Sis. Alison Wisniewski. We commend Bro. Matt Link to the Washington, DC, Ecclesia and Sis. Molly Schmitt to the North Industry, OH, Ecclesia.

We were blessed with the confession and baptism of HEATHER WILCOX on July 15, 2007. May our Lord return soon, that her walk may be a short one

In addition to many visitors from California, we were also happy to welcome: Bro. Carl and Sis. Cindy Paiva (Guadalajara, Mexico); Bro. Nigel and Sis. Cynthia Patterson, Sis. Lily Heavyside, and Bro. Kitson and Sis. Alison Reid (UK); Bro. Nathan and

Sis. Antonia Giordano, and Bro. Andrew and Sis. Carlie Culver (Norfolk, VA); Bro. Matthew and Sis. Julie Smith, and Bro. Ben and Sis. Elaine deCaussin (Glendale, AZ); Bro. Jim and Sis. Esther Harper (Meriden, CT); Bro. Paul and Sis. Belinda Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI); Bro. Simon Gore (Australia); Sis. Beverly Barling, Sis. Sharon Bruhm, and Sis. Wendy Johnson (BC); Bro. Paul and Sis. Erin Bottomley, and Bro. Steve and Sis. Mindy Faver (Bozeman, MT); Sis. Kessid Mindorff (Calgary, AB); Sis. Chloe Sparacino (Ann Arbor, MI); Bro. Drew Lawrence (Guelph, ON); Bro. Brian and Sis. Sherry Walker (Prince George, BC); Bro. Gary and Sis. Shirley Smith (Brantford, ON); Bro. David Clubb (Wichita Falls, TX); Bro. Aaron McDonald (North Industry, OH); and Sis. Rachel Launchbury (Portland, OR).

We thank Bre. Kitson Reid, Ted Sleeper, Shane Kirkwood, John MacDougall, Brad Foltz, Max Wickham, Matthew Smith, and Jim Harper for their words of exhortation.

Jeff Gelineau

VICTORIA, BC

Seniors' Housing has a one-bedroom unit available for low-cost rental by December 1, 2007. Individuals must be able to care for themselves. We also have a fully-furnished visitors' unit available year-round. The building is located behind the Victoria ecclesial hall. Contact Sis. Pat Williamson at 250-721-4938, or at pwilliamson@telus.net.

Pat Williamson

Appeal for Bro. Grant Anderson

On August 23, 2007, our Bro. Grant Anderson was in a near-fatal car accident on his way home from Manitoulin Youth Conference. He was immediately flown to a local hospital in London, ON. The local brethren and sisters in the London area played an integral part in supporting the Anderson family during this time. This past week, Bro. Grant was successfully transported back to a hospital near his home in the suburbs of Detroit, MI. Even though the doctors originally gave Bro. Grant a very bleak prognosis, he is now beginning to respond. He currently remains in a "semi-coma", has very limited motor skills, and is starting to breathe on his own — but still remains in very critical condition. Even though Bro. Grant is only 20, he seems to have touched the lives of so many. We ask that you continue to pray for God's blessing upon Bro. Grant and his family during this time (1 John 5:11-15).

The Anderson Family Support Fund has been established to help defray costs that may arise during this time (transportation, absence from work, food, etc.).

Fortunately, through the state of Michigan, the Andersons have unlimited medical coverage. With that said, there are two ways to donate financially:

1) Via online at www.milfordroad.net/Andersons.html to pay via Credit Card of PayPal.
2) Via postal mail (checks payable to "Christadelphians") to: Anderson Family Support Fund, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696

Once again, please keep Bro. Grant and the Anderson family in your prayers until the Lord returns.

Paul Sparacino, On behalf of Detroit Milford Road, MI, Ecclesia

Camp Hashawha

The Washington, DC, Ecclesia extends a loving invitation for all to attend our family Bible study weekend, Lord willing, November 23-25, 2007, at Camp Hashawha,

Westminster, MD. Bro. Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ) is scheduled to lead us in classes entitled "Lessons for Future Kings — Life Lessons from the Kings of Israel". Bible classes for all ages will be held Saturday and Sunday, beginning at 8:45 am. A nursery for children four years old and under will be available.

Everyone, including day attendees, must pre-register. Mail registrations will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis and only with proper deposit. We cannot accept phone, email or walk-in reservations. Please register promptly.

The registration fee for those over four is $50 in US funds only. A $20 per person deposit is required with your registration. Make checks payable to Washington Christadelphian Ecclesia.

Mail registrations and deposit checks may be sent to Bro. David Fertig, 9703 Schmidt Drive, Burke, VA 22015. Registration deadline is November 12, 2007. A confirmation of your registration will be emailed or phoned to you. Guardians for those under 18, who are attending without their parents, must be staying on site at the camp and must be over 25 years old.

For forms or information, phone 703-644-6311 or email Bro. David at hashawha@cox.net. Forms should be available from your ecclesia, or at http://www.Christadelphians.net/Adelphi, or by contacting Bro. David Fertig.

Deposits will be refunded, after the camp, if we were able to fill your place with someone from our waiting list.

Day attendees must also pre-register. There will be a $20 fee for those attending the classes but not staying at the camp. These will be accepted on a first-come basis and only to the extent that full-time registration has not exceeded classroom limitations.

Those desiring to attend classes or Sunday services, with or without meals, should send their registrations and deposits in as soon as possible. Classroom and Memorial service space is limited, and preference must be given to those staying at the camp.

We look forward to an uplifting weekend of fellowship and study around the word of God.

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation

The Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation was incorporated in the province of Ontario in 1985. Its initial asset base consisted of the proceeds of the sale of Fairhaven House, a residential care facility in Toronto geared to assist elderly Christadelphians. The foundation's primary focus is to provide supplementary assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. We also entertain requests from Canadian ecclesias to assist their broader membership.

As examples, recently a grant was provided for an ecclesial hall renovation to make the building wheelchair accessible; a rent subsidy was provided to a Christadelphian refugee family resettling in Canada; and support for living accommodations was provided for an elderly sister on limited income.

Canadian law does not allow us to provide grants to those outside of Canada. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada.

Alan Ghent

India — Appeal for Calcutta

The ACBM [Australia Christadelphian Bible Mission] is particularly hoping and praying that fieldworkers will come forward to staff their Mission premises in Calcutta during 2008. This is a new arrangement aimed at strengthening the brotherhood of about 130 members in the northeast Indian state of West Bengal. Please give this appeal serious consideration.

If you believe you might be able to go, whether for several months, or only a month or two, please email Bro. David Caudery at **india@acbm.cc**

The ACBM will give you more details of the kind of challenge and experiences that this location offers. Just to whet your appetite, Bro. David recently received an email from a brother in the Kirpai Ecclesia telling him that he had 30 people who have said they are interested in baptism.

Bro. David and other brethren are over there at the moment working on such openings as well as running a six-day Bible week for the brethren and sisters and young people. But that is what is happening this year. Can you be part of what might happen in 2008?

By the way, the Mission has leased a modern six-room third-floor apartment in Calcutta as a base for fieldworkers. Interested? If so, send an email of enquiry today — or by regular mail to:

David Caudery,
35 Jeffery Street,
Blackburn, Vic.,
Australia 3130.

Minute Meditation

Halftime

John Glenn has said that there is no cure for the common birthday. As the days pass, we inexorably age, wrinkles appear, body parts wear out, and the birthdays continue to arrive until we die. Someone once noticed that after age 30 the body seems to have a mind of its own; instead of the quick deft motions that came almost effortlessly, we move slowly, sometimes painfully, and sometimes not at all.

In a book entitled *Halftime*, the author, Bob Buford, compares our life to a sport that has a break halfway through the game. He uses football as his example, but any sport that has two halves would do. The game begins with a plan for how to play the full game. In the middle is the halftime, when the coaches and players analyze what happened in the first half and make adjustments to improve and overcome the obstacles that occurred in the first half. Quite often there is a big difference between the first half and the second half. Many games are decided in that second half.

If our life is like a game of football, it begins with the kick-off. Childhood flies by quickly, and then there are the turbulent teens and the roaring twenties, and the thirties and forties come and go, and suddenly, halftime arrives. The first half has passed faster than we ever thought it would. What we sometimes forget is that the second half is played differently because so many birthdays have accumulated and the body is giving out. We may not be able to play as fast or as skillfully, especially in the last quarter. As we age we need to learn to work smarter rather than harder. It is important not to waste the time we may have left before the body stops cooperating.

We either go through all these stages of life or we die young. Every age has its benefits, and rather than wishing we were either younger or older, we should enjoy the age we are in. We need to accept the fact that if we were born the year we were born, then we are the age that we are right now or we are dead. There is nothing in between.

Wherever we are in this game called life, it is good to pause and reflect where we have been and how we can do better from here on to the end. For some of us, it is the fourth quarter and we have already received the two-minute warning, and so we know that the end of the game is in sight.

As long as there is still time on the clock, there is still time to score. Some games are won in the final seconds. Let us learn from the past while we concentrate on the future. We need to ask ourselves what has worked in our lives so far, and what changes do we need to make in order to improve the time we have left.

We want to avoid the woulda, coulda, shoulda routines — where we lament the mistakes we have made. We need to feel thankful for forgiveness. We should look back only to learn how to fix what was broken. Paul shows this mindset when he says, "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."

The future is all any of us has left. It may be long or short, but we all need to plan to improve how we use the time left to our full advantage. So, with Paul, let us reach forward and press for the prize that the Lord is waiting to give to each of us at the end of the game of life.

Fortunately God wants us to succeed, for, as Peter tells us, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

We are all in this game of life, and with Paul we can say, "This one thing I do." Let us charge back onto the field with renewed determination to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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"

7 San Franciso Peninsula Fraternal. Belmont Senior Center, 9:30 am to 3 pm. Bro. Dave Garnand. For accommodations contact Sis. Ruth Ann Gover 650-260-2694

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

13,14 Pittsburgh, PA CYC study weekend. Bro. Jay Mayock (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON): "Into the Land of Promise: Lessons from the Children of Israel". Contact Sis. Sarah Telles 724-334-2333 sarah.telles@gmail.com

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). Contact Bro. Michael Carr 902-820-2532 buxtoncarr@hotmail.com

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

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

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
P.O. Box 530696 • Livonia, MI 48153-0696
Periodicals Postage Paid at San Dimas, California

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 waltdodrill@msn.com 727-528-1197

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

10,11 Victoria, BC Study weekend. Bro. Christian Russell (Verdugo Hills, CA): "The Garden of the Lord". To help with catering or to arrange accommodation, please contact Sis. Pat Williamson 250-721-4938 pwilliamson@telus.net

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. David Fertig hashawah@cox.net 703-644-6311

JANUARY 2008

26 San Diego County Ecclesia Annual Study Day. Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI): "Little Words that Mean a Lot". 9:30 am Ecclesial Hall, lunch served. Contact Bro. Kent Ellis ellisk@san.rr.com 858-674-5645

FEBRUARY

3-8 Palm Springs Bible School. Bre. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD) and Michael Owen (Seaton, UK). Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau register@christadelphianbibleschool.org. Or visit website www.californiabibleschool.org

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 70 **November, 2007** **No. 10**

Editorial — What I Don't Know (Part 3) **471**
Exhortation — Learning to Pray Continually, *Jim Hagler* **474**
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:
(10) God's spiritual and eternal temple, *Tom Barling* **478**
Bible Study — Little Words that Mean a Lot:
(3) Truth, *John C. Bilello* **483**
Bible Study — Thoughts from The Letter to the Hebrews:
(1) Faith and Understanding, *Colin Edwards* **489**
Article — Women Committed to the Lord, *Patricia Bartle* **491**
Archaeology — Sepphoris and Jesus, *George Booker* **496**
Reflections:
Struggles Within the Home and Heart, *David Andrews* **503**
Jesus' Unlikely Conversions:
(4) Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, *Wesley Booker* **505**
Bible Mission News — Lima, Peru; Thisisyourbible.com **507**
News & Notices **511**
Minute Meditation — Your Attitude, *Robert J. Lloyd* **517**
Coming Events **519**

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Editor: George Booker

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060) is published monthly by The Christadelphian Tidings, 42076 Hartford Drive, Canton, MI 48187-3360. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID at San Dimas, California. POSTMASTER: Return Service Requested to The Christadelphian Tidings, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696.

Tidings Publishing Corporation: Joe Hill (Chairman), John C. Bilello, Peter A. Bilello, Steve Cheetham, Ken Curry, Clive Drepaul, Mark Giordano, Tony Isaacs, Ted Sleeper, Phil Snobelen, Ken Sommerville, Jeff Wallace.

The Tidings is published on the 25th of the month for the month following. Items for publication must be received by the 10th of the month. Correspondence to the Editor: George Booker, 2500 Berwyn Circle, Austin, TX 78745-3559. E-mail: editor@tidings.org. Administrator: Rose Madge: rm_madge@yahoo.com. Production Editor: Kathy Hill. Home page: www.tidings.org. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF. Copyright 2007, Tidings Publishing Corporation. Reproduction in whole, or in part, without permission is prohibited.

Subscriptions

United States: $20, **Canada: $28**. Checks payable to ***The Tidings*** and sent to P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to the same address. Changes of address and other subscription matters to Rose Madge at the above address or by e-mail at rm_madge@yahoo.com. **Australia: $39**. Mail checks to Fran Caudery, 35 Jeffery Street, Blackburn, VIC 3130. **New Zealand: $39**. Mail checks to John Beer, P.O. Box 559, Te Awamutu 3840. **South Africa: R140**. Mail checks to Anthony Oosthuizen, P.O. Box 50357, Durban 4062. **United Kingdom: £14**. Mail checks to Malcolm Cross, Grange Farm, East Cottingwith, York YO42 4TB.

The sweet fragrance of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15)

Two men were riding on top of a bus in London. As they came down a poor-looking street with a big factory on one side, they were halted, and they noticed the doors of the factory had opened and hundreds of girls were pouring out and making their way across the street to a lunchroom. Suddenly the air was filled with a sweet delightful fragrance. The visitor said, "Isn't that remarkable in a factory district here in London? Such a wondrous fragrance! It seems like the smell of a great garden. You would not think of finding such fragrance in this district."

"Oh, you don't understand," said his friend; "this is one of the largest perfume factories in all the British Isles, and these young people are working constantly among the perfumes, and everywhere they go the fragrance remains upon their garments."

If only we could live in such close proximity to our Lord — that the fragrance that graces him might saturate our garments and follow us wherever we go! So it might be said of us, as it was said of the disciples, that others "were astonished and took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

Editorial

What I Don't Know (Part 3)

Continuing with "what I don't know"...

5. The secret, hidden things of nature and the world around me:

> *"There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a maiden. This is the way of an adulteress: She eats and wipes her mouth and says, 'I've done nothing wrong' " (Prov. 30:18-20).*

A supersonic jet may leave a vapor trail behind it, but an eagle soaring through the sky leaves nothing behind. A snake may leave a trail in the sand, but none on the rock. Likewise, a ship on the sea leaves no trail behind it after it has sailed past.

A man seducing a maid leaves no evidence behind (or at least, he hopes he does not). And an adulterous woman is careful to hide her deeds.

I cannot know any of these comings and goings, unless I see it with my own eyes, or have other firsthand knowledge. But I ***do*** know that God sees all these things (He is "El Roi" — "the God who sees": Gen. 16:13). He sees, He keeps a perfect record, and He judges rightly. One day, everything I need to know will be revealed to me. In the meanwhile, I can safely entrust everything I do not need to know... to the All-seeing, All-wise Judge. Thus I take comfort in what I can know, and also in what I need not know.

6. What will happen to "the other fellow":

> *"Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them... When Peter saw him, he asked, 'Lord, what about him?' " (John 21:20,21).*

After the special post-resurrection meal at the Sea of Galilee, Peter follows after his Lord as they walk along the shore (v. 19). But for a moment at least, he turns back (v. 20). It is then he sees "the disciple whom Jesus loved", John, "following them". It is only after Peter sees John that he asks Jesus, "Lord, what about ***him?"***

The first and most obvious lesson is this: if we will keep our eyes upon our Lord, we will have much less occasion to be distracted by what others do, or don't do.

Jesus had just told Peter something of the future, suggesting his death would be a difficult one — but one in which he would give a great testimony to the Lord whom he served. It is at just this point that Peter turns (is he thinking of going back? who can say?) and sees John. Having just been confronted with a painful trial in his own path, Peter — quite naturally — wonders, 'What about this man John? How will ***he*** die?'

His question can sound very much like: 'Lord, am I to be singled out, alone, for suffering?'

Which in turns sounds very much like: 'Lord, I must protest! Is it fair for me to suffer so, when other disciples will not?'

Such a question as Peter asked — and the other, unspoken questions implied in it — ought not to be asked. There are certain things one does not need to know. Thus Jesus answered Peter:

> *"If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me" (v. 22).*

When we place ourselves in the Lord's hands, we must not question what happens to us. Shall the clay say to the potter, 'Why have you made me so?' (cp. Rom. 9:20,21; Jer. 18:3-6). The hallmark of a true disciple is spending little if any time judging the actions, or evaluating or questioning the fates, of his fellow-believers: "Who are you to judge someone else's servant?" (Rom. 14:4; cf. 1 Cor. 4:5). Rather, the best way for a believer to spend his time is in doing what ***his*** Master has told ***him*** to do!

The One to whom we may safely entrust our ultimate fate will surely do right by us in the interim — even if we don't know why He chooses one thing for us, and something else for others. Even if we don't know why intense and prolonged suffering is the lot of one disciple, while another enjoys many blessings with seemingly no real difficulties in life.

What I do know is... what my Lord chooses for ***me*** will be right!

There are many "things I don't know". The cure for any concerns or anxieties about present things (and future things), that I don't know, is found in Christ's words to Peter: "Follow me!" The sheep does not know everything the shepherd knows, but he follows the shepherd because he does know that the shepherd is his friend and his protector. 'My Lord is my shepherd!... Surely I will dwell in his house forever!'

That is enough to know.

7. The things Job did not understand:

The things Job did not understand (Job 42:3), brought out under the strong argument of Elihu and the intense questioning of the Almighty, are things I do not understand either:

> *"Who can understand how [Yahweh] spreads out the clouds, how he thunders from his pavilion?" (Job 36:29).*
>
> *"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone — while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4-7).*

"Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death? Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this. What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside? Can you take them to their places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings? Surely you know, for you were already born!" (Job 38:16-21).

I can truly know, and understand, none of these things — for they happened long before I was born, or well out of my circle of observation and "control" (If indeed I have ***any*** control over anything). But here again, I can trust that God organized, directed, and controlled these things (and continues to do so) well, and suitably, and that He did not need (and does not need) my advice or help!

I can go to sleep at night, knowing that the foundations of the earth stand sure. And even if they do not, from my limited perspective, then that which will be shaken will only be removed temporarily, to give way to a surer eternal foundation, on which His Kingdom will be built (Heb. 12:26,27; cf. Psa. 102:26,27)! And that, when that day comes, He will remember me.

I can go to sleep at night, knowing that He keeps the gates of death and darkness. I need not fear. And even if those gates swing open to take me away while I sleep, I know that there is One who holds the keys of death and the grave (Rev. 1:18), and "What ***he*** opens no one can shut" (Rev. 3:7).

How many secrets of the universe would I trade for ***that*** knowledge?

(To be continued)

George Booker

"I lie down and sleep; I wake, because the LORD sustains me" (Psalm 3:5).

He who did keep me waking
Has kept me still through the dark, silent night;
And now I thrill — to greet once more the light.

His power unseen,
From sleep unlocked my eyes, with strength afresh renewed;
And I arise — with song of gratitude.

Thus, if death's night at length
Should darkly close, and in my earthly bed, confined and deep,
I take repose — stiller, profounder sleep,

To know a yet more marvelous waking,
A fairer morn... may I with gladness say
I slept, but wake new-born — to brighter day.

(Selected)

Exhortation

Learning to Pray Continually

Two of Webster's definitions for prayer are:

1. To ask or beg earnestly, to entreat, to supplicate as in the guilty rebel begging for mercy, and
2. To make or address petitions to the Divine being.

Now, I like this one. An old pagan definition was: the chanting of secret incantations with the hope of receiving a magical result!

These are pretty limited meanings compared to the Hebrew and Greek meanings in the concordance.

According to Strong's concordance, there are several Hebrew and Greek words that mean pray or prayer. In the Old Testament these words in various contexts mean: entreat, *burn incense,* be grieved, grace, sigh, whisper, meet, ask, ask another to intervene, commune, *meditate,* complain, *song of praise,* to request, bow, *petition,* and judge oneself.

In the New Testament these words mean: want, beseech, ask, interrogate, pray, wish, call for.

So we can see that the words for prayer are rich in meaning and encompass much more than what people today consider prayer to be.

How often do you pray?

At Bible school I asked several people, "How many times a day do you pray?" I wanted to see if there was any pattern by age, time in the truth, etc.? Did young people pray less because they were younger and less experienced? Did older, retired people pray more because they had more time and experience? And did working parents fall in between?

The answer is, No. The most common answer was:

- 'Five times per day: morning, evening and for the three meals a day.'

Other answers were:

- 'Three times a day.'
- 'I have so much turmoil in my life lately that I just don't take time to pray.'
- 'I hardly pray at all.'
- 'Many times a day.'
- 'I talk to God when I go to bed, and pour out all my problems in a conversation.'

Many said something like:

- 'When I have a "storm" in my life, I pray more.'

Likewise, when others felt blessed, they recognized the blessing was from God

and gave thanks in prayer. When life was running smoothly, people admitted to getting lax in prayer or not praying at all.

When we put that all together, it is clear that it becomes a circular pattern: when things are good, we don't pray as much. Then when storms come, we start to pray until things are better again. Then we get lax, and so on and so on. Just like the Israelites: when things were good, they ignored God and relied on self. Then, when they were punished by God, they repented, and God forgave them and they returned to Him. But later, they forgot their blessings, and thought they could rely on their own wisdom — and the cycle repeated itself.

Why pray?

Why pray? Do we suppose that God puts storms in our lives to get us to commune with Him more often? One brother said "Yes" to that question. Why does God want us to pray? In praying, we demonstrate our ***love*** for Him and our desire to be close to Him. What is the first commandment?

> *"The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment" (Mark 12:29,30).*

That includes ***praying continually.*** God also wants us to pray so that we will *search* our hearts, *judge* ourselves, *ask* for forgiveness, and tell the Lord what we are thinking and what we really desire.

In the beginning, Adam had two-way communication with God. This was a form of prayer. After Adam, men continued to speak with God in a two-way fashion. Because of sin, however, the intimate fellowship with the Creator had changed.

Abraham also communed directly with God. For example, "The word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision, saying, 'Fear not, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward' " — and Abraham answered Him — "Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" (Gen. 15:1,2).

Here we have two-way communication.

God chose Moses to mediate His covenant with the children of Israel. Moses did this in a very literal way, coming down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments. The people begged Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exod. 20:19). The people wanted a mediator — they saw the power of God and were afraid to talk to God or hear from Him directly. They did ***not*** want two-way communication with God.

Kinds of prayers

Under the Mosaic Law, incense represented prayer. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest was to take a censer full of sweet-smelling incense with coals from the altar and go into the Most Holy Place beyond the veil, so that a cloud of incense would cover the mercy seat. In praying for help, David said, "Let my prayer be set forth as incense" (Psa. 141:2).

Prayer can also be in the form of psalms and music. The house of Asaph prayed in song continually before the ark for more than 500 years. David gave his psalms to Asaph so that they might "give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people, sing unto him, sing psalms unto him" (1 Chr. 16:8,9). In the Bible, there are psalms as petitions, praise, thanksgiving, meditation, confession, lament, and the like. When we read a psalm — any psalm! — in our Bibles, then we should be thinking of it as a prayer!

So far, we have sought to define what prayer is, and how prayer has evolved from direct communication to incense to song and psalms and meditation.

Now let's jump forward to...

The Lord's prayer

This is a relatively short prayer, but it is given as an example of how to pray. Nowhere is it recorded that the disciples prayed this exact prayer. It wasn't intended to be ***the*** prayer, to be recited precisely week after week, as is done in many churches. Instead, it was to be a guide, giving the essential elements of a prayer. Prayers don't have to be long, drawn out affairs to be effective.

In our service, brothers say prayers at different times for different purposes. There is the opening prayer, the prayer preceding the exhortation, the prayers for the emblems, and the closing prayer. As brothers, when we are called on to give a prayer, we are representing the whole ecclesia. We must keep our minds focused and give the asked for prayer — this doesn't mean including everything we can possibly pray for.

The "long" and the "short" of it

The longest prayer isn't always the most appropriate prayer. If the prayer is for the bread or wine and we mention ***all*** the elements of a general prayer, we may forget to give thanks for the bread or wine.

The longest prayer isn't always the best prayer. A sister once said that, at mealtime, when all the food was warm and she was especially hungry, that would be the time when the praying brother would go on and on, giving his own exhortation instead of just giving thanks for the food.

The longest prayer isn't always the most effective prayer. Occasionally, at a gathering for example, each brother seems to outdo the previous brother by praying longer! I have heard some very eloquent prayers. But we need to beware lest we become like the Pharisees, saying long prayers and losing the attention of the people. There is a time and place for short prayers such as at meals, and a time for more all-encompassing prayers like our morning and evening devotions.

"Mini-prayers"

I don't intend really to tell you how to pray, but to encourage you to pray more often and commune with God on a regular basis. Even very short prayers like the Lord's Prayer can be quite effective. What I suggest is to find triggers to instigate "mini-prayers". For example, we've looked at other less "conventional" types of

prayer such as singing of psalms or hymns. So when you're driving to work, try singing a hymn — that is a way of communing with God. When you stop at a red light or get caught in a traffic jam — use that as a trigger for communication with God. Maybe a "mini-prayer" for patience would be appropriate at times like that, especially if you are worried about being late to work.

Here is my favorite: every time I take a shower, I "wash my sins away". That is, I pray that my sins be washed away as I wash the dirt from my body. David prayed, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Psa. 51:2).

Another suggestion: every time you open a door, think of the door that Christ opened for us, as Gentiles, so that we might be saved and so that we can now go directly to God in prayer. Or, when you walk out the door in the morning to confront the world, pray to be kept from temptation.

Here's one we do every day: every time you take a drink of water, think of your baptism and thank God for the precious gift of having learned the Truth. Or think forward to the living waters that will flow forth from Jerusalem to heal the nations.

Pray continually throughout the day in little mini-prayers; they are as good as any long prayer. Each day before you do the Bible readings, say a mini-prayer for wisdom and understanding, just like we do before Bible class. By the way, just doing the readings every day is meditating on God's word.

Whenever you see or hear an ad for some new drug, or whenever you drive by a hospital or your doctor's office, say a mini-prayer for those who are physically or spiritually sick.

Every time you pass a church, pray for those who are spiritually sick.

What we all need to do is to figure out our own triggers that will remind us to commune, meditate, sing praise and pray to God, our Father.

When you look up at the moon and stars on a beautiful night, thank God for creating this universe some 16 billion years ago (according to the Science channel). He knew us before the foundations of the earth were laid and has been waiting for us to talk to Him for some 16 billion years — that is how long ***He*** has been thinking about ***us***. Isn't it about time ***we*** think about ***Him?***

Brothers and sisters, call home once in a while!

Jim Hagler (Austin Leander, TX)

"No aspect of our life in Christ is more important than is prayer; a prayerless life is a godless life. Without prayer Bible study becomes mere academic exercise, fellowship mere social intercourse, preaching a kind of religious politics and life like a dusty imitation flower — lacking color and fragrance" (Melva Purkis and Cyril Tennant).

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (10) God's spiritual and eternal temple

Reconciliation

At the conclusion of our previous article we saw how Paul was stressing the unity, in the Lord Jesus, of Jew and Gentile. Now, in verse 16 of Ephesians 2, he pursues the same theme, using the word "reconciling", as reconciliation is always a necessary preliminary for peace to prevail. Warring nations or factions have to abandon their enmity and recognize their common need for understanding and peace. The irreconcilable differences between Jew and Gentile had been done away by God in His grace, for, as ever, God had to take the initiative. In the case of those prepared to acknowledge their common need, their need to be reconciled to God, this reconciliation and sharing in a common salvation had been made accessible in the Lord Jesus, through his death on the cross. Understandably, the subject of "reconciliation" appears in Romans:

> *"For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" (5:10, RSV).*

That the initiative comes from God is made crystal clear in a passage to which we often refer:

> *"But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18,19).*

With regard to the term used in Ephesians 2:16, Vine comments that this is a stronger form of the Greek term for "reconcile" ("apokatallaso"), and means "to reconcile completely".[1] While this common salvation was created by the Lord upon the cross, its achievement was an historical process. Again the Book of Acts is invaluable in this connection. We have already seen in our study of "the fullness" of the Lord, how this was brought about by the preaching of the Gospel. The Twelve all played their part but the proclamation was spearheaded by Peter (see Acts 2,3). Initially this process was limited to Jews and proselytes. It was quite a momentous development, in which Peter, accompanied by six witnesses, played the vital role in establishing that salvation was now available to the Gentiles (see Acts 10:1—11:18). It was thus, and in no other way, that those previously far off, were brought nigh (see Isa. 52:7; 57:19). So "the one body" of Ephesians 2:16 came into being, and peace, the peace of sins forgiven, was made available to Jew and Gentile.

Peace

This unity in the Lord is underlined in verse 17 and Paul here uses "we", thereby indicating Jews and Gentiles are now included. But all must remember this is a shared access and can become a personal experience only for those who demonstrate there is one spirit, the spirit which unites. If we truly belong to the Lord, then his spirit animates us. This all-important subject of unity is dealt with by the Apostle in detail in chapter 4:1-13.

Fellow citizens

We note the "we" of verse 18 is replaced in verse 19 by "ye", as once more Paul addresses his Gentile readers. Now, in Christ Jesus, they are "no more strangers and sojourners" but "fellow citizens with the saints" and "members of the household of God". It is fascinating to note how constantly the Apostle reminds former Gentile disciples never to forget how the divine purpose was connected with Abraham and his seed. The terms "strangers" and "sojourners" speaks of the former status of Gentile believers, and this Paul has already spelled out in verse 12 of this chapter. Now their former status has given way to a much more privileged one: they are no longer strangers and sojourners but enjoy full citizenship in God's commonwealth. When we recall that Peter describes Christian believers also as "sojourners" (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11), we begin to appreciate how one form of citizenship is set over against another. In the great chapter on faith, Hebrews 11, we are told that those united by their faith in the God of Israel...

> *"...all died in faith, not having received the promises... having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (v. 13).*

As for Abraham, he looked forward to the city whose builder was God (v. 10).

Paul's position

We do well to remember the exceptional position of the Apostle when we consider the subject of citizenship in his day. He was certainly a member of the commonwealth of Israel and — to the astonishment of Claudius Lysias, who had paid a great price for his citizenship — Paul was a freeborn citizen (Acts 22:26-28). The Apostle had also acquired, through his faith and baptism, the privilege of belonging to the commonwealth of which the Lord Jesus was the head. This was what he prized above all, and he regarded all his other privileges as "but dung" ("rubbish": NIV), so that he might truly win Christ (Phil. 3:8). There is a great lesson here for disciples of all ages: they need to have their priorities right.

Members of God's household

Also in verse 19 the Gentiles are now declared to be members of God's household. The Greek word corresponding to this expression is used only two other times in the New Testament, on each occasion in Paul's letters:

(1) In 1 Timothy 5:8, we read: "But if any provideth not for his own and especially his own household ('family': RSV)…"

(2) In the other instance, the term is extended to embrace "the household of the faith" (Gal. 6:10).

This second is clearly the sense in Ephesians 2:19. The Gentiles have now been welcomed into God's own family. Briefly then, Gentile believers enjoy full and unqualified membership in the family, because, through faith, they form part of the body of the Lord Jesus. He is the firstborn in the family; all who wish to be members must be conformed to his image, for he is the image of God (see Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15).

The chief cornerstone

The expression "household" in verse 19 leads to the development of the concept of a building, and this is enlarged upon in verse 20. The edifice is erected "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets", thus stressing once more how the work of the Lord had been continued by his followers, and notably by the Twelve. What is especially interesting here is that the Apostle who had declared to the Corinthians: "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11) now refers to him as "the chief cornerstone". The passage in Paul's mind is Isaiah 28:16, quoted from the Septuagint, according to Robinson.[2] The other Old Testament reference is to Psalm 118:22:

> "*The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.*"

This sense of wonder at what the LORD God was to achieve, and did achieve, in His Son must be echoed by all his followers. The Lord Jesus was well aware of the relevance of the Old Testament passages to himself; moreover, in the parable of the householder and his vineyard, he concluded with this prophecy:

> *"And he that falleth on this stone shall be broken in pieces: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust" (Matt. 21:44).*

Here, evidently, Jesus is evoking Daniel 2:34,35. While this points to the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus, the question now arises: in what kind of structure did the Lord Jesus become an all-important part, the chief cornerstone? In other words, who exactly constitute "the foundation of the apostles and prophets"?

Digression: Prophets and apostles

The question is important, and once more we are brought back to the concept of the fullness of Christ. If we pause to review the situation when Ephesians is being written, it is more than doubtful that a single person reading the letter had ever heard the Lord himself. In Ephesus the Gospel had been mediated by Paul (see Acts 19). In the case of the ecclesias in the Lycus valley, as we have discovered, it was the faithful Epaphras who had been the minister of the Good News (see Col. 1:7, 4:12). If we examine the occurrences of the term "prophet", we are led to a conclusion that endorses what Paul affirms in Ephesians. The examination of the New Testament, especially Acts and the epistles, reveals how important was the witness of the prophets in the new dispensation. We take note of Acts 15:32 where Judas and Silas (the latter Paul's companion on his Second Missionary Journey) are both designated "prophets". There are many other passages that could be called upon (see, for example, Acts 13:1).

The priority, however, is given by Paul to the apostles in Ephesians 2:20. As ever, Acts is here helpful; no other "apostle" comes to prominence until we reach chapter 6 and there we read about the selection of the Seven (see 6:1-6). Amongst these was Stephen, "full of grace and power" and he opens a window on a wider world, for which he paid a price, being the first of the Lord's followers to be put to death. With the call of Saul of Tarsus and the admission of the Gentiles in Acts 10, the scene changes and the converted Saul, "the apostle to the Gentiles", becomes a leading figure.

Back to the chief cornerstone...

What may seem a major digression has been necessary to understand why Paul — who understood perfectly the unique place occupied by the Lord in the process of salvation, and who in one place calls him the only foundation — changes the figure to designate him "the chief cornerstone". On this matter, Armitage Robinson comments:

> *"They [the cornerstones] are straight blocks which run up to a corner, where they are met in the angle by similar stones, the ends of which come immediately above or below them. These straight blocks are of great length, frequently measuring fifteen feet. The longest that has been found is described by Sir Charles Warren (in **Jerusalem Recovered**, p.121) in his account of the excavation of the southern wall of the sanctuary area. It measures 36 feet and 9 inches, and belongs to a very ancient period of building. It was such a stone as this that furnished the ancient prophet with his image of the Messiah."* [3]

A new "temple"

The symmetry and stability of a building can be ensured only if each part fits in with all the others. Here the Apostle envisages the actual process of erecting the temple, for as it takes shape, it grows into a "holy temple in the Lord". Why at this stage does Paul develop the figure of a temple? If we look back at verses 14 and 15 of this chapter, while he does not specifically mention the Temple at Jerusalem, it is clearly implied: the barrier that excluded Gentiles had effectively been done away in the Lord, and was to become history in AD 70. However, God's purposes of redemption and salvation cannot be frustrated through the destruction of the works of men. As ever, our Lord is the primary source, using the figure, now to be extended by the Apostle. Early in the ministry, Jesus had said to the Jews, to their consternation and mystification: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). The hearers bridled at the thought of the destruction of their beloved Temple; who was this deluded man who spoke of restoring it in three days? Lest his readers should have problems in understanding the Lord's words, John explains: "But he spake of the temple of his body" (v. 21).

This same figure is used with great effect by Paul himself, in writing to the Corinthians who needed to be reminded of the holiness of their calling:

> *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy;*

for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:16,17).

This stern lesson is repeated in chapter 6:16-20. It seems to have been lost on at least some of the Corinthians, for Paul reminds them of this fundamental truth (see 2 Cor. 6:16). The moral corruption of the city appears to have influenced practices in the ecclesia; the temple on Acrocorinth was dedicated to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, with its cultic prostitutes. Corinth was well known in the contemporary world for its immorality.

Before leaving verse 21, we observe the expression "fitly framed together", which reminds us of the detailed instructions given to the Israelites when the Tabernacle was being prepared. The observance of these instructions led to the Tabernacle being "one": each component part executed according to stringent specifications formed one harmonious whole (see Exod. 26:6,11).

It is these great truths, so fundamental an element of the Christian calling, that the Apostle presents to his reader as he concludes this chapter:

"In whom ye also [Gentiles] are builded together for a habitation in the Spirit" (v. 22).

This, then, is no structure made by human hands destined to decay, but a permanent structure. Those who endeavour in love and humility to live according to the pattern left by the Lord Jesus will know the change which will make their corruptible body like that of the glorified Jesus. One day, in fulfilment of the divine purpose, this spiritual edifice will be revealed in all its beauty.

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

Notes:

1. See Vine, *Expository Dictionary,* McLean, VA 22101, p. 943.
2. J.A. Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians,* London, 1903, p. 68.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

Editor's Note: The "fitly framed together", or "joined together", and the "builded together" of the Lord's holy temple (Eph. 2:21,22) have numerous connections with the tabernacle and temple — and the city of Jerusalem — in the Old Testament, through the Hebrew word "heber", or "chever", meaning "to join".

According to *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis,* this Hebrew word "heber" is used often, in its various forms, for the joining together of the curtains of the tent of the tabernacle (Exod. 26:6-11; 36:10,11), as Bro. Barling notes above; as well as the joining of the two pieces of the ephod (Exod. 28:7; 39:4). Other forms of "heber" occur to describe the "joinings" or "fittings" (1 Chr. 22:3), and "couplings" or "joists" (2 Chr. 34:11) of Solomon's temple. Another intriguing use is of the "joining" or "touching" of the wings of the four living creatures (Ezek. 1:9,11). (See also G. Henton Davies, "Tabernacle", *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* 4:498-502.)

An interesting reference to Jerusalem is Psalm 122:3, where the city is said to have been built, ***"bound firmly together***" (v. 3, RSV). Jerusalem was of course where "the house of the LORD" was situated (v. 9), and where all the tribes of Israel came together to praise His Name (v. 4).

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot
(3) Truth

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32, NKJV).

My grandfather, the late Bro. Angelo Buonadonna, in his youth, could only read and write in Italian. He became a Christadelphian almost 100 years ago by reading a book called *Guida Alla Vertia — Guide to the Truth* — by Bro. Gaetano Gariti. Bro. Gariti wrote this book in the early days of the 20th century as a teaching guide for the Italian immigrant community to learn all the doctrines of the "Cristadelfiani". On the cover of this book is quoted the famous question raised by Pontius Pilate: *"What is Truth?"* — John 18:38 (actually Bro. Gariti's book cites Giovanni 18:38!).

As Christadelphians we use the word *Truth* often in our discussions with each other, in Bible classes, in preaching and quite often from the platform on a Sunday morning. When we do so we are generally referring to our distinct set of beliefs. To outsiders this does on occasion seem patronizing and arrogant. Even within our own community we often don't appreciate the full extent of what the Bible means by the word "truth". The focus of this chapter is on this simple word *truth,* which expresses a concept loaded with profound meaning.

When Pilate raised this question he was hardly expecting an answer that would require 263 pages of closely spaced 10-point typescript — as is the case for *Guida Alla Vertia.* Though there is no punctuation mark in the Greek, the *New Testament in 26 Versions* indicates that virtually all English Translations take it to be a question, not a declarative statement. A famous painting by the Russian artist Nikolai Ge captures the moment when Pilate posed these words to Christ.[1] In this picture Pilate's right hand is held out in a gesture meant to show dismissal. In English the sentence is given a question mark, but it easily could have been a declarative statement with Pilate not expecting any answer at all — in which case the translators should have put an exclamation point.

How was the question asked? Indifferently?

Clearly without being there, or having a video image of the encounter, it is not possible to be exactly sure ***how*** Pilate asked this question. There are certain things that reading a text cannot always tell us. The inflection of the voice, the wave of the hand (as the artist Ge imagined), or something similar... could have meant that Pilate was simply saying, dismissively, that "Truth" didn't matter. In other words, he knew that the Jews had brought Jesus to him for political reasons and that the charges against him were all trumped up. In this case, the "Truth" of the accusations against Jesus didn't matter one way or the other.

...Or philosophically?

On the other hand, Pilate could have meant it as a question in a deeper philosophical vein. 'Is it really possible to have absolute certainty about anything?' Or, 'Can anything be proven beyond doubt?' He might have said something like: 'After all, there are many religions in the world, all professing to have the "truth"; what gives any one of them the right to the exclusive claim of having ***THE*** "truth"?' Such protestations can be deeply disturbing and confusing especially to young people, who might hear a question like this posed at school or by their peers. Hence it is far from trivial to seek an answer to the question: "What is truth?"

In the modern world we have gone philosophically from Newtonian determinism to quantum uncertainty, whereby it is postulated that nothing can ever be exactly specified. In quantum physics there is a concept called the "Uncertainty Principle". This theory removes the idea that the universe works like a perfect mechanical instrument. In its place one must instead deal with probabilities. It turns out that it is impossible to be sure of the position and motion of any object to an absolute degree of certainty, because the very act of measurement changes the state of that object.

Imagine, for example, that you have to shine a light on a particle to see where it is. The light beam itself has energy that can interact with the particle and disturb the very position and motion you sought to measure in the first place. Many philosophers have adopted this principle of physics and extrapolated it to mean that nothing in life can be absolutely certain. If that is true of Bible knowledge, then I am certainly wasting my time typing these words and worse, you are completely squandering your time reading this essay!

Two basic questions

With these thoughts in mind, let's step back and consider two basic questions:

1. Does *Truth* really matter?
2. Is it possible to have absolute "truth" or complete certainty in the things of God?

Both of these queries have profound implications for our calling and ultimate salvation. We will attempt to give concise, but thoughtfully accurate answers to both of these questions.

I believe that the answer to the first is simple and straightforward. In fact the nature

of "Truth" seems to have been of special concern to the Apostle John, because he uses the word more often than any other Bible author (22 times). (The word "truth" is used, altogether, 222 times in the King James translation and nearly as often in the NIV — 214 times.) The key verse is:

> *"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).*

Free from what? The obvious answer is free from sin and death — "O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory!" (1 Cor. 15:55). Thus, unless you think overcoming the grave is of no consequence, one has to believe by these words that Bible "truth" is critical to our salvation. Without this "truth" we might as well eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die — and unfortunately that is the way so many people seem to live their lives. Grasping for all the wealth and pleasure one can greedily acquire in this life — with absolutely no thought of eternal consequences.

The answer to the second question should be equally obvious to a Bible student: "In (the) hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began" (Tit. 1:2, NKJV). God cannot lie; thus what He has promised is certain. Furthermore, since He could swear by no greater He swore by himself, thus confirming the certainty of His promises (Heb. 6:13-17). Finally, He assured us of the *truth* of His promises, beyond any measure of doubt, by the resurrection of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:17). Thereafter Jesus revealed himself to reliable witnesses, so none should have any uncertainty as to the immutability of the Word of God.

The remainder of this essay will thus focus solely on answering Pilate's question to assure ourselves that we fully appreciate — what is *truth?*

The first meaning of "truth"

The word *truth* actually has two possible meanings. The first idea that usually comes to mind is that *truth* defines what is correct versus that which is false. It contrasts honesty with lying. As the Apostle John wrote: "No lie is of the truth" (1 John 2:21). Thus as Christadelphians we consider the false doctrines of orthodoxy to be nothing other than lies. We also know that no liar will be in the Kingdom of God (Rev. 21:27; 22:15); hence, false beliefs on fundamental doctrines separate us from the grace of God and doom us to eternal destruction. The Scriptures emphasize over and over again the essential need for correct *true* doctrine — here are a few examples to prove this point:

- "Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you" (1 Sam. 12:24; see also 1 John 2:21)
- "For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law" (Prov. 4:2, NKJV)
- "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Tim. 4:16)

There can be no doubt from these passages that the doctrines, as expressed in the Scriptures, claim to be absolute *truth*. The apostle also tells Timothy that they provide the means of obtaining salvation. No matter how compelling other

precepts may be, if they contradict the doctrines expressed in the Scriptures, they must not be *truth* (Gal. 1:8). That is the ultimate test of whether or not a religious principle is one that we ought to heed.

The practical application

The contrast between what is false and what is honest also has direct implications with respect to our character. It is not enough to simply know a set of facts that make up true doctrine. *Truth* has to be our bond in the way we deal with everyone around us — "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" (Col. 3:9). Sometimes one is tempted to tell a falsehood to hide one's own sins. The cover-up is usually worse than the original offense, as we have seen so often in public life in recent years. It should not be so among us; to do a brother or sister an offense secretly, and then to cover it up under the cloak of confidentiality, is unethical no matter how you try to dress it up (cp. Deut. 27:24). Telling the truth is as important as knowing the truth!

The hallmarks of "truth"

The Bible has some built-in mechanisms to help us identify *true* doctrines. We will consider two of them, the first is "repetition" and the second is "consistency".

The prophet Isaiah tells us, "The word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line..." (Isa. 28:13). True doctrines thus can be identified by the fact that we need not rely on some obscure verse or some esoteric knowledge of language to understand their meaning. They are principles that are mentioned over and over again, so that we have no doubt as to their veracity.

Consistency is the other important identifier of *Truth*. By this I mean that all the verses connected to a true doctrine should be self-consistent, with no contradictions. The insights given in the New Testament might expand on the spiritual significance of a teaching in the Old Testament, but shouldn't contradict it.[2] Generally we end up calling such concepts *first* principles.

We can demonstrate the ideas of "repetition" and "consistency" guiding us to a *Truth* by taking a specific doctrine for example, the "resurrection of the dead". Most mainstream Christianity has extremely confused ideas about this doctrine, and have wed it with the ancient Greek pagan idea of an immortal soul that lives on beyond death of the body. However, Bible teaching couldn't be plainer. There are at least 42 references concerning the resurrection of the body (*at the last day*) and not a single one of them mentions anything about an immortal soul, or any sort of continuing existence after death.

Most of the verses teaching the *truth* on the resurrection of the dead are crystal clear. They range from the words of the prophet Daniel:

> *"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2, NKJV).*

...to those of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians:

"Now if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (1 Cor. 15:12, NKJV).

The apostle is already fighting the influx of pagan philosophy into the thinking of the early Church.

Some other definitive references to the *truth* concerning the resurrection of the dead include Job 19:25,26; John 11:24-26; John 5:29; John 6:39,40,44,54; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; and many others. Some of these references have been mangled by modern translations that have deviated from the more direct literal transcription of the King James Bible. Nevertheless, the overwhelming evidence derived from repetition and consistency makes most scholarly versions of the Bible suitable for teaching. I personally have used the KJV, NKJV, NIV, NEB, RSV, and even the Catholic Douay version of the Bible to teach the *Truth*.

The second meaning of "truth"

Now let us turn to the second meaning of the word *truth,* which applies equally whether we are considering ancient Biblical languages or modern English. The second possible meaning alludes to picturing what is perfect versus imperfect, or comparing something that is real versus something that is unreal. For example, we say that a line is drawn straight and *true* — or a sailor might set his ship's course on a *true* heading. In this and similar expressions, we are not comparing honesty to lying. We are instead indicating that an object or issue is correct with respect to some standard. We find this second concept of *truth* used frequently in Scriptures. In this case it is also a matter of doctrine (i.e., teachings), but this connection may not always be readily appreciated. Some examples:

"And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and ***truth****" (Exod. 34:6, NKJV).*

This passage speaks of the perfection of God; it is not comparing God's honesty to that of liars. The LORD God is a standard of perfection, and that is the character we are trying to develop in ourselves.

Another example:

"He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of ***truth*** *and without injustice; righteous and upright is He" (Deut. 32:4, NKJV).*

Again the word *truth* is used to show that the works of God are a standard of perfection.

The most elegant example of this alternate meaning of the word *truth* is exemplified in the passage describing the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ:

- *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' " (John 14:6, NKJV).*
- *"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17, NKJV).*

Jesus is the way *(to the Kingdom),* and the perfect image of the character of God, the true image of the Everlasting God revealed in the flesh so that we could behold him with our own eyes and touch him with our own hands.[3]

As we have taken on the physical image of God through Adam, we must now put on the spiritual image of the Father through Christ:

> *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14, NKJV).*

It should be obvious from this passage that Jesus not only taught the *truth,* but he ***was*** the *truth*. His character is the Father's character (John 12:45). His love, mercy, compassion and concern for us are the same as the Father's, but now made manifest in the flesh. With Jesus the abstractions are gone and the reality of the new Adam purged from sin is revealed.

The practical application again

It should be the same in our lives — the *truth* must be not only in our minds, and spoken by our lips, but it must be made manifest in every action in our lives. The *Truth* must be revealed by our love for our spouses, our care and concern for our children, and for our brothers and sisters in our ecclesias. Indeed, it should be revealed by our love for all mankind (it is not possible to be a true follower of Jesus Christ and hate another human being). The *truth* is displayed by the labor we willingly do in the ecclesia, the things we do to help one another as the need arises, and the generosity with which we give our wealth and time to the work of the Lord. All of this is as much *truth* as are the facts that we believe embodied in our statement of faith.

I hope that we now appreciate that *truth* is correct belief in contradistinction to the lies of false religion, ***and*** that it is also a way of life after the pattern revealed by the character of our Lord Jesus. Without both of these meanings, understood and carried out, we cannot claim to have the *truth.*

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. *What is Truth? (Christ and Pilate),* 1890, by the Russian artist Nikolai Ge.
2. The New Testament reaffirms nine of the Ten Commandments of the Law of Moses and in most cases expands the spirit of that code. The only commandment not endorsed in the New Testament was the ritual of the Sabbath. Without fail all the major truths of the Old Testament are included in the New Testament; only the ritual of the Law was eliminated. Ironically, once the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, it also became impossible for Jews really to keep the ritual of the Law.
3. I mean this not only metaphorically, but also realistically — the way humans would prove the existence and actions of any historical person, i.e., through the testimony of reliable witnesses (1 Cor. 15).

> *"Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth. I sat at a table where were rich food and wine in abundance, but sincerity and truth were absent; and I went away hungry from the inhospitable fare" (Henry David Thoreau).*

Bible Study

Thoughts from The Letter to the Hebrews:
(1) Faith and Understanding

Faith is spiritual sight, an understanding of that which cannot be seen literally, but can be perceived spiritually. We cannot see events taking place in ancient times, nor can we can talk to people long since dead. But we can perceive the significance of the events of their lives, and we can contemplate the character of the hero or heroine. History can only be perceived by faith. It may be based upon fact, but ultimately it is understood by faith; in other words, it is a subjective interpretation of personal and public records.

The Letter to the Hebrews interprets the history of the people of Israel as foreshadowing the life and work of Jesus Christ in a particular way. Otherwise meaningless events, obscure personalities, and difficult passages are re-interpreted with new meaning and given a clarity that is achieved nowhere else. In other words, we have the privilege of being shown a method of interpretation we would not otherwise have seen. We begin our comments at the start of Hebrews 8, where we have a summary of the teaching already covered in the letter:

> *"We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens; a minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man" (Heb. 8:1,2).*

These words relate the Old Testament to the work of Jesus Christ, along with this verse:

> *"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24).*

In other words, the tabernacle, its design, its fittings and its furnishings were a giant visual aid to teach the people about the "real things in heaven". This does not mean that there is a physical structure in heaven called "The Sanctuary"; however, it may suggest that there is a location where God dwells, where angels praise "the God of all creation" and where Jesus met his Father and dwells with Him. He is at the right hand of the Father as our high priest, a role made possible by his ascension into the heavens. The real things are, therefore, the ascension of Christ, his role as priest, and his return from heaven.

The terms "high priest" and "tabernacle" take us back to the wilderness journey and the past experiences of the Hebrews. The Most Holy Place was unoccupied except for the Ark of the Covenant, the top of which was a flat piece of wood overlaid with gold, deemed to be the throne of God. This place had a very important significance for the Jews: this was the place where the high priest, once a year on

the Day of Atonement, took the blood of animals and sprinkled it upon this, the "mercy seat", seeking forgiveness for the sins of the people. This act foreshadowed the work of Jesus who gave, instead of the blood of bulls and goats, his own blood — his own life; and who, in a figure, took that blood into the presence of God to plead for forgiveness of believers' sins.

In a similar fashion, all of the furniture of the Tabernacle, the work of the High Priest, and the various sacrifices had special meanings — it all foreshadowed the work of Jesus. It was all "a figure for the time then present"; it was a parable, teaching those who would understand its meaning, that Messiah had to suffer and die before he could be crowned with glory. The cross must precede the crown.

The past has therefore relevance for the present age, in order for us to understand the role and significance of Jesus. Each of the items had their significance and was considered to be "good", but Christ was much better. In this Letter to the Hebrews, certain key words point the way to understanding the key messages: ***Christ is better!***

Better than angels	1:4
Better than priesthood	7:7
Better hope	7:19
Better covenant	7:22; 8:6
Better promises	8:6
Better sacrifices	9:23
Better reward	10:34
Better country	11:16
Better resurrection	11:35
Better thing	11:40
Better blood sprinkling	12:24
Better response by believers	6:9

And... ***Christ is perfect!***

Perfect through suffering	2:10
Being made perfect	5:9
Go on to perfection	6:1
If therefore perfection...	7:11
The Law made nothing perfect	7:19
The son consecrated for evermore	7:28
Could not be... perfect as pertaining...	9:9...
A more perfect tabernacle	9:11
Never... made the comers... perfect	10:1
Perfected forever	10:14
Without us, should not be perfect	11:40
Author and finisher (perfecter) of our faith	12:2
Spirits of just men made perfect	12:23

These terms show very clearly the way the writer to the Hebrews compared and contrasts the old with the new. Everything of the old was useful and instructive. Everything had a full and integral part to play in explaining the purpose of God, but it was neither complete nor perfect.

A tent by definition is temporary, made for a finite time and for a specific purpose. The Tabernacle was a temporary meeting place; the sacrificial and priestly system equally of short-term duration and value until he came who fulfilled all things.

Again, a summary makes the teaching clear:

> *"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:11,12).*

Jesus was the real High Priest who entered into the real Sanctuary with a real sacrifice that saves real people from real sins!

All of these are perceived by faith — we were not there, but we can read about them, we can imagine them in our minds. Furthermore, we can study the details of the sacrificial system, the priestly roles, and the use of the items of furniture. By so doing, we can understand more clearly the work of Christ. However, it is the work of Christ that is important — his life, death, resurrection and ascension together with his return from the Most Holy Place in Heaven. As the writer says:

> *"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).*

Colin Edwards (Newbury, UK)

Article

Women Committed to the Lord

Commitment to the Lord knows no gender. However, as the following thoughts were delivered at a sister's retreat a few years ago, the focus is naturally towards sisters.

*****

Commitment is defined by Webster's Dictionary as "the state of intellectual and emotional adherence to some political, social or religious theory; a promise or a pledge". The Oxford Dictionary offers "an engagement or involvement that restricts freedom of action". A discerning brother added his suggestion: "a promise to follow through to the best of your ability with a decision which was thoughtfully made".

Combining these thoughts and applying them to ourselves, we see that exposure to God's plan and purpose through the Scriptures caused us to think deeply

and eventually led us to baptism. We left the old way of life, with its unbridled instincts of human nature, and pledged to adhere to the ways of the Lord. The consequence of this commitment is that we are morally bound, dedicated to God and His purpose, and no longer free to indulge selfish inclinations or desires. To put it succinctly, we entered into a covenant relationship with the Lord and thereby committed our lives to following His will.

The experience of Israel

Israel made their commitment, after exposure to the will and purpose of God, through the dispensation of angels. God had clearly stated the premise upon which the relationship must be based: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." They gave their pledge: "All that the LORD has said we will do" (Exod. 19:6,8). Sadly, the commitment was too fragile to be sustained; the nation rebelled and failed to keep the covenant, thereby forfeiting the blessing of 'rest' in the Promised Land.

The writer to the Hebrews identified the problem: "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:19). We gain even more insight if we follow the writer's rationale as he quotes liberally from Psalm 95 (which he attributes to David in Hebrews 4:7):

> *"Wherefore as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter my rest" (Heb. 3:7-11).*

Not only were the Israelites unbelieving and disobedient, they caused the Lord God grief, because in the deep regions of their minds, they didn't really know Him!

Ignorant to the ways of God

Here is a great paradox. When Moses enquired about God's name and later asked to see His glory, that glory was revealed in the declaration of His character:

> *"And the LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exod. 34:6,7).*

And so the very name of God — Yahweh — declared Him to be the merciful Savior whose purpose was to bring many sons and daughters to glory through the forgiveness of sins. At Sinai, the people heard the voice of God and received His laws. An angel who was a manifestation of Yahweh led the tribes, guiding and protecting them on the continuation of their journey. One is compelled to ask: how could they have been in ignorance of His ways?

Ignorance of the true purpose and will of God is a dilemma to be found throughout the Scriptures. Eli would have meticulously schooled his sons in the rites and rituals of the law, and yet the divine assessment is chilling: "They knew not the LORD" (1 Sam. 2:12). The young men failed to see that the law in the aggregate revealed that the merciful and gracious God would one day provide a perfect sacrifice for sin. Paul astutely summarized the many facets of the Law of Moses: "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ..." (Gal. 3:24).

The scribes and Pharisees were self-proclaimed experts of the law; nevertheless, their knowledge did not lead them to a recognition of their Messiah. Paul again with great insight identified the problem: "Well spake the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed..." (Acts 28:25-27).

It behoves us to pay close attention to the reasoning of the inspired apostle here, because he answers one of the tantalizing anomalies in the book of Isaiah. The actual quote from the prophet is:

> *"Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed" (Isa. 6:9,10).*

Now, why would the merciful God instruct Isaiah to shut the eyes and ears of the Israelites in order to prevent them receiving the saving message? The enigma is solved by Paul adding three words to the Isaiah quote: *"...have **they** closed"!* This was not a supernatural blocking of God's words; the very action of Isaiah's preaching caused a counter-reaction, whereby the people deliberately chose to close their ears and eyes, refusing to integrate the message. (Hardening the heart is another way this phenomenon is described.)

What about us?

Now comes the crunch: do we, who think of ourselves as spiritual Israel, really know God? An affirmative answer is vital because, in his poignant prayer, the Lord Jesus stated:

> *"This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).*

Interestingly, the Greek word translated "know" here ("ginosko") is also used in the Septuagint Greek translation of Genesis 4:1: "Adam **knew** Eve his wife; and she conceived." To quote Bro. Mansfield in *The Cherubim:*

> *"In both cases, the word signifies a union between two parties that brings forth a new life. The natural union produces a child. The spiritual is the union between the human mind and the word, which is the living, active seed of God that can produce a child of God."*

Nicodemus, one of the Jewish rulers, had trouble grasping this concept when the Lord Jesus said to him: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Whereas Peter (who probably overheard the conversation) fully understood: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23).

For us the lesson is clear; having been born again spiritually through the Spirit-Word and baptism, we await the wondrous day when we will, in God's mercy, be physically reborn to immortality. We must nurture the precious seed of the word and allow it to develop from an embryo to the maturity of true daughters of God.

Difficulties in preaching

Part of our responsibility as sisters in Christ is a commitment to preaching. After 45 years in the truth, however, my experience is that it is becoming increasingly difficult to introduce the subject of the role of women, as defined in the Bible, to female friends.

I had trouble coming to terms with the issue 45 years ago. So I can imagine how it must be for those living in the society of today, where political correctness insists upon equality for women in every sphere. To them, the following Scriptural quotations are anathema:

> *"The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God... the man is the image and the glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (1 Cor. 11:3,7,8,9).*

We understand and accept the implications of:

> *"Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14).*

The woman was made to be a suitable and supportive companion for the male. Eve was deceived by the incorrect reasoning of the serpent and was the cause of her husband deliberately choosing to disobey the Lord's command. The consequence was that God in His wisdom decreed that, in the future, man must take the lead role and woman be in subjection.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of understanding, men have considered this situation a license to dominate and bully the female, leading to much abuse. On the other hand, the husband is required to pattern his behavior on Christ, who as head of the church gave his life for her. The husband must nurture, love and care for his wife as if she was his own body (Eph. 5:28). Only when both partners understand their different roles in love and respect can true harmony and happiness exist.

A quote from the past

A Bible student recently said, "That is all very well in the marriage state, but what about the inequality of women in the Law of Moses? I could not accept being a second-class citizen!"

Certainly the lady had a point, for clearly under the Law, women had a secondary role to the men:

(1) The numbering of Israel applied to ***males*** only (Num. 1:2).
(2) The Law of the firstborn: "Every ***male*** shall be the Lord's" (Exod. 13:12).
(3) "Three times a year shall all your ***males*** appear before the Lord" (Exod. 23:17).
(4) The seal of the covenant was imprinted in the flesh of the ***male*** (Gen. 17:10).
(5) In cases of a vow, the female was assessed at a smaller value than the ***male*** (Lev. 27:2-7).
(6) Purification time was longer after the birth of a daughter than of a ***son*** (Lev. 12:2-5).
(7) Except in the case of the peace offering and the sin offering of the common people, the sacrificial offerings had to be ***male*** (Lev. 3:1-6; 4:28,32; 5:6).

The writer to the Hebrews states that the law foreshadowed things to come in relation to Christ. Thus, the truth being taught in the apparent elevation of the male is not to denigrate the woman; no, it simply emphasizes the wonderful fact that it would be "the man" the Lord Jesus Christ who would bring about salvation for both sexes.

Now for an interesting quotation:

> ***"Of course, the modern school, with their 'new woman' racing hither and thither and posing in attitudes and relations for which she is unfitted by nature, will rebel against these divine appointments."***

"The modern school" and "new woman" have a familiar modern ring about them. However, the passage was written by Bro. Robert Roberts in 1898, 109 years ago! Whatever would he think of the society in the twenty-first century?

Doubtless we live in a very different age from that of our sisters in the late nineteenth century, where the male was the breadwinner and, without question, the head of the family. Today, political correctness insists upon absolute equality of the sexes in every aspect of life. Irrespective of cultural changes, for us the Bible principle of headship remains constant: God, Christ, man, woman.

All one in Christ Jesus

In regard to salvation, however, everyone is equal and personally answerable to the Lord: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Most of us have been privileged to receive quality education. Let us resolve to search out the ways of the LORD in the quest to really know Him. Then using our skills, we can explain these things to women who will listen. May the LORD bless us in our commitment to honor His will and purpose and bring glory to His Name.

Patricia Bartle (Toronto East, ON)

Archaeology

Sepphoris and Jesus

We commonly think of Jesus, the child and the young man, growing up in the quiet countryside, the provincial backwater, of Galilee, amid the village life of Nazareth. Certainly, many of his teachings draw on pastoral and farm settings, and the simple lives of the poor.

But there is more to the background in which the Son of God grew up that may have influenced his life and his teachings. There existed, very near to Nazareth, a great urban setting: a metropolis in the middle of Galilee, only an hour's walk from the little village where Jesus grew up. This was the acropolis — the fortified and elevated city — of Sepphoris.

An article in *Biblical Archaeology Review*,[1] by Richard Batey, outlines the discoveries at Sepphoris, and points out connections between the city and the words of Jesus in the gospels. (Batey also wrote a book on Sepphoris entitled *Jesus and the Forgotten City.)* Portions of this article summarize Batey's work.

What is left of the acropolis at Sepphoris rises 400 feet above the surrounding fields of central Galilee. The site in the early first century AD served as the capital for Herod Antipas, appointed by Rome as tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. In 3 BC, a year after the death of his father, Herod the Great, Antipas began rebuilding Sepphoris, which had been destroyed by the Romans in an effort to smother a rebellion. Over the next several decades, Antipas created a thriving metropolis on the site. The remains of this great city have now been brought to light by archaeologists. Their excavations have so far uncovered four major buildings dated by associated pottery to the early first century AD, that is, to the time of Antipas' city. In addition to the theater, the work has exposed a large colonnaded building, a villa, and community ritual baths.

"A city set on a hill cannot be hid" (Matt. 5:14). Jesus' words come to mind as one stands on a ridge at the northern edge of modern Nazareth. Three miles north and 700 feet lower in elevation, stands a large hill that was the site of ancient Sepphoris. In the decades following the birth of Jesus, it was the chief city and capital of Galilee.

The view from Nazareth — one that Jesus, the boy and young man, could easily have seen — was described by Leroy Waterman, who excavated at Sepphoris in 1931: "Across the rolling uplands to the north the peak of snowy Hermon hangs like a fleecy cloud above the horizon; to the west, the blue Mediterranean shimmers under the afternoon sun like a vast molten mirror, while halfway between, in full view and only an hour's walk from Nazareth, lies the site of the city that at the beginning of the first Christian century reared its brilliant acropolis, Sepphoris, 'the ornament of all Galilee', its capital and its largest and most ornate city, and at that time second only to Jerusalem in importance in all Palestine." [2]

Continuing archaeological excavations at Sepphoris are yielding evidence of a sophisticated urban culture that places Jesus in a radically different environment, one that challenges traditional assumptions about his life and ministry. The popular picture of Jesus as a poor peasant (growing up in the relative isolation of a small village of 400 people, hidden away in the remote hills of Galilee) must now be integrated with the newly revealed setting of a rapidly growing Greco-Roman metropolis boasting upwards of 30,000 inhabitants — Jews, Arabs, Greeks and Romans. Sepphoris — powerful, prosperous, peace-loving — was linked with other Greco-Roman centers on the eastern trade routes.

History of Sepphoris

Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great and the ruler who beheaded John the Baptist (Matt. 14:10; Mark 6:16; Luke 9:9), rebuilt Sepphoris after the death of his father, in 4 BC. For almost three decades following Jesus' birth, Sepphoris served as the capital of Galilee and Perea, a large territory east of the Jordan River. The proximity of Sepphoris to its satellite village, Nazareth, made contact between Nazareth and this influential urban center convenient and natural.

Following the death of Herod the Great, riots and rebellions flared up in several places throughout his kingdom. Sepphoris was a center of the uprisings in Galilee. The Roman governor of Syria, Quintilius Varus, ordered his legions to crush the rebels in Galilee. The Roman army, commanded by his son, attacked Sepphoris, captured and burned the city, and sold the inhabitants into slavery.[3]

When Antipas returned to Galilee from Rome in the spring of 3 BC, he selected the ruins of Sepphoris for his new capital. He launched a vast construction project that lasted throughout the life of Jesus. Sepphoris became the center for the government of Galilee and Perea. Political policy, military strategy, and economic regulation flowed from this seat of power. Influences from Sepphoris affected the people living in Nazareth as well as other satellite villages. Josephus tells us that Sepphoris was the largest and most beautiful city in the region.[4]

The city plan, laid out on the Roman grid pattern adjusted to the contours of the land, has all the elements typical of a Roman provincial capital — a main east-west street leading to the forum, Antipas' royal residence with its imposing tower that offers a breathtaking panorama, a 4,000-seat theater, baths, libraries, gymnasium, waterworks and public buildings.

Archaeological digs

Extensive new excavations began at Sepphoris in the 1980s. Aerial photographic techniques revealed long-buried walls and aqueducts. Ground-penetrating radar scanned a labyrinth of tunnels, cisterns, grain silos, wine cellars and storage chambers carved into solid rock deep below the debris of centuries.

Sepphoris boasted a formidable water supply system. A triumph of Roman engineering, its reservoir measured 541 feet long and about 22 feet high. Carved from a natural cavity in the limestone bedrock, it lies about a mile east of Sepphoris' acropolis. A surface aqueduct brought water to the reservoir from the

springs of Abel, three miles away, but archaeologists have not yet discovered the tunnel that took the water from the reservoir into the city. Built in the early first century to supply water for Herod Antipas' city, the reservoir continued in use until the fifth century.

Other underground structures at Sepphoris include a group of four connected chambers. These chambers originally served as cisterns; later they were used for dry storage.

The impact upon the Gospels

The more the site is studied, the more evident it becomes that Jesus lived in a Galilean culture much more sophisticated than previously assumed. To recognize this fact is to see the man and his ministry from a radically different viewpoint. Jesus in the Gospels was acquainted with the policies of kings, Antipas' government, tax collectors, wealthy landlords and poor peasants, as well as actors from the theater. All these characters assume significant new roles on the stage of an urban and cosmopolitan Galilee.

The ongoing construction of an influential Roman capital city so near Jesus' home in Nazareth redefines the carpenter's occupation in central Galilee. To erect Herod Antipas' new capital, many skilled workers from surrounding towns and villages came to Sepphoris and found employment. Artisans from Nazareth would surely have been among them.

Joseph and Jesus knew of the construction of the new capital, and would surely have been acquainted with artisans and other workers employed on the site. "Very likely 'carpenter' as applied to Jesus meant not simply a worker in wood but one who labored at the building trade in general, and it requires no [great] imagination to picture the youthful Jesus seeking and finding employment in the neighboring city of Sepphoris. But whether or not he actually labored there, his presence in the city on various occasions can scarcely be doubted; and the fact of such contacts during the formative years of his young manhood may account for attitudes and opinions that show themselves conspicuously during his public ministry." [5]

Of course, no visit by Jesus to Sepphoris is recorded in the Gospels, but then the gospel accounts leave many of Jesus' activities unreported — especially those of his teenage years and twenties. After Jesus became prominent, Antipas sought to kill him (Luke 13:31). Sepphoris would not have been a safe setting in which to proclaim the coming kingdom of God. However, the Gospels do tell of Jesus' travels throughout all the cities and villages of Galilee and into Phoenicia, as well as journeys through Samaria to Jerusalem in Judea. It is difficult to imagine that Jesus grew up looking at Sepphoris and never visited the capital or met the people living and working there. Even casual contacts with the capital would have given Jesus firsthand knowledge of Greco-Roman city planning, architectural design and sophisticated engineering technology — as well as the cosmopolitan citizens.

Kings

References to kings occur in a number of parables and sayings of Jesus. Was Jesus' understanding of kingship influenced by knowledge of Antipas' policies and rule at nearby Sepphoris? From prison John the Baptist sends two of his disciples to ask Jesus if he is the one anticipated by John's ministry, or should they look for someone else? Jesus tells them to report to John the healings Jesus performed (Matt. 11:2–6). After they depart, Jesus asks the crowds what they had gone to see in the wilderness: "A man dressed in soft raiment?" Then Jesus alludes to the ease and luxury characteristic of Antipas' lifestyle. "Behold, those who wear soft raiment are in kings' houses" (v. 8). Herod the Great built palaces in Jerusalem and Jericho, as well as in the fortresses at Masada and Machaerus. Antipas erected royal palaces at both Sepphoris and Tiberias. The luxury and ostentation of the Herodian court was legendary, and no expense was spared to create its atmosphere of conspicuous affluence.

One of Jesus' followers was Joanna, the wife of Antipas' steward or "treasury secretary", Chuza (Luke 8:3). She followed Jesus about Galilee in the company of several other women, who together helped to finance his travels (Luke 8:3). Joanna was certainly one person who could have told Jesus about the splendor in which Antipas and his court officials lived. The excesses and extravagances of the royal family stood in sharp contrast to the conditions of the poor peasants dwelling on the land. Jesus alludes to his own homelessness: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58).

Jesus appears to have been acquainted with Antipas' banking policies carried out at Sepphoris. Once Peter asks Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answers, "No, seventy times seven!" (Matt. 18:21,22). Then Jesus relates a parable about a king to illustrate the nature of forgiveness (Matt. 18:23–35). The king wanted to settle accounts with his debtors. One man brought before him owed the king the staggering sum of 10,000 talents, which in today's currency might run into tens of millions of dollars. Such a sum was astronomical, even for a king like Antipas, and many of Jesus' parables contain tremendous exaggerations. But such a parable certainly suggests that Jesus was at least aware of the "high finance" practiced by the royalty of the Roman Empire.

In another incident, Jesus asked what king contemplating a war against another king would not first counsel with his military strategists to determine if with 10,000 soldiers he could repel an attack, although outnumbered two to one. If his army is judged inadequate and defeat is likely, the king will send ambassadors to negotiate a peace treaty (Luke 14:31,32). This specific reference to a king planning a military campaign is significant. Given the strategic location of Galilee and Perea, which served as a buffer between Rome and both the Parthian empire and the Nabatean (Edomite) kingdom, Antipas was preoccupied with maintaining his military strength. In typical Herodian fashion and with considerable success, he sought to stabilize his realm with a strong and efficient army.

Jesus' saying reflects an awareness of the military planning and preparation that kings must continually make to secure themselves against aggression. Jesus encourages his followers to be careful, to count the cost, and to be willing to pay the price that the security of God's kingdom requires. "So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

The references to kings in the parables and sayings of Jesus portray him as one whose cultural horizons are far wider than those of a remote Galilean village. The references to a king point consistently to the concept of the king's sovereignty over his subjects. He determines their economic fortunes, freedom and slavery, and life and death (Matt. 18:23-35; 22:1-14; 25:31-46). The king's judgments at times are harsh, but at others they are tempered with mercy; in either case his authority is never challenged. Such an understanding of kingship may well reflect — among other things — an awareness of Antipas' rule from Sepphoris and Tiberias. Antipas represented the vast power of the empire in his territories. Jesus uses the figure of the king as an unquestioned authority to point toward God's sovereignty over creation, and to exhort his disciples about the seriousness of life for those seeking God's coming kingdom.

The realization that Jesus grew up in the shadow of Sepphoris, a great Roman capital city, casts new light on the man and his message — light that changes the perception of Jesus as a simple peasant of Galilee. The people to whom Jesus proclaimed his message of hope and salvation — Jews, Greeks, Romans and other Gentiles — were struggling with life's meaning in a culture where Jewish traditions and Greco-Roman urban values collided. Jesus' teachings reflect an awareness of city life shared with his cosmopolitan audience, and he addresses human issues that are quite contemporary. To grasp this idea is to see Jesus as one who knows ***our*** world as well.

Incidentally, the cosmopolitan culture of Galilee increases the probability that Jesus spoke Greek as well as Aramaic. Present-day debates among New Testament scholars are changing from the question of ***whether or not*** Jesus spoke Greek to ***how well*** he spoke Greek. Careful study of the Greek text of the Gospels has led more recent scholars to conclude that a number of his teachings were composed originally in Greek rather than Aramaic.

The theater

At some point during the reconstruction of Sepphoris, Antipas probably built the great theater. This would be consistent with the wave of first-century theater building that gripped the Roman world, as the provinces tried to imitate the sophistication of Rome.

Appropriate for a capital, the theater at Sepphoris was a large one, with a stage 156 feet wide and 27 feet from front to back, and with seating for 4,000 (the same capacity as the theater in the great port city of Caesarea). Archaeologists have found the front and back walls of the stage, but not the floor; hence the floor was probably made of wood that decayed long ago. This raises the interesting possibility that Jesus and his "father" Joseph, being carpenters, may even have

helped build the stage.

Some of Jesus' teachings strongly suggest that he had firsthand knowledge of the great theater at Sepphoris, and the plays that were staged there. Jesus seems to have disapproved of the theater, for he often used the term "hypocrite" (which originally denoted an actor, or a pretender) to rebuke those whose religion was a pretense. Jesus uses some form of "hypocrite" about 20 times (Matt. 6:2,5,16; 7:5; 15:7; 22:18; 23:13,15,23,25,27,28,29; 24:51; Mark 7:6; 12:15; Luke 6:42; 12:1,25; 13:15; 20:20). By contrast, the words appear in Paul's letters only twice (Gal. 2:13; 1 Tim. 4:2) and in Peter's letter only once (1 Pet. 2:1). In the Sermon on the Mount, for example, Jesus warns, "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them... do not be like the hypocrites" (Matt. 6:2,5).

> *"James Strange pointed out... that the Greek word translated 'street corners' ('plataon') is plural of 'plateia' or colonnaded street. The main street of Sepphoris is referred to as 'palatia' in rabbinic sources... Strange translates the passage in Matthew as, 'And when you pray, you must not be like actors, for they love to stand and pray in [public] assemblies and on the corners of the [colonnaded] streets to be seen by people'."* [6]

The beautiful theater constructed by Antipas at Sepphoris was the newest and the nearest to Nazareth. However, there were several other theaters in the areas where Jesus traveled. Almost a decade before Antipas was born, his father Herod the Great built the lavish theater at Jerusalem as part of his preparation to celebrate the Actium sports and games in 28 BC. This celebration honored Octavius' victory over Anthony and Cleopatra. Herod the Great acquired a reputation as a theater builder. He erected other theaters at Jericho and Samaria. During his public ministry, Jesus traveled in these areas (Mark 10:46; John 4:3–6), because they were on the two main pilgrimage routes between Galilee and Jerusalem. Herod built a theater in his port city of Caesarea, and even constructed another in Sidon, just north of his kingdom, as a sign of friendship toward these neighboring peoples. Jesus also traveled in the district of Tyre and Sidon, that is, Phoenicia (Mark 7:24,31; Matt. 15:21).

Note: See the picture of the theater at Sepphoris on the inside back cover.

Playing at dice

Dice, found at the site of Sepphoris, are very similar to first-century AD Roman dice known from other sites. Their faces exhibit the same arrangement of numbers as on a standard modern die (that is, faces opposite each other always add up to seven). Playing at dice must have been a popular entertainment among Roman troops. Almost certainly those who "cast lots" for Christ's clothing at his crucifixion used such dice (Matt. 27:35; Mark 15:24 Luke 23:34; John 19:23,24; Psa. 22:18).

"Sounding a trumpet"

When Jesus' disciples made charitable offerings, they were not to seek honor and public acclaim by, figuratively speaking, "sounding a trumpet" in the synagogue or streets — like an actor whose dramatic entrance on stage is announced with a

trumpet's fanfare. "Sounding the trumpet", an expression comparable to "blowing your own horn", probably refers to the rams' horns that were blown on various significant occasions — such as fasts — in Jewish religious observances.[7] Such gifts should be privately made so that the left hand does not know "what the right hand is doing... and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Matt. 6:3,4).

"When you fast," Jesus instructs his hearers, "do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full" (Matt. 6:16). It was customary during a religious fast, as an expression of grief or sorrow for sins, to dress in sackcloth, tear one's clothes and place ashes on the head. This appearance, accompanied by a long and somber face, was an open display of fasting. The comparison appears to be with the tragic actor who makes up his face to portray dramatically the agony of his character.

Conclusion

Quite possibly, many more aspects of culture and life in and around Sepphoris influenced the thoughts and words of Jesus Christ. We do well to understand the world in which he lived, and to recognize, not just how much that world differed from our own, but also how much it resembled our own.

The carpenter of Nazareth was a man who knew the world of his day, all of it, who saw it for what it was — passing by, observing it, and studying it.

The man Jesus saw the great palaces, the great power, the great military might, the great wealth, the great "learning", the great technological achievements, and even the great theaters and entertainments of his world.

Finally, and conclusively, he rejected its values, its wealth, its pretense, and its façade of prosperity and conspicuous consumption.

Assessing it all with a keen spiritual insight, he turned and walked away, telling his disciples: "Seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled... Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matt. 5:6,8).

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Notes

1. May-June 1992, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 50-62.
2. Leroy Waterman, *Preliminary Report of Michigan Excavations at Sepphoris, Palestine, in 1931* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1937), p. v.
3. Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews,* 2:56; *Antiquities of the Jews,* 17:271ff.
4. Josephus, *The Life of Flavius Josephus,* p. 232.
5. S.J. Case, *Jesus: A New Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), pp. 205f; and "Jesus and Sepphoris," *Journal of Biblical Literature,* Vol. 45, p. 18.
6. Richard Batey, a personal conversation with James F. Strange, cited in *Biblical Archaeological Review,* May-June 1992, Vol. 18, No. 3, p. 62.
7. Jack P. Lewis, *The Gospel According to Matthew, Part I* (Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing, 1976), pp. 98f. Cited by Batey in his *BAR* article.

Reflections

Struggles Within the Home and Heart

"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

It is only through trials and tribulations, through persecutions, through pressures of every sort — in short, through struggles within and without — that we all, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, may come at last to God's glorious Kingdom.

*****

The Scriptures comfort us with the fact that even devoted men and women of God were not by any means exempted from the 'military service' of the trial of their faith. They were often pushed (driven) by God Himself *to the very limit of their respective levels of endurance* in places where 'the test can break the best'! They struggled until they could endure no longer and were compelled to cry out to the 'author and finisher of their faith', who was keenly aware of their true limitations and who alone was able to deliver them from ultimate disaster.

Sooner or later we are brought to that point that is *especially prepared to develop our spiritual fighting skills*, so that we may be made ready to serve the Master better.

Consider the inner and untold wrestling of Abram (his name later changed by God to Abraham), the man who was called 'the friend of God' (2 Chron. 20:7; Jam. 2:23). He sought to obey the call of the LORD to leave his "country, kindred, and father's house" in Ur of the Chaldees and go into a land he had never yet seen (Gen. 12:1-3). Scripture says he left (by faith) not knowing whither he went (Heb. 11:8)! This may sound easy to accomplish today, but remember, there was no "World News Today" to be checked on TV, or internet connections to be called up to assure him of the way! He was pinning his conviction on something in which there was no tangible evidence (Heb. 11:1).

One reason we may believe he did not have quite so easy a time, despite his trust in God, rests with the record in Genesis 11:31: "***Terah took*** Abram his son... and went forth into the land of Canaan", as though Terah was responsible for the migration. Perhaps this betrays the fact that even though Abraham was asked to "leave thy father's house", he simply could not bring himself to leave his father. Does this diminish the reputation of faithful Abraham? Certainly not! There is better reason to believe Abraham badly wanted to ***save*** his father as well, and daily preached the gospel of salvation to him while giving him the place of honor, as culture and custom demanded in those days, of leading the family out. Even if we today are aware of our loved ones' reluctance to share our hope of the gospel, would we not do our best to save them from the impending disaster of the times?

We are told in Genesis 11:32 that Terah did not reach Canaan, as he died in Haran (a stop-off point along the fertile Euphrates trail), at the age of 205 years.

Was this because he was too old to continue the journey? That is unlikely. Let's take another look:

Terah was at least 70 years old when he fathered Abraham (Gen. 11:26) and therefore at least 145 when Abraham left Haran at age 75 (Gen. 12:4). Since Terah was 205 years old (Gen. 11:32) when he died, this means that Abraham left him in Haran about 60 years before his death!

But if Abraham so cared for his father that he could not leave Ur without him, why did he leave him in Haran? This must have been a rather painful decision for him. Perhaps the answer lies in one or more of the following suggestions:

1. Terah and his entire family had come out originally from Ur in the southern Euphrates region. Easton's Bible Dictionary tells us Ur was "the largest city of Shinar or northern Chaldea, and the principal center of the country as well as the center of political power". Therefore Terah would have been accustomed to a sophisticated city life and relatively high standard of living. *The prospects of resuming a dangerous cross-country journey across the unknown, void of regular comforts, might have taken its eventual toll on his level of social tolerance.*
2. Ur, we are told in Scripture, was a land steeped in idolatry. Abraham was, no doubt, daily preaching a gospel of the one God of heaven and earth. There is no reason to believe Terah embraced this view. If Abraham had indeed tried for years to get his father to leave Ur in the first place, one can well imagine *how much harder it might have proved to get him to accept that this one God Almighty actually spoke to him personally and gave him eternal promises!* (Furthermore, this kind of thinking places a son above his father in spiritual importance — a concept stranger than fiction in those days.)
3. Stephen, in his defence before the Sanhedrin Council (Acts 7:4), seems to complicate matters when he categorically states that Abraham moved on from Haran "when his father was dead". Assuming that the age calculation outlined above is correct, how can this be accounted for? Some scholars have put this down to Stephen erring under the stress of the trial. However, this need not be so, for when Terah failed to resume the journey with Abraham, he was surrendering a share in the only hope (an inheritance yet unseen) by which he could be saved into God's new world (Rom. 8:25). *Therefore he effectively died **spiritually** in Haran when Abraham decided to move on without him!* In any event, God had originally commanded Abraham to leave his "country, kindred, and father's house". God knew Terah's heart beforehand, that he was not committed enough to completing the journey and was more likely to keep Abraham back from the Covenant He gave to him.

The lesson confronting us today is this: at some point *we* may have to face the heart-wrenching choice of moving on to complete our God-appointed journey to His Kingdom *in the light of other temporary but compelling options*. Our choice carved out of such struggles helps to define our true identity and ultimately our eternal destination!

In Christ, we burned our return tickets to Ur and Haran when we declared plainly at our baptism that we are seeking a better country — God's coming Kingdom.

Therefore we will no longer stall, nor attempt to return to the world we have publicly forsaken. "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called our God."

David Andrews (Arima, Trinidad, West Indies)

Jesus' Unlikely Conversions: (4) Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus

> *"Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it with the spices in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there" (John 19:38-42).*

Let's consider Joseph of Arimathea first. He was a prominent member of the Sanhedrin council (Mark 15:43). We are told that he "waited for the kingdom of God" (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:51). John adds that he was a disciple "secretly, for fear of the Jews" (John 19:38). Why not openly? There's much evidence that if he were to have "come out" for Jesus and his claims, he would have lost his position on the Sanhedrin.

So what had happened in the meantime for Joseph to take such a bold step? I suggest that, in all likelihood, he had come to believe that Jesus would rise from the dead. And how had he become convinced of this? Was it the events of Jesus' so-called "trial"? As a member of the council, Joseph would have witnessed the following (Luke 22:66):

a. Jesus, when he was forced into speaking, was logical, calm, and eloquent.
b. In response to the question of his being the Messiah, he admitted, without hesitation, that he was.
c. Jesus told them that they would witness his kingship when they would see him (the Son of Man) sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26:64). In this Jesus cited the familiar Old Testament prophecies of Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13.
d. The so-called "evidence" of his criminal deeds was manufactured simply to convict him. There had to be a semblance of order at the trial or mob rule would have set in. And who better to speak up for order and justice than Joseph and Nicodemus? (In Luke we are told that Joseph had not consented to their counsel and deed, and that he himself was a good and just man: Luke 23:50,51.)

* * * * *

In the case of Nicodemus, he was ***the*** Teacher of Israel (John 3:10, RV), which probably meant the president of the Sanhedrin. Earlier he had come to Jesus *by night* to learn from him (John 3). At that point in time, he would not have wanted to do anything to hurt his social standing. If it had become known that he had sought an audience with Jesus, his reputation might have been damaged. How ironic: he, ***the*** teacher of Israel, sitting at the feet of an unschooled carpenter!

When we next read of Nicodemus in John 7, he is protesting against the Pharisees' attempts to bring Jesus in: "Does our Law condemn anyone, without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?" (John 7:51). And the Pharisees' sharp response is: "Are you from Galilee too? Look into it and you will find that a prophet does not come from Galilee" (v. 52). So the clear implication is that Nicodemus was no longer head of the Sanhedrin and was becoming more of an "outsider", while still technically being a part of the council. In John 12 we are told that among the chief rulers, "Many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess him lest they be put out of the synagogue. For they loved praise from men more than praise from God" (vv. 42,43). And this, for a time, was Nicodemus and probably Joseph.

Yet now, in regard to both Joseph and Nicodemus, they had found their faith when others had lost theirs. And their conversions were almost complete when they went, side by side, to Pilate to request the body of Jesus. If it were not for Joseph's wealth and high social position, he likely would not have gotten an audience with Pilate. But he did, and Pilate was more than willing to give them Jesus' body.

Notice the contrast between Pilate's willingness to cooperate with Joseph and Nicodemus, and his opposite reaction to the chief priests' protest of the notice fastened to the cross — "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews" — "What I have written, I have written" (John 19:22).

Joseph and Nicodemus took the body; washed it; wrapped it in linen, applying myrrh and aloes that Nicodemus brought to the body; and then carefully laid it in Joseph's tomb.

* * * * *

Now what is almost undeniable about Joseph and Nicodemus is this: by taking a stand with a crucified Jesus of Nazareth, by going to the side of a man that their own counsel had condemned to death, ***they could not go back!*** This meant a drastic change in their lifestyles, major sacrifices to become Christians themselves. Nevertheless, I think without a doubt this is what they did. And so again, we have before us two unlikely conversions (from the world's point of view) — all brought about because of the beauty of Jesus' character, because of their logic in deciding what they must do, and through their courage and faith to do it.

Wesley Booker (Austin South, TX)

"They who are lavish in their promises are often short in their performances" (Scottish proverb).

Bible Mission News

Lima, Peru

It was a pleasure to meet again with our interested friends in Lima for nearly a full week in September. Taking the convenient direct flight from Los Angeles, we arrived at 4 AM Tuesday. Talks had been scheduled in the conference room of our downtown hotel for every night from Tuesday to Saturday and for Sunday afternoon. We were reasonably pleased to welcome nine visitors to the first class until we discovered that none of them had received the mailed invitation, of which 400 had been sent! They had seen only the one sent by e-mail, which meant that most of the contacts hadn't known of our coming. There seems to be no explanation of the problem, since a more recent letter sent to Lima to "test the waters," so to speak, arrived in five days. Fortunately Jean was able to remedy the problem in part by assiduous use of the telephone and so attendance picked up dramatically, hitting 21 on Saturday. In all, 33 different adult visitors came out during the week, and a number of them participated enthusiastically in all six days of talks.

One of our most zealous students, whom we had never met before, described how he had come to start reading his Bible. Though aware of many shortcomings of the Roman Catholic Church, he had continued to attend Mass regularly for want of a better alternative. Then one Sunday morning two months before our visit he awoke thinking "Jesus is not God." Going to his computer, he typed that phrase (in Spanish) into a search engine, having decided to investigate the first site that appeared. That turned out to be the Spanish-language Christadelphian web site www.labiblia.com and he spent the rest of the day reading the material on the site, fascinated. He had had no idea there was such a thing as a non-Trinitarian Christian community. When his wife asked him if they were going to Mass, he said that what he was reading was more important, and so she decided to follow him. They have never returned to the Catholic Church. The lovely thing about the story is that his wife is equally enthusiastic about Bible study and his mother also attended nearly all the classes.

There are a number of others who wish to be baptized as soon as possible and so we hope, God willing, on our next trip to program several sessions of baptismal-preparation classes.

Lima is a huge city with a very young population. There is a great deal of unemployment, or, more accurately, underemployment — many people trying to make a few cents selling candy or trinkets in the street, for example. Many of our students cannot afford the $2.00 airmail postage to send their Bible course

answers back to us, so on our next trip we hope to set up a system whereby they can return them locally, to be forwarded to us in the US.

God willing, Bro. Robert Alderson and Bro. Don and Sis. Miriam Luff will carry out a further four days of classes and follow-up in Lima at the end of October. We thank God for the interest and the spiritual growth of all our friends there. We pray that, if it be His will, there might soon be an ecclesia in the city.

Jim and Jean Hunter

Here is a shot from the Saturday evening when we had our best attendance. The couple on the left front is Dr. Jorge Velasquez and his wife Magdalena, and the other couple is Dr. (in law) Eduardo Bustamante and his wife Coile. The three people down the right side are Jaime's wife Adriana and his two daughters; his son is at the extreme left of the second row.

Thisisyourbible.com Website

September was an exciting month for the website. It seems that summer is over and people are getting back to business. We had the highest number of pamphlet downloads ever in September — **3,956** — which is more than **600** over our previous monthly high. There were also over **805** Minute Meditation readings, almost double what we had in our highest month before. For the first time ever we exceeded one million hits in a single month — **1,207,999!**

The best news of all, though, is a huge increase in Bible students, **796** who signed up on the system (**643** of those are actually taking correspondence courses). At this rate we certainly could use some more tutors.

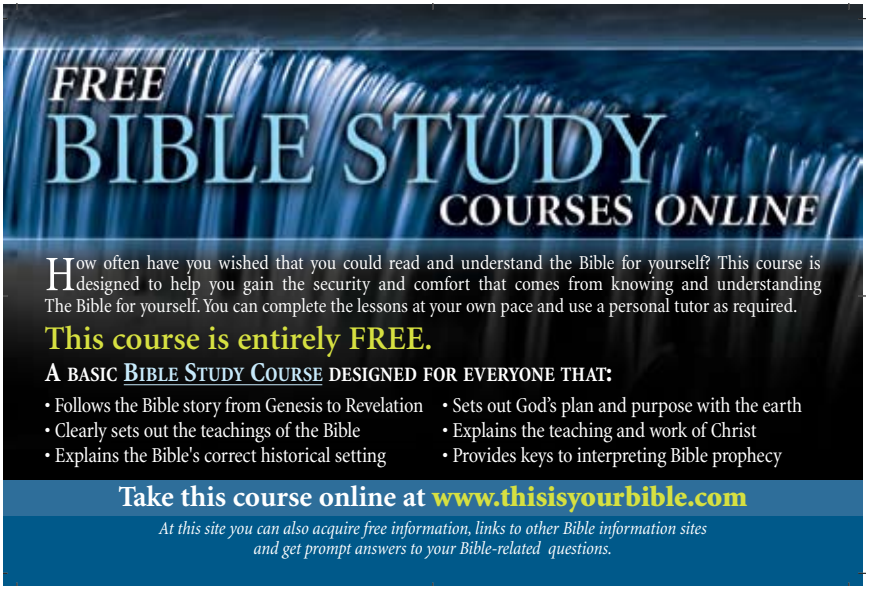
As examples of the continued growth, the site was advertised in Barbados, and the students have been coming in thick and fast — as have the questions and DVD orders! In June, there were **29** students. The current count is **383.** Barbados is now second only to the USA for total number of students. Our South African

brethren and sisters are also doing well. In June they had **100** students, but as of today that number is at **244.** ***It pays to advertise!***

Now for the next baptismal story, promised last month. This was a good example of the partnership that can bear fruit between our various CBM organizations, their students and the website. The student ***Pasobsuk Tuktukwon Jirondorn,*** who lives in Thailand, was a long-time correspondence student of the ACBM. He found the website and began a detailed discussion over several months on his key questions. He was baptized in December 2006 at a Bible camp in Penang, Malaysia. Of that gathering he said, "I get an impression of love of our brethren in the Christadelphian family. We have a few Christadelphians in Malaysia, with one family and five singles, and they live in different areas. We are alone but we try to contact and encourage each other."

Want to help?

- Visit the website and find out what it's all about (***www.thisisyourbible.com***)
- Become an on-line tutor; we need your help!
- Hand out the business cards available in your ecclesia — let us know if you need more
- Advertise the website in your local newspaper or as a link on your ecclesia's website. Below is one example of a newspaper advertisement:



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 online 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

BEDFORD, NS

We welcome by transfer from Victoria, BC, Sis. Sarah Bennett. Her many talents are our assets.

Recent visitors have been Bro. Brad and Sis. Deb Goodwin with children, Joseph, Hannah and Megan, and Bro. Ken and Sis. Wendy Dickson (Sussex, NB); Sis. Anne Hancock (Tunbridge Wells, UK); Sis. Jane Miles (Cambridge, UK); and Bro. Peter and Sis. Margaret Stonell (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON). We thank the brethren for their uplifting exhortations.

Ronald A. A. Hill

BRANTFORD, ON

We are pleased to welcome to our area Bro. Glenn and Sis. Megan Abel (Petersburg, VA), Sis. Hadassah Mindorf (Niagara, ON), and Bro. Dean and Sis. Andrea Bailey (Vernon, BC). These brothers and sisters and their families will be attending the Brantford Ecclesia regularly, and we look forward to enjoying fellowship with them.

We commend in love by transfer our Sis. Jolene Budden to the Surrey, BC, Ecclesia as of September 16. Sis. Jolene has helped in many areas over the last five years, including teaching at CHC. She will be greatly missed. We pray for God's richest blessing on her as she returns to Vancouver.

We thank those who supported the recent CHC garage sale fundraiser which raised close to $2,000 for the school. The school remains in need of financial assistance as announced in the 2007 CHC appeal. Contributions may be sent to "The Brantford Christadelphian Ecclesia" earmarked for the CHC.

Daniel Billington

CRANSTON, RI

We are very pleased to announce that, since our last report, we have witnessed another of Adam's race, ANTHONY MILIA, JR., answering the call of the gospel. He confessed his belief in the things concerning the kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ, and was baptized on July 8.

The undersigned has resigned as recording brother of the ecclesia. Assuming these duties is Bro. Raymond Entwistle. All correspondence should be addressed to Bro. Ray at our ecclesial hall address, 2104 Cranston St., Cranston, RI 02920, or at his home address, 184 Fairway Dr., Attleboro, MA 02703.

Craig S. Nevers

GUADALAJARA, MEXICO

We are pleased to report the baptism of FRANCISCO CASTILLO on Saturday, September 23. He has attended regularly for several years. Bro. Dennis Paggi of California first did a review with him earlier this year, and his studies have been

ongoing since that time. Bro. Bill and Sis. Carol Rawson spent four weeks in Guadalajara strengthening the ecclesia and supporting the preaching efforts from August 27 to September 23. During this time period, Bill and Francisco had regular studies preparing for Francisco's baptism. There are now ten brothers and two sisters in the ecclesia in this city, and there are a number of interested friends who attend on a regular basis.

We also report that the ecclesia moved to another rental facility nearer to the center of the city. It is one block from a park where a number of major bus routes converge, as well as an underground train station. God continues to bless the work in this city in many ways.

Don Luff

HOUSTON NORTH, TX

We welcome, by transfer from Houston West Ecclesia, Bro. Dave and Sis. Judy Gadberry, and Bro. Melo and Sis. Amy Montalbo with their three daughters.

Also, please note that our dear Bro. Ken, Sis. Dorothy, and Bro. Seth Langston have transferred to the Denver, CO, Ecclesia. We will miss them but look forward to visiting them too!

Bro. Brad and Sis. Anne Bennett had their second son, Brady, born on August 4.

It is with great sadness that we report that our dear Sis. Jerusha Young fell asleep on August 4. Please keep the Young family in your prayers. She will be missed by our CYC and the ecclesial families here in Texas.

Stan Isbell

LOMPOC VALLEY, CA

Since our last report to *The Tidings,* we have been blessed with the visits and fellowship of many brothers and sisters around the Memorial Table of our absent Lord. We are especially grateful to those brethren who led our Bible Classes and favored us with words of exhortation, and to our brother David Cooper, who led our 33rd annual Bible study weekend earlier this year.

We are excited to be able to announce the plans for our 34th annual study weekend, to be held, God willing, March 15 and 16, 2008. Our scheduled study leaders are Bre. Don Pearce (Rugby, UK) and Paul Billington (Brantford, ON). Between the two of them, they will lead us in an "Up Close Look At Bible Prophecy Being Fulfilled In Our Time".

Since our seating is limited, we are asking that all who plan to attend please send $25 per person to: Ron Stewart, 275 Oakwood Circle, Lompoc, CA 93436. Please make checks payable to Lompoc Valley Ecclesia. We recommend that those looking for accommodations for Friday or Saturday night please call the Lompoc Chamber of Commerce at 1-800-240-0999 for available rooms and rates.

We are pleased to welcome, by transfer to our ecclesia, Bro. Ron and Sis. Melody Magness. We look forward to many times of fellowship with them, as we help each other toward God's glorious Kingdom.

We are saddened to announce the falling asleep in Christ, on September 8, of our

Sis. Margery Burnett. Sis. Margery had been in the truth for over 78 years, during which time she had been a member of five different ecclesias: Pomona, Los Angeles, Dana Point, San Luis Obispo, and Lompoc Valley. She is especially remembered in the Los Angeles Ecclesia in her role as a very effective Sunday school teacher. Our sister's sleep will be short, as we confidently expect the soon return of our dear Lord to this earth.

Ron Stewart

LONDON WEST, ON

It is with sadness that we report our Sis. Helen Boyce fell asleep on July l. Our sympathies are with Bro. John Boyce in his loss. On September 15 we held our annual fraternal gathering; we thank Bro. Nigel Patterson (Newquay, UK) for his ministrations. We rejoice in the marriages of Bro. Nathan Meaker to Sis. Melissa Short on August 11, and Sis. Danielle Winter to Bro. John Birney on October 6. We pray for God's blessing on them as they begin their new lives together, as heirs of the grace of life. We welcome by transfer Sis. Joyce Lausch (Manitoulin Island) and Bro. Bill Scott (Tillsonburg). We also transfer Sis. Nicole Winter to the Kamloops Ecclesia, and commend her to the love and fellowship of the brethren and sisters there.

Please note that, effective October 21, 2007, the London West Ecclesia has relocated to 101 Wistow Street, London, which is situated just west of Oxford Street and Highbury Avenue. If additional details are required, please contact the undersigned at 519-666-1534 or e-mail Bro. Colin Meaker colinmeaker@hotmail.com.

Ron Kidd

LOS ANGELES HISPANIC, CA

Sis. Norma Alvarado married Bro. Nassib Shankour of the Verdugo Hills meeting on July 29. Sis. Norma has now transferred her membership to that ecclesia. May God bless them in their walk to His kingdom.

With sorrow we report that Sis. Ligia Nunez passed away unexpectedly on August 16 at the age of 68. Sis. Ligia was the first contact ever to attend our meetings here in Los Angeles and the first to be baptized. She awaits the return of our Savior and the resurrection.

Sis. Martha Cerrillo and Bro. Salvador Rivera have both transferred to the ecclesia in Guadalajara, Mexico, where their support for the preaching effort is greatly appreciated.

Outreach work continues with postal courses and weekly public lectures, and there are seven or eight interested friends attending meetings regularly.

Jim Hunter

MAPLE RIDGE, BC

Our little ecclesia has been growing since our last update, with several births as well as a baptism. We thank our Heavenly Father for the safe arrival of a daughter, Lois Ruth, to Bro. Dan and Sis. Ruth Osborn in September 2006, as well as a son, Josiah Michael Edward, to Bro. Mike and Sis. Deborah Hart in May 2007. We rejoiced at the baptism of DANIEL CHADWICK, immersed into the Lord Jesus Christ at Kanaka Creek on May 26. Our new brother has been attending youth and ecclesial events for the past two years, and we pray the Father's blessing as he begins his new life in Christ.

We held our second annual youth gathering, led by Bro. Ted Hodge, Jr. (Orangeville, ON), in February; and our third annual West Coast Prophecy Day, led by Bro. David Wisniewski (Brantford, ON), in May. Both events were very helpful in focusing our minds on the coming of our Lord, and we thank both brethren for their studies.

We are glad to report that Bro. Kevin Skinner has been restored to fellowship, and is now meeting with the Vernon, BC, Ecclesia.

Edward Hart

NANAIMO, BC

I have taken over the duties as recording brother for the Nanaimo Ecclesia. Any correspondence can be directed to me for Nanaimo either at eevans@shaw.ca or 250-754-5830.

Eric Evans

ORLANDO, FL

We are happy to announce a new addition. Jessica Rachel Garan was welcomed into the world by her loving parents, Sis. Dawn and Bro. Daniel Garan, on June 27. Psalm 17:3 reads, "Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him."

We also give our best wishes and rejoice over the union of Sis. Nishla Sobers and Bro. Ian Neblett (Toronto East). The marriage took place on July 21, in the Gamboa region of Panama. Sis. Nishla Neblett has since transferred from the Orlando Ecclesia to the Toronto East Ecclesia. May their marriage be enriched with love and blessings as they walk together as one in the Lord.

Since our last ecclesial reports we have enjoyed the fellowship of the following brethren and sisters: Bro. Bob and Sis. Martha Holley (James River, VA), with their grandchildren, Alex and Zachary House; Bro. Bill and Sis. Jennifer Rinard, with their children Victoria, Jordan, Elizabeth, and Rebecca; Bro. Lou Pokol (Williamsville, NY); Sis. Jan Reese (Largo, FL); Bro. Erik Denson (Orlando, FL); and Sis. Emily Tingle. Our thanks to all the brethren who enriched us with their words of exhortation and their fellowship.

Randy Davenport

SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR

On a recent trip to El Salvador I was able to spend considerable time with Sis. Alejandra Guzman who is gravely ill with cancer. During the visit she was able to sit and chat for a number of hours at a time, but has since grown weaker. We ask for your prayers for our sister and her family. Sis. Alejandra has been one of the leading sisters in the meeting in San Salvador, and her sickness has greatly affected everyone in the ecclesia.

The brethren and sisters are preparing for the Bible school at the end of the year. They are expecting about 100 to attend, and it is always the highlight of the year for everyone. The ecclesias continue to function well and are active in their preaching and Sunday school work.

Jim Hunter

SHELBURNE, ON

We are happy to report the baptisms of ALEXIS DAVIS, daughter of Sis. Trish Davis, on August 16, 2006; JOSIAH SALES, son of Bro. and Sis. Chris Sales, on September

14, 2006; JOEL THOMAS, husband of Sis. Irene Thomas, on April 18, 2007, and PAUL DAVIS, husband of Sis. Trish Davis, on August 12, 2007. Our best wishes are with all, especially the latter two families as they walk together towards God's kingdom united in purpose.

With sorrow we report the death of Sis. Marjorie Hewer on December 1, 2006, after a painful illness. Her husband, Bro. Charlie Hewer, has since transferred to the Hamilton (MacNab) Ecclesia to be closer to the rest of his family. Bro. John Abel has transferred to the Kitchener/Waterloo Ecclesia. Bro.Walter and Sis. Tricia Lovato have transferred to the Orangeville Ecclesia. We commend them all to the loving care of their new ecclesial homes. Sis. Joanne Cooper has returned to us from the Kitchener/Waterloo Ecclesia, and we are happy to have her with us once more. Sis. Lois Abel has transferred back from Hyderabad, India.

On April 12, our ecclesia hosted a study day on "The Importance of our Statement of Faith — Clause 24", given by Bro. Frank Abel. On June 2, Bro. Jonathan Bowen (Brantford, ON) gave a special lecture in the Shelburne library on "Jerusalem — 40 Years in Jewish Hands". Several interested friends attended.

Sis. Mary Jane Abel was married to Bro. Paul Styles (Livonia, MI) on September 15 with the best wishes of the ecclesia.

Bro. Frank Abel is now Recording Brother. All correspondence should be sent to him at 195306 East Luther Amaranth Town Line, RR #1, Grand Valley, ON, L0N 1G0 fabel@conestogac.on.ca.

Graeme Wilson

SHENANDOAH VALLEY, VA

Our Heavenly Father continues to bless this little meeting in the valley of Virginia. We have had many visitors, and a number of those brethren have encouraged us with words of exhortation. We are blessed to have a close relationship with the Washington, DC, Ecclesia. They regularly send speaking brethren to give us healing words.

We are located along Highway I-81 in the northern part of the Shenandoah Valley. We encourage any travelers passing through to contact us for a visit. We like having visitors.

It is with great pleasure that we announce the baptism of JEFFREY JENSEN into the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ on July 16, 2006. Bro. Jeff is the husband of Sis. Ruth Jensen, the father of Julia and Jaclynn Jensen and the son-in-law of Bro. Craig and Sis. Diane McInturff. We pray that God will bless Jeffrey's walk to His kingdom.

It is with sadness we announce the falling asleep of our Sis. Nancy Davison Conover Sauer. Sis. Nancy was born in Richmond, VA, in the fall of 1924; she was baptized in February, 1947, at the Washington, DC, Ecclesia. She moved to the valley in the 1970s. Sis. Nancy was the wife of Bro. Elmer "Whitey" Sauer

Our contact information is as follows: Rec. Bro. David Anderson c/o 161 Star Tannery Road, Star Tannery, VA 22654-1942; or Bro. Craig McInturff 540-877-3178 toolman@visuallink.com.

Please call ahead for meeting, Sunday school, and mid-week Bible class information.

David Anderson

TULSA/JOPLIN, MO

We would like to announce the baptisms on September 15 of DAN and TAMIE BRENDER. We joyously welcome this lovely couple into the household of faith.

God willing, our ecclesia will hold a study weekend November 10-11, 2007, in Joplin, MO, led by Bro. Roger Long entitled "From Upper Room to Resurrection". For more details and housing accommodations, please contact Bro. David Perry at 417-782-2213.

We have enjoyed the company of a number of brethren and sisters in the past month, including Bro. John and Sis. LaDonna Clubb (Wichita Falls, TX); Bro. John and Sis. Lindsey Billington, and Bro. Paul and Sis. Sally Billington (Brantford, ON); and Bro. Garth and Sis. Kerry Maier (Tyler, TX).

Jonathan Sabo

WASHINGTON, DC

It was previously stated in the July issue of *The Tidings* that Bro. Sandy and Sis. Janice Piskura had transferred from the Petersburg, VA, Ecclesia to another ecclesia. The correct information is that they transferred to the Washington, DC, Ecclesia.

Cory Crabill

WORCESTER, MA

We are pleased to announce our newest member, Bro. Dale Long, who transferred to our area from the Springfield, MA, Ecclesia. His new address is 88 Perry Street, Unit 280, Putnam, CT 06260. We look forward to our walk together with him to the kingdom.

Our Sis. Ruth Jorgensen has settled into her new job after graduating from Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine. Her new address is 5362 Horseshoe Lake Road, Batavia, NY14020. We pray God will watch over her in her new endeavor.

Mark Fulmer

Ann Arbor Thanksgiving Gathering

The Ann Arbor Ecclesia is planning our annual Thanksgiving Gathering to be held this year on Sunday, November 25, at the North Campus Holiday Inn in Ann Arbor. Our guest apeaker this year is Bro. Karam Ram (Birmingham, UK). His topic is "Who are you?" The central theme of this talk is getting brothers and sisters to think about holiness and what that means in practice. The afternoon talk will be on "The Great Commandment". Lunch will be provided, and the day promises to be one filled with spiritual food and good fellowship.

Anyone needing more information or direction can contact Bro. Paul Elliott at 248-449-7063.

Ecclesial membership does not make one a "Christadelphian" any more than owning a piano makes one a musician.

Minute Meditation

Your Attitude

Your attitude, more than your aptitude, will determine your altitude. This short pithy saying means that your attitude is more important than how talented you are, when it comes to being able to fly high, that is, be successful, in whatever you are doing. Sports teams look for more than raw ability when they are choosing their players. Lou Holtz, a famous football coach, observed, "Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do, and attitude determines how well you do it."

We all have some ability. Especially when it comes to our service for the Lord, we have talents God has given us to use. We are to share the good news of the kingdom with others, to spread cheer by visiting the sick and sad, to send cards, to train up the young in the fear of the Lord, to encourage and uplift our fellow brethren. Everyone is capable of doing many of these things, but some never get around to doing any of the things that they could do. And some do them half-heartedly. If we want to hear those words, "Well, done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord," then we need to change our attitude towards using our time and abilities in serving our Lord.

We need to be motivated to get started. Without being filled with the desire to serve, any abilities we have to serve will never be used. We must work at making sure our attitude is right, that we love our God and are so thankful for the beautiful world He has given us, His guidance and care in our lives, and the opportunity for salvation and eternal life in the kingdom. Then we will be motivated to use our God-given abilities to serve Him.

Paul exhorts us, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."

Jesus had more ability than any man who has ever lived, but it was his attitude rather than his aptitude that caused him to make the supreme sacrifice he did for us. We want to cultivate the same attitude that our Lord Jesus Christ had — he selflessly dedicated himself to serving his God and taking care of the needs of others. He had unlimited ability and supernatural powers, and he used them not to serve himself but to serve others.

When Jesus was tired and hungry, he preached to the woman at the well in Samaria. When the news came about the death of John the Baptist, the disciples went off to mourn quietly, while Jesus, instead of sending the people away, had compassion on them and spent the day teaching a multitude. When the disciples were arguing among themselves as to who was the greatest, Jesus got down on his knees in front of them and washed their feet. At the time Jesus was facing death

by crucifixion. Even while he was suffering, he was thinking of others rather than himself, and made sure the apostles escaped arrest and that his mother was looked after. Peter tells us, "Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God."

God is looking for this attitude in us. Do we think about serving God before we think about serving ourselves? Do we put the needs of others over our own wants and needs? Do we, as Paul exhorted, consider others better than ourselves? Obviously there was no one alive who was better than Jesus was, but he did not think about what he wanted — but what was the will of God and what was best for his followers. Even when Jesus had not eaten for forty days and forty nights and was starving, he would not perform a miracle to satisfy his own needs. Yet, when he saw the multitude who had missed only a few meals, he had compassion on them and fed them lest they should go away faint, and collapse along the way.

Human nature tends to think first of itself, but the Lord's teaching is to think first of what God would have us do, to care for our brethren and sisters and to forget our own wants and desires. This approach goes against all that is natural, but just doing what feels natural is living like animals and not as brethren and sisters of the Lord.

Paul tells us, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." We believe we are Christ's. Then we are to crucify the flesh. Our own affections and lusts must be put down so that we can serve God and serve others. Let us make sure that we have done so, that we are filled with zeal and the motivation to use our abilities to serve our God and care for others. Remember Paul's instructions: "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."

Robert J. Lloyd

"A man will sometimes say to himself — indeed we have heard it openly suggested — that as David was forgiven his sin, and it is evident that God makes much allowance for human weakness, surely we in these days shall be excused for doing such and such things.

"These fleshly reasoners fail to perceive that by the very fact of their indulging such reflections they move the transgression of fleshly weakness into the category of deliberate despising of God's law. If David, previous to his transgression, had deliberately reasoned the matter out and concluded that since God had shown mercy in other cases, it might be worth while to undertake the risk of sinning, we should never have heard of him as an example of rectitude. In all probability he would have been treated with the severity shown to other despisers and willful transgressors of the law" (Islip Collyer, ***Conviction and Conduct).***

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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 waltdodrill@msn.com 727-528-1197

10,11 Tulsa/Joplin, OK Bible study weekend. Bro. Roger Long (UK): "From Upper Room to Resurrection". Contact Bro. David Perry 417-782-2213

10,11 Victoria, BC Study weekend. Bro. Christian Russell (Verdugo Hills, CA): "The Garden of the Lord". To help with catering or to arrange accommodation, please contact Sis. Pat Williamson 250-721-4938 pwilliamson@telus.net

The Theater at Sepphoris
Martha Cooper
© National Geographic Society

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
P.O. Box 530696 • Livonia, MI 48153-0696
Periodicals Postage Paid at San Dimas, California

16-18 Seattle, WA Youth Conference. Bro. Kevin Styles: "Maintaining Our Spiritual Compass in the Last Days". Contact Sis. Rebekah or Sis. Abby Cooper seattlecyc@gmail.com

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. David Fertig hashawaha@cox.net 703-644-6311

DECEMBER

7-9 Worcester, MA CYC Weekend. Bro. James Diliberto (Echo Lake, NJ): "The Tabernacle: Lessons for Young People in the Wilderness of Life". Contact Bro. Aaron MacAdams aaronmacadams@hotmail.com 978-502-9690

JANUARY 2008

26 San Diego County Ecclesia Annual Study Day. Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI): "Little Words that Mean a Lot". 9:30 am Ecclesial Hall, lunch served. Contact Bro. Kent Ellis ellisk@san.rr.com 858-674-5645

FEBRUARY

3-8 Palm Springs Bible School. Bre. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD) and Michael Owen (Seaton, UK). Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau register@christadelphianbibleschool.org. Or visit website www.californiabibleschool.org

MARCH

29 - April 5 Florida Bible School Christian Retreat, Bradenton, FL. Adult / teen classes. Bro. Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON): "Bumps along the Road of Discipleship"; Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD): "First Principles of Prayer"; Bro. Martin Webster (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON): "The Fifteen-Minute Exhortation". Contact Bro. Walt Dodrill 727-528-1197 waltdodrill@msn.com. Registration: Sis. Diane Jennings 727-528-1886 diane@dianej.net

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 70 **December, 2007** **No. 11**

Editorial — What I Don't Know (Part 4) 523
Editor's Note — Two Projects for the New Year 528
Exhortation — Back to Basics, *Will Jackson* 529
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:
(11) The unsearchable riches of Christ, *Tom Barling* 532
Bible Study — Little Words that Mean a Lot:
(4) Compassion, *John C. Bilello* 537
Bible Study — Thoughts from The Letter to the Hebrews:
(2) "Let us go on...", *Colin Edwards* 542
Reflections:
Mary's Dream 545
The Potter's Wheel, *Marieke Garner* 546
"I would not be here if it were not for you", *Ken Sommerville* 547
A Correlation, *Gideon Drepaul* 548
Jesus' Unlikely Conversions:
(5) The thief on the cross, *Wesley Booker* 549
Nullifying the Word, *Clyde Snobelen* 552
Letters — What will happen to "the other fellow"? 554
Bible Mission News — Mexico; South America;
Thisisyourbible.com 558
News & Notices 563
Minute Meditation — Impossible, *Robert J. Lloyd* 567
Coming Events 569
Index for 2007 570

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Editor: George Booker

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060) is published monthly by The Christadelphian Tidings, 42076 Hartford Drive, Canton, MI 48187-3360. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID at San Dimas, California. POSTMASTER: Return Service Requested to The Christadelphian Tidings, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696.

Tidings Publishing Corporation: Joe Hill (Chairman), John C. Bilello, Peter A. Bilello, Steve Cheetham, Ken Curry, Clive Drepaul, Mark Giordano, Tony Isaacs, Ted Sleeper, Phil Snobelen, Ken Sommerville, Jeff Wallace.

The Tidings is published on the 25th of the month for the month following. Items for publication must be received by the 10th of the month. Correspondence to the Editor: George Booker, 2500 Berwyn Circle, Austin, TX 78745-3559. E-mail: editor@tidings.org. Administrator: Rose Madge: rm_madge@yahoo.com. Production Editor: Kathy Hill. Home page: www.tidings.org. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF.

Copyright 2007, Tidings Publishing Corporation. Reproduction in whole, or in part, without permission is prohibited.

Subscriptions

United States: $24, **Canada: $32**. Checks payable to ***The Tidings*** and sent to P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to the same address. Changes of address and other subscription matters to Rose Madge at the above address or by e-mail at rm_madge@yahoo.com. **Australia: $39**. Mail checks to Fran Caudery, 35 Jeffery Street, Blackburn, VIC 3130. **New Zealand: $39**. Mail checks to John Beer, P.O. Box 559, Te Awamutu 3840. **South Africa: R140**. Mail checks to Anthony Oosthuizen, P.O. Box 50357, Durban 4062. **United Kingdom: £14**. Mail checks to Malcolm Cross, Grange Farm, East Cottingwith, York YO42 4TB.

New Subscriptions

For most subscribers, renewal of subscriptions comes up this month. You should find a renewal notice in this magazine, along with a return envelope. There are also boxes to check if (a) you cannot afford to pay at this time, but would like to continue receiving the magazine, or (b) you would like to contribute additional funds to help provide the magazine to those who cannot afford to pay.

The new rates are listed above. In both the US and Canada there are increases — from $20 to $24, and $28 to $32, respectively. Part of this increase is due to significant increases in postage rates. Also, it seems, other costs rise inexorably too. Incidentally, this is the first increase in the past six years for both the US and Canada. For those of you who like to do math, that works out to slightly over 3% increase per year for the US, and slightly over 2% increase per year for Canada.

Editorial

What I Don't Know (Part 4)

8. The things the "Preacher" did not understand:

The Book of Ecclesiastes is a veritable treasure trove of "things we don't understand".

> **(a)** *"[God] has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set* ***eternity*** *[Hebrew 'olahm'] in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end" (Eccl. 3:11, NIV).*

Man indeed has the capacity — God gave it to him, of course — to understand and appreciate eternal things in some measure, and to imagine an eternal, never-beginning, never-ending Divine Being. Yet we live in a fixed time, whilst He exists above, outside of, and beyond time. Ultimately, in this life and with these limitations, we cannot really fathom... we cannot really plumb the depths of knowing and scale the heights of understanding Him. So much remains a mystery to us. "Now we see through a glass darkly" (KJV) — "now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror" (NIV) — and a very dull, and unpolished metal mirror at that (1 Cor. 13:12). Other men who have no real knowledge of God and His ways are indeed and truly in the dark, but even those of us who ***know***... in actual fact, we know so very little: "What we will become has not yet been made known" (1 John 3:2).

> **(b)** *"Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked?" (Eccl. 7:13).*

The "crooked" conditions under which we all live (cp. Eccl. 1:15) were brought about by the original transgression and curse of Genesis 3. This "human condition" cannot and will not be altered this side of God's Kingdom. But even now, in the midst of a world filled with "crooked" people and "crooked" ways, those who love and serve God can choose, insofar as they are able, to walk in "straight" paths (Psa. 125:5; Prov. 2:10-15). They can also choose not to complain or whine or fret about their lot (Eccl. 7:10). They know that their faith, and their steps, even when they falter, will so please their LORD that He will delight in straightening, at last, all things that are "crooked" for them! And how they will sing, and dance, and run, and shout, when the crooked ways are made straight, and the rough places plain and level (Isa. 40:3,4). "And the glory of the LORD will be revealed" in that day (v. 5).

> **(c)** *"I said, 'I am determined to be wise' — but this was beyond me. Whatever wisdom may be, it is far off and most profound — who can discover it?" (Eccl. 7:23,24).*

As the Preacher pursued the use of wisdom in a practical sense, he came to discover the limitations of such wisdom, in at least two ways:

(1) because the human mind, in its present corrupted state, can stretch only so far (v. 23), and
(2) because some wisdom is simply inaccessible, even to the very best of human minds — it is kept hidden in the eternal mind (v. 24).

Wisdom is inaccessible, or accessible only at a steep price: it is as though it were buried far beneath the surface of the earth, or hidden in the depths of the sea (Job 28:12,21, etc. in context; Psa. 36:6). Or, alternatively, wisdom is far above the earth — "too lofty for me to attain" (Psa. 139:6). Either way, "the secret things belong to the LORD our God" (Deut. 29:29). Paul confesses his limitations in understanding the deep things of God:

> *"Oh, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" (Rom. 11:33; cp. 1 Cor. 1:19-25; Job 11:7).*

It has been pointed out that the knowledge of any man or woman (or, for that matter, the accumulated knowledge of all mankind) is like a circle that surrounds us. In this analogy, the perimeter of the circle represents the outer boundary, the limit of what is known; beyond that line there is the unknown. As the circle expands, that is, as more is learned — upon ***any*** subject, secular or spiritual — it is obvious that the line is still there, and there is still the unknown beyond that line. But now, with the growth of knowledge, and the widening of the circle, the circumference of the circle that encloses our knowledge is growing too. In other words, the more we learn, the more we appreciate how little we know, and how much more there is to learn! Ad infinitum!

Of course, humanly speaking, the best example of this limitation of human knowledge is the ultimate line that our inquiries can never cross. The last line, beyond which is the true unknown, is the line of death. Who can go to explore that dark land and return to reveal all its mysteries? No one.

Man continues to study the workings of the human brain. As time goes by, certain advances have indeed been made — we are told that scientists now understand the fundamental purposes of various parts of the brain itself, and how chemical or electrical stimuli, or a tumor or injury, can disrupt its workings in a particular area, while leaving other functions unimpeded. Even in such instances, scientists are only now beginning to perceive how — even when the work of one functional area of the brain is interrupted — other parts of the brain may go beyond their ordinary functions to take over this other necessary job, as though the human brain is a self-repairing apparatus!

One great hindrance in such study, of course — and it seems to be hinted at in these verses — is this: when we study the human brain, we are using the human brain! And our understanding, such as it is, is limited by the fact that we are studying ourselves, and we simply have no platform higher than ourselves — or separate from ourselves — on which to stand, in order to evaluate objectively what we are and how we work.

(d) "*When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe man's labor*

on earth — his eyes not seeing sleep day or night — then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows ['think to know it': KJV], he cannot really comprehend it ['he shall not be able to find it': KJV]" (Eccl. 8:16,17).

"We cannot find out the work of God in all its fullness — not even with the Scriptures to guide us. Ecclesiastes teaches us that the world is like this: essentially unfathomable and beyond man — and hence frustrating and vain to him. One cannot read Ecclesiastes and fail to come away with this impression. God has made the world like this deliberately so that we may realize the gulf between ourselves and Him, and so that we might seek after Him in order to understand and to have direction. We can go so far in understanding the world by our observations of it and by our experience, but we must remember that this is only 'so far' and not all the way. God's ways are ultimately inscrutable to human view. There will always be things that we cannot fully understand. And if we claim any different — if we 'think to know it' — we shall only be deceiving ourselves. For the Preacher tells us that we 'shall not be able to find it.' This is because we are man and not God. We must recognize and bow to His supremacy in all things. We must learn to recognize our finiteness and weakness, the dullness of our minds, and learn to place our trust and confidence evermore in Him" [Mark Vincent, "Ecclesiastes: (5) 'Yes... But...' "; *Tidings, May 1999].*

(e) *"So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but no man knows whether love or hate awaits him" (Eccl. 9:1).*

Almighty God exercises unquestioned control over all affairs of life, but especially and preeminently He holds the righteous in His hands (Prov. 3:6; Psa. 37:5; Phil. 2:13). It may not be possible for even the wise to understand ***why*** God allows certain things to happen in their lives (Eccl. 8:17), and sometimes those things are hard and bitter experiences (Heb. 2:8-10; 1 Thes. 3:4; 2 Tim. 3:12). (This would seem to be the "love" and "hate" of this verse: not what the righteous do, but what is done to them, especially as allowed by God.) Nevertheless, the believer has faith that "in all things [whether seemingly good, or seemingly bad] God works for the [ultimate] good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

(f) *"As you do not know the path of the wind [Hebrew 'ruach'], or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things" (Eccl. 11:5).*

More literally, this ought to read "As you do not know how the ***Spirit*** ['ruach'] enters the body being formed..." The Spirit, or the spirit, of God is the key factor here, as in verses 3 and 4 — where the "wind" or "Spirit" brings clouds of rain and causes trees to fall.

As man does not know exactly how, or exactly when, the fetus is formed in the womb, and the spirit of life enters into it... so man does not know how or when

the seed planted will germinate into a crop. "The seed grows up, he knows not how" (Mark 4:26,27; cp. Isa. 55:8-11; 1 Cor. 3:6,7).

In a spiritual sense, these two "miracles" of creation are blended together — in the conversion and rebirth and renewal of a life in the service of God. This was the theme of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus:

> *" 'How can a man be born when he is old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!'..." (John 3:4).*

But Jesus explained:

> *"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (v. 8).*

The Preacher reminds us God is "the Maker of all things". In this he refers to:

(a) the natural creation of Genesis 1;
(b) the ongoing renewal and life-sustaining power of God;
(c) the spiritual, or new, creation — an ongoing development of God's family in the world today; and
(d) the final regeneration and renewal of the whole world — including the glorification of the saints — at Christ's coming.

All these actions — some more or less instantaneous, others covering millennia, some open while others are secret and hidden — all these are above and beyond us, even when they concern us most intimately. These are all part of "what I don't know", and even if I may believe in the ultimate outcome of the LORD God's creative activities, I cannot appreciate ***how*** He does what He has promised to do. Even when He is working right now, under my very nose, so to speak, ***with me...*** even then I cannot truly know what He is doing, and how it will turn out. Using Jesus' analogy, even though I can feel the wind, and see something of what it accomplishes, I cannot ***see*** the wind. And so it is with God's Spirit, which after all is called by the same Hebrew word ("ruach") as the wind!

"No man understands just how the child's skeleton is formed in its mother's womb, or how the flesh is covered upon its bony frame, or the eyes and ears are fashioned, or the heart and veins are made. Yet all find their appointed place, and function so perfectly in the newly formed fetus. Qoheleth [the 'Preacher'] thus reminds us that every birth is a marvelous, fantastic, incredible miracle, performed by Yahweh, exhibiting the wonder of His wisdom, seen also in the starry vaults of heaven, and the wonders of the earth beneath. Creation bears eloquent testimony to the fact that there is nothing too hard for Yahweh, nothing beyond His power to accomplish. Men should, therefore, put their complete trust and confidence in Him, and not worry needlessly, when adverse conditions appear to frustrate their work. Let them preach, sow the seed at all times, and leave the increase to God (Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17; Matt. 19:26)" (R. Krygger, *Ecclesiastes: A Devotional Study*).

*****

Like the "Preacher" of Ecclesiastes, even after persistent investigation and study

and reflection, we still come to realize how little we truly know.

So often is this stressed, and so much is this so, that we may well conclude that one of the benchmarks of human wisdom is the recognition of how little one truly knows!

But... *"the man who knows not, and knows that he knows not... that man may be taught."*

And our LORD will teach us (John 6:45)... both what we need to know, and what we may well get along without knowing, at least for now.

But above all, in His infinite wisdom, He can teach us the wonderful lesson — in our so-very-less-than-perfect understanding:

"We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).

For us, who know so little, there is no other way to live.

*****

It would surely be presumptuous to suggest this ***completes*** my survey of "what I don't know"! But perhaps this is a good enough place to stop for now.

I suggest, dear reader, that you always consider (carefully and thankfully) what you ***do*** know.

At the same time, I suggest that you pause once in a while to consider what you ***don't*** know. Paradoxical as it sounds, you may be much the wiser for the exercise.

George Booker

Two books *fill a vital place in the scheme of revelation by raising questions to which the full answers are only to be found in Christ. Exploring life fearlessly, they seem to baffle the believer with doubts and difficulties, yet they really pave the way to a deeper faith...*

Job *leads through the problem of suffering to the wider problem of man's relation to God. Is it a simple profit-and-loss account, in which well doing is rewarded and wrong doing punished? Obviously it is more than that, since a righteous man can suffer... When the Son of God himself suffers on the cross, then the cross deepens the problem only to solve it, since the way of life is opened up in the risen Christ...*

Ecclesiastes *probes the problem of man's relation to his own life. What is it worth when lived as an end in itself?... The field of inquiry is wider than in Job, since it covers the experience of life generally and not only the particular experiences of loss and pain; but in the same way it raises fundamental questions to which only partial answers can be given within the book's own limits — the final answers are in Christ.*

L.G. Sargent

Editor's Note:
Two Projects for the New Year

Are you interested in a project for the new year? Or two? Something like a New Year's resolution, and in either case something you might work on a bit every day when you do your Bible readings. Choose one (or both) if you like — and then start a list (or lists). After the end of the year, send me what you have done (or send me periodic updates through the year). I'll compile and collate all the responses and make the results available after the year-end. My email (also on the inside front cover) is editor@tidings.org.

The first project: Difficult words in the King James Version

In the September *Tidings,* page 389, there is a list of about 175 difficult words in the KJV, with their present-day meanings and, in some cases, the appropriate references. However, this list can be expanded considerably.

So, if you'd like to participate in this project, simply keep a notepad handy when you (or your family) are doing the daily readings (or following any reading method), and compile your own list of difficult words in the KJV (omitting the ones already on our first list). If you miss some that should be on the list, don't fret; someone else will surely write that one down. By compiling and collating all our lists after the end of the year, I ought to be able to produce for us a fairly extensive and exhaustive list of such words.

The second project: Unnamed people in the Bible

Another project, or a second project if you wish: As you go through the Bible in 2008, keep a list of all the unnamed people you encounter. (Here, of course, the appropriate Bible reference is most certainly needed.) Same procedure: keep adding to your list until the end of the year, when you send it along to me. Then I will compile and collate all the lists, and make the results available to anyone who is interested.

What do I mean in this case by an "unnamed person"? I mean, an unnamed person whose words are recorded in the Bible, or who does some significant thing. For example, the list should include Job's wife because her words are recorded (Job 2:9), but not his father, who is mentioned once (Job 15:10) but who does and says nothing. The list should include Jephthah's daughter, who comes out to meet him and who speaks (Judg. 11:34-40), but not his mother the prostitute, who is only mentioned in passing (Jdg. 11:1). The list should include the tenth leper, the Samaritan who, being healed, returns to thank Jesus and praise God (Luke 17:15-19), but not the other nine, who simply go their own way, never to be heard of again (v. 14).

So there you are. Have fun, and let me hear from you.

George

"What is right is right even when no one else is doing it.
What is wrong is wrong even if everyone is doing it."

Exhortation

Back to Basics

I've spent the last nine years in wholesale mortgage sales, the first half as a sales rep and the last half as a sales manager. I've been blessed and enjoyed success, so I am frequently asked the secret to success in sales.

I always tell people who ask that success in sales is simple, but not easy. There are really just a few things a person needs to know, and they are not difficult.

The hard part comes in the application. It's not because you have to learn the right things to say — the "tricks" — to get people to buy. In fact, I'm absolutely convinced that such tactics will actually hurt a salesperson much more than they will help. People generally know when they're being tricked, and selling people things they don't need is a sure way to ruin one's reputation and derail one's career.

The bottom line is that a salesperson needs to find clients who have a legitimate need for his product or service. The salesperson needs to convey effectively how his product or service meets those needs. Finally, he needs to follow through and stay in touch with the client. It's really about that simple.

The hard part is doing it. Let's face it, most people are lazy. Most salespeople have good intentions but poor follow-through. They mean to call on new prospects, but instead they let themselves get tied down in paperwork. They mean to get a proposal to a client when they said they would, but something comes up and they are late. They mean to call to check on something, but forget. They mean to call a client back, but they don't until two days later.

It's not complex, but a lot of it is roll-up-your-sleeves work. In my business, there's not a lot of daily oversight by a manager; it's up to the sales rep. He is given a goal, or quota, and then he is accountable at the end of the period for achieving it. If he achieves his goal, or quota, he generally earns good money and receives well-deserved recognition. Then he has the opportunity to do it again the next month. If he doesn't meet his goal, he doesn't make much money, and is probably admonished and put on probation. If he misses his goal several months in a row, he loses his job.

Living the life of a Christadelphian is a lot like this. Having believed and obeyed the gospel in baptism, we are given a goal or a quota. God clearly lays out a goal in His Word, the Bible. He says, "Love your neighbor as yourself"... 'forgive'... 'help others'... 'treat others fairly', etc. Those are fixed goals. In the corporate world we'd call them objectives. Make the objective, get the reward. Miss it, lose your job.

In the business world we usually work in three timeframes — months, quarters, and years. We receive — or if we're managers, we give — certain goals or objectives for these three time-periods. As Christadelphians we are given time-periods too. The big one, our "year", is our life. When we stand before Christ at the judgment,

he's going to look at our life and evaluate it to determine if we receive the gift of eternal life. I'm not saying we ***earn*** that reward by works, as we might in the corporate world. But we do receive the gift, in a sense, because of our intentions and, to some extent, how those intentions are revealed in our lives.

But there are other time periods too — phases in our lives: marriage, parenting, friendship, careers, etc. All these together add up to our lives, in the same way months and quarters add up to years in the business world.

As believers in Christ, we have the same objectives an aspiring salesperson does. The salesperson knows he or she needs to make the calls, find the need, fill the need, follow up, and communicate. As believers, we know what we should be doing. We know we need to call that brother or sister in need and help however we can. We know we need to read our Bibles. We know we need to pray. We know we need to share fellowship, etc.

But like a sales rep working for me in Dallas or Salt Lake City, we don't have constant oversight. We have good intentions, but we don't have Christ giving us constant feedback, unless we're doing our readings and meditating on them in prayer. We don't have Christ saying directly to us, "I know you meant to call your brother in need, but you didn't." So it's easy to let things slip. It's easy to say we'll do them later when we have time and aren't so tired. The problem is, deadlines sneak up on us more quickly than we think — the "month-end", the "quarter-end"... the "year-end"!

> *"Be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Matt. 24:44).*

As a sales manager there are signposts. For that sales rep in Dallas, I can see signposts that tell me whether he's going to be successful:

- Call reports: is he averaging 20 or more meetings per week?
- Account set-ups: is he getting three to five new clients approved to do business with us per month?
- Account drops: is he terminating our relationship with unprofitable customers?
- Communication: is he calling for help or to ask me questions?
- File submissions: are new applications coming in?
- Pull-through ratio: is he following up and closing the applications he brings in?
- Expenses: how many minutes is he using his cell phone per month? How many miles is he driving?

These are all signposts that strongly suggest success or the lack thereof. I tell my new employees about these signposts. I tell them I have found that the sales reps who do these things tend to be successful, and the ones who don't, usually aren't.

Isn't it true that the success of our lives as Christadelphians also leaves markers or signposts? Isn't it true that God's Word tells us the signposts of success for a Christadelphian? Think of almost any verse in Proverbs — there's a signpost!

Jesus said, "A tree is recognized by its fruit" (Matt. 12:33-37). There are outward signs that reveal our hearts and our convictions. This passage concerns our speech. It's not only how we speak to each other, but the things that we talk about. What we say suggests what is in our hearts and on our minds.

James said, "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:17). He is not saying we are saved by works. But he is saying that faith and deeds cannot exist independent of each other. He is making a call for faith in action. If you really have faith, you'll ***want*** to do things that show that faith.

John makes a similar call for "love in action" (1 John 3:17). Loving your brethren, and helping them in a time of need, cannot exist apart from one another.

Just like I can see the signposts of success in my sales reps, the Father and His Son, and even our brethren, can see the signposts of faith in our lives. We have to let God and Christ speak to us, through the Word, and we have to talk to each other to offer feedback and encouragement.

The call of a Christadelphian is simple; Jesus summarizes it in Matthew 22:37-39:

> *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."*

But doing this can be difficult. Just as Jesus harshly condemns the teachers of the law, the Pharisees, and the hypocrites for focusing on the less important things (Matt. 23:23,24), so he reminds us to focus on the basics of our walk as a believer — justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

As we approach the breaking of bread, we have an opportunity for a fresh start. Let us examine ourselves, confess our sins, ask for forgiveness, and recommit ourselves to the basics.

Will Jackson (Austin Leander, TX)

Success

"Everyone who is successful must have dreamed of something" (Maricopa Indian proverb).

"It is our attitude at the beginning of a difficult task which, more than anything else, will affect its successful outcome" (William James).

"Inside the will of God there is no failure. Outside the will of God there is no success" (Bernard Edinger).

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (11) The unsearchable riches of Christ

At the conclusion of Ephesians 2, Paul developed the concept of a spiritual temple, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the Lord Jesus being the chief cornerstone. The apostle has made it abundantly clear to his Gentile readers that they are on the same footing as Jewish disciples in this great work: there is no difference; they are all one in the Lord Jesus. It is this final thought of the Gentiles' place that prompts what he goes on to say in the opening verses of Ephesians 3. It is as though now he wishes to present his credentials to the Gentile part of his readership.

A prisoner

He begins by mentioning that he is a prisoner, not for some felony he has committed but on "behalf of you Gentiles". Although there were others who preached the gospel in the Gentile world, he, Paul, was pre-eminently their apostle. The full exploration of this claim cannot now detain us, but we can at least remind ourselves of this fact: While the revelation on the Damascus road was primarily to open the way to salvation for a repentant sinner (the common experience of all disciples) — this was associated from the outset with a purpose that was to govern the rest of Paul's life. The bewildered Ananias received this clear message about the former persecutor:

> *"He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15,16).*

Digression: "A chosen vessel"

Now there is a remarkable feature of the Damascus episode that appears to have been missed by commentators. This touches upon an important aspect of the early history of the gospel. First, Ananias was told in plain terms that the converted Saul of Tarsus would be a chosen vessel to the ***Gentiles.*** Presumably the only conclusion Ananias (not to mention all other Jewish believers) could draw was that the Gentiles who responded to the gospel would need to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. Such was probably also Saul's understanding at this stage for, after his conversion, he preached Jesus in the synagogues of Damascus; there is no mention of Gentiles (see Acts 9:20). What was required was the epoch-making revelation to Peter that uncircumcised Gentiles could simply, on the basis of faith, be baptized into the saving name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 10).

Paul himself had to be enlightened on this matter, and it may well be that the period spent in Arabia, after his conversion, was the time when he received this enlightenment (see Gal. 1:17). Despite all the evidence that the law of Moses was now superseded, we know what resistance there was within the Jerusalem

ecclesia to the teaching that circumcision and observance of the Mosaic law were no longer necessary (see Acts 15:1).

This resistance continued, and for many years, wherever Paul took the gospel. The problems in the Lycus valley are witness to this. Paul's First Missionary Journey with Barnabas would not have been possible without the special revelation to Peter and what was revealed to Paul.

When we reflect once more upon the circumstances of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, we must not miss the fact the Lord Jesus was ***personally*** involved. This gave it a special character, though not unique, for Jesus had likewise chosen the Twelve (see Luke 6:12-16). The consciousness of his special mission was constantly present in Paul's mind (see Acts 22:21; 26:15-19; 1 Tim. 1:11,12). For him, therefore, the grace of God in the Lord embraced not merely his salvation but also his special mission in life. Although Paul concentrated his activities on Ephesus during the Third Missionary Journey (see Acts 19), he was widely known in the province of Asia. Evidence of this can be seen at the end of 1 Corinthians 16:19: "The churches of Asia salute you."

The dispensation of God's grace

Nevertheless, Paul now reminds his readers of what they would certainly have known, that he writes from prison (in Rome), and that was a consequence of his total commitment to his Gentile mission. The "if" of verse 2 does not express a condition, but a confident assumption. Thus, we might say to someone, ***'If*** you knew this, why did you act as you did?' So Paul refers to the dispensation of God's grace granted to him specifically for the Gentiles. The term in the RV, "dispensation", is accompanied by a footnote that gives "stewardship" as an acceptable alternative. This term "dispensation" has given expositors problems; it is used exclusively by Paul except for its occurrence in Luke 16:2,3,4, where it is consistently rendered "stewardship" in the RV. The interpretation adopted here is that of Armitage Robinson: "Both here and in Colossians 1:25 the 'dispensation' spoken of is a dispensation in which God is the Dispenser, and not the administration, or stewardship, of any human agent. This is made clear by the parallel use of the word in 1:10..." [1]

The "mystery" of the Gentiles

Paul then enlarges on the concept of his special mission to the Gentiles. He has already (in Ephesians 2) made clear the equality of Jew and Gentile in the construction of God's spiritual temple. This, he feels, he has done briefly ("in few words"). Now he has much more to say on this subject so near to his heart. The purpose of these additional words is to provide, especially for his Gentile readers, evidence of his insight into "the mystery of Christ" (v. 4). We have already had occasion to consider the word "mystery" and in this connection we note once more what the Lord said to his disciples:

> *"Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 13:11).*

By this we understand that they were humbly prepared to receive from the Lord

insight into the truths of his teaching on various aspects of the kingdom.

What had not been previously understood, and accepted, as now it had been, was that the Gentiles were:

> *"...fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the same body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (v. 6).*

Before the coming of the Lord Jesus, the world at large had been ignorant of God's purpose in Christ. Also, there had been amongst Jews no understanding of how Gentiles would acquire parity with themselves. So it was that Paul, in addressing the Areopagus in Athens, spoke of "the times of ignorance" (Acts 17:30). But now, the RV in verse 6, by the studied use of "fellow", is alerting us once more to Paul's use of "sun" compounds (the "together" words), and thus to the equality of Jew and Gentile before God. We encountered this in 2:19, which declared that Gentiles "are fellow-citizens with the saints". In the case of 3:6, the NIV brings this out thus:

> *"The Gentiles are heirs **together** with Israe, members **together** of one body, and sharers **together** in the promise in Christ Jesus".*

Here we see an instance, all too common, where a feature of one language is difficult to reproduce in another. The RV use of "fellow" goes some way to achieving this. However, it breaks down in the case of "sussoma", literally "together-body" ["sun" here in the Greek becomes "sus" because of the following letter s]. [2] When we consult Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon,* we find the only occurrence of the word is in Ephesians 3:6, an interesting fact in itself. It seems the apostle was constrained to coin a new term in order to bring out the important fact that believers, Jews and Gentiles, form one body, and that is the body of the Lord Jesus. We can be one only in him, and that is a truth every follower of the Lord Jesus must embrace and strive to make true in his or her case. No other form of unity is acceptable.

"A servant of this gospel"

Having thus comprehensively affirmed, and demonstrated by his carefully chosen language, the unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ Jesus, Paul reverts to the subject of his apostleship:

> *"I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given to me by the working of his power" (v. 7, NIV).*

One cannot read Paul's letters without perceiving the fundamental character of divine grace. Paul felt deeply, in view of his earlier record as a persecutor, that he experienced this in abundant measure. As the result of his call he had become a *servant of the gospel.* The word here used is "diakonos". [3]

As he looks back on his life, and its total transformation on the Damascus road, Paul has a sense of awe — for he regarded himself as less than the least of all saints. This was no posture, no affected humility. What made him thus was the consciousness of the greatness of the Lord Jesus and the reality of the forgiveness he had received (see once more 1 Tim. 1:12-16). It is usual in this connection to turn also to 1 Corinthians 15:9, where Paul declares himself to be the least of

the apostles, unworthy even to be called an apostle. Yes, he knew full well that the Twelve had in different ways failed their Lord, but he had been a persecutor, one with blood on his hands. Doubtless this was generally known in Christian circles, and it is possible some of his adversaries exploited the fact. But the Lord Jesus had totally forgiven him, and not only forgiven him but also made him the special apostle to the Gentiles. If this was not grace, what was? The fact of the cross thus possessed for Paul a special meaning: the Lord Jesus lived in Paul, for he had loved him and had given himself for him (see Gal. 2:20).

The unsearchable riches

To return to Ephesians 3:8: we take note how the grace Paul had received was exercised by him: in preaching to the Gentiles "the unsearchable riches of Christ". We have already met the term "riches":

(a) Ephesians 1:7: the "riches" of God's grace, and

(b) Ephesians 1:18: the "riches" of God's glory.

The concept meets us also in Colossians:

(c) Colossians 1:27: the glorious "riches" of this mystery, and

(d) Colossians 2:2: the full "riches" of this understanding.

In this last passage, Paul's hope is that the disciples in the Lycus valley may possess a "complete understanding", so "that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ" (NIV). How easy it is to have a pitifully inadequate view of the gospel and the rich heritage available in the Lord Jesus. We should take note especially of Colossians 2:9:

"For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

Each should have the consciousness, shared with the apostle, of the riches of Christ. For him, they are unfathomable, yes, and inexhaustible. Here we can discern an anticipation of the great prayer of this chapter (Eph. 3:14-19).

A mystery kept hidden

In thus preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, the apostle has the task of declaring the mystery that hitherto had been concealed in God, who "created all things". This declaration should especially be noted, and it is confirmed in Hebrews 3:4:

"For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God."

He is the sole great architect of all things. After the fulfilment of the prophecies relating to the Lord Jesus and the preaching of the gospel as recorded in Acts, the way was opened up for an understanding of so much more of the Old Testament. The first who had to be enlightened were the apostles themselves (see Luke 24:45-48).

Digression: Principalities and powers

But what are we to understand by "the principalities and the powers in the heavenly *places*"? Whatever their identity, we must take account of the fact that they are enlightened by "the church" (v. 10). In the early days of preaching, Peter and

the others presented the gospel in clear terms to the multitude, and to the Jewish authorities when they were arraigned before them (see Acts 3,4, and 5). As for Paul, he appeared before various Jewish and Roman authorities and, whatever the circumstances, he preached to the great and lowly alike (see Phil. 1:13). When Peter speaks of a "new heavens and a new earth" (in harmony with Isa. 65:17), we know from the details in Isaiah he is looking for a new world government and a regenerated mankind. The burden of the apostolic message, whether ministered by Paul or others, is to make known God's wisdom in its manifold aspects.

But is it also possible that "the principalities and powers" might refer to the angels? This possibility at least merits some consideration, in view of 1 Peter 1:12:

"Even angels long to look into these things" (NIV).

However, the probability, if not certainty, points primarily to human rulers and authorities.

This is in keeping with the eternal purpose centered in the Lord Jesus (v. 11). God's redemptive purpose in him was portrayed in the lamb slain to provide a covering for the nakedness of Adam and Eve (a subject explored at an earlier stage in our study of this letter). For those in Christ, who have faith (ever a key word), there is freedom of access to the throne of grace.

"Do not be distressed"

In view of this, adds Paul, you need not grieve about what has happened to me. In varying degrees, many in Asia would be familiar with what happened to Paul in carrying Christ into the heathen world. "Do not be distressed by this", adds the apostle (in v. 13), "for it is your glory." This may seem a strange exhortation, but his sufferings are a consequence of his love for his Lord and for them, the readers of his letter. Boasting was foreign to Paul, but we remember how once, reluctantly and to answer his Judaizing critics amongst the Corinthians, he engaged in the foolishness of boasting. None can read 2 Corinthians 11:23-30 without feeling a sense of awe. There is so much to learn from the study of Paul's letters, and not only from his writings, but also from his example.

In our next study we hope to look at the beautiful prayer the apostle offers for his readers.

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

Notes:

1. *St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians,* London, 1903, p. 76. See also John Carter, *The Letter to the Ephesians,* The Christadelphian, p. 63: "Here, the idea is that, in God's administration, His purpose now took in the Gentiles."
2. English has borrowed many words from Greek and in the process the "sun" compounds reflect the variations in the Greek: thus we have "synthesis", "sympathy", "symphony", "system", etc.
3. Paul, in considering his relationship to the Lord Jesus, sometimes calls himself his "doulos" (slave, bondservant); see, for example, Romans 1:1, Philippians 1:1. When he speaks of his work for the Lord, he is a "diakonos" — "one who ministers" (see Col. 1:23).

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot
(4) Compassion

"The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion;
slow to anger, and of great mercy" (Psa. 145:8).

The 1950s was a time when radio actually entertained people, instead of just having talk shows all day long. Today radio is a medium that seems to thrive solely on trashing politicians, celebrities, and of course football coaches! During the 1950s there was an ongoing series that served as filler between regular broadcast shows. This series featured Carl Reiner as a reporter interviewing a supposedly 2000-year-old man, played by Mel Brooks. The *shtick* was centered on the 2000-year-old man making comments that were farfetched, but at the same time reflected painfully and accurately on the human condition. One of these vignettes has Reiner asking Brooks, "What did you do for entertainment 2000 years ago? Things must have been very boring." "Oh no," replies the 2000 year old man. "We had plenty of good tragedy and comedy." "Really! Can you give our listeners an example of what you are talking about?" asks Reiner. Brooks replies, "Tragedy is when I cut my finger. Comedy is when you don't look where you are going and fall in a hole and die."

Therein lies the tale. We are often insensitive to the pratfalls of others, and they can even be the objects of laughter if not too injurious. This type of humor has made big stars out of many performers. Slapstick comedians such as Charlie Chaplin and the Three Stooges used such routines to milk their audiences for laughs. Why do people laugh at such apparently cruel pratfalls? It is generally thought this makes many people laugh with relief that it isn't happening to them. It's the other guy who is looking ridiculous by slipping on a banana peel — thank goodness it isn't me! *(Personally, I've never cared for this type of so-called humor, but to each his own.)*

The moral of this story is that we can often be insensitive to the plight of others, no matter how serious (*falling in the hole and dying*), yet we are keenly sensitive to even the slightest pain or inconvenience that we suffer personally (*cutting our finger*). A person who is insensitive to the pain of others lacks **compassion,** and anyone lacking compassion fails miserably in emulating the character of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us take a closer look at this little word, compassion.

The English word "compassion" is derived from the primary root word "passion", having a Latin origin. "Passionem" in the Latin originally meant "the suffering of pain". By adding the prefix "com", one extends the meaning to include a sense of "together, in combination, in union". However, even though "compassion" is derived from "passion", the link between the two has clearly diverged in common

English usage since the 1611 King James Bible. For example, if I told you Mary had a great passion for music you would hardly suppose that she 'suffered' through musical programs; in fact, you would think quite the opposite. The meaning of 'passion' in modern American English is now understood in the opposite sense from what it originally meant. [1] The word 'passion' appears only once in the King James Version of our Bibles (Acts 1:3), and the meaning is unequivocally 'suffering'. Both the New King James and the New International Versions concede the divergence from modern English and eliminate the word 'passion' in this passage, using instead 'suffering'.

Remarkably, the word "compassion" has not changed its meaning since 1611. Its primary meaning is still 'suffering together with another', i.e., sharing another's pain. [2] The word appears 39 times in the KJV and an astonishing 73 times in the NIV; it is a translation for at least six different Hebrew and six different Greek words. The best way to get a deep sense of what the Scriptures mean by "compassion" is carefully to read our Bibles and to appreciate how this concept is put into living action.

Compassion in the Old Testament

The psalmist informs us of the character of the Lord God in dealing with the disobedience of the children of Israel:

> *"But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them. Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath" (Psa. 78:38, NKJV).*

In writing this psalm, Asaph perhaps had in mind what had happened to Judah in the days of Pekah, king of Israel (see 2 Chron. 28): As a punishment for the sins of Judah, God allowed the Northern Kingdom to "carry away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought them to Samaria" (2 Chron. 28:8). But the LORD had compassion upon them in spite of their sins, and sent the prophet Oded to remind Israel of their own sins:

> *"Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the LORD your God?" (v. 10).*

What follows is remarkable. Heeding the admonition of the prophet and apparently of their own volition, "certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim" (v. 12) undertook a massive act of compassion:

> *"Then the men who were designated by name (**i.e., in v. 12**) rose up and took the captives, and from the spoil they clothed all who were naked among them, dressed them and gave them sandals, gave them food and drink, and anointed them; and they let all the feeble ones ride on donkeys. So they brought them to their brethren at Jericho, the city of palm trees. Then they returned to Samaria" (v. 15, NKJV).*

This was an enormous act of compassion on the part of 'certain of the heads' of the children of Ephraim. Moreover, they had to stand up to the power of a returning victorious army and deprive them of their spoils in order to carry out this

act of mercy and kindness to their defeated enemies (vv. 13,14). It is an example that seems to have had almost no counterpart in contemporary conflicts in the modern world — genocide seems far more prevalent than even the smallest acts of compassion. We might do well to consider whether our own actions in the ecclesia are as magnanimous in dealing with those who have offended us. Do we offer them compassion — knowing *that we too have sinned?* Or are we instead guilty of attempting to extract measure for measure?

Compassion in the New Testament

We are told "the LORD *is* gracious and full of compassion" (Psa. 111:4). We are also told that the best way, as always, to appreciate fully the character of the Lord God is to see how it was reflected in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. As Jesus set out to preach his gospel message, he was moved to compassion when he realized how lost the people were, like "sheep having no shepherd". Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few" (Matt. 9:35-38, NKJV). If this was the situation in the first century AD, think how much greater the disparity must be today. Yet do we exhibit the same compassion for this state of things, or are we content to hide our candle under a bushel (Matt. 5:15, Mark 4:21, Luke 11:33)?

How much compassion do we have for the world around us? Do we recognize its need for salvation, or is our attention focused on our little circle of family and our ecclesial clique of comfortable friends? In North America we have spent an inordinate amount of time, energy and expense preaching to each other, instead of cooperating to bring in the harvest in unity (Psa. 133:1). We have been marvelous in seeing the mote in others' eyes and have usually been oblivious to the beam in our own. If the same amount of resources that has been devoted to unity efforts had been spent in helping small ecclesias grow, in planting new ecclesias where none previously existed, in recovering lost sheep and further strengthening our young so they can withstand the buffeting of a virtually godless world, how much spiritually richer would our community be today?

We here in North America are living amongst the most educated and religiously aware communities in the entire world. We have freedom to preach and practice our faith, a freedom we often take for granted. This freedom is far greater than that of many other nations around the globe — lands where brethren and sisters labor under conditions of poverty, religious intolerance, and political unrest. Yet ironically, even though the population in North America has grown by 300% since 1940, the total number of Christadelphians has hardly changed. As a percent of the total population our numbers have actually declined. We can make excuses for our shortcomings. In the end, however, the Father will hold us accountable, for He will know whether or not we as a community have acted wisely or foolishly in carrying out His will (1 Tim. 2:4).

"Jesus wept" — Why?

John 11:35 is well known as the shortest passage in Scripture. It is also among the most poignant. But why exactly was he weeping? Was it compassion for the

sorrow of his friends Mary and Martha in their loss of their brother Lazarus? Possibly. A careful reading of the text presents us with an alternative. John 11:33 tells us that, upon returning to Bethany, Jesus saw not only Martha and Mary crying, but "the Jews also which came with her". This caused Jesus to groan and be troubled in spirit. The reason for this groaning had nothing to do with Mary and Martha. The narrative in verse 37 makes it plain that the Jews questioned his authority and power:

> *"Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"*

We next read that Jesus 'again' groaned; this little word 'again' connects us back to verse 33, where he groaned the first time. It appears that Jesus' sorrow was not just a compassionate response to the pain of Mary and Martha, but also most assuredly a deep sorrow because of the unbelief he knew was in the hearts of the Jews who were witnesses to the death of Lazarus. This is made plain by the words of Jesus in verse 41:

> *"Father, I thank You that You have heard Me" (NKJV).*

Jesus could have uttered these thoughts silently in his mind, and they would have been just as effective. But he spoke loudly to the crowd gathered around the tomb of Lazarus, so that none would doubt the immediacy of the answer to his prayer. Jesus had felt the pain of Lazarus' death, but also sorrow for the unbelief that had infected the accompanying crowd. His compassion for us in times of pain includes the same factors. Our faith in Jesus should suffice to cover both our immediate sorrows and also the tendency to lose our faith when faced with calamity. If we had the faith of Martha who, when faced with the pain of losing her brother, could say: "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (v. 24), then the compassion of Jesus would comfort us even now.

The compassion of Jesus

There are so many examples in Scripture of the compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ that one could virtually write a chapter expounding on each instance and still not capture the full measure of the power of his love in sharing our suffering. There was the compassion he had for the widow of Nain, which culminated in the resurrection of her child (Luke 7:11-15), and the healing of the man possessed with demons that were transferred to the herd of swine (Mark 5:1-20) — to name just two instances. We recall the teachings of Jesus concerning the nature of true compassion, as illustrated in the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan. The compassion Jesus had for the multitudes that followed him on two occasions, who "were like sheep not having a shepherd" (Mark 6:34) and who hungered so much for the words of Christ that they had "nothing to eat" for three days (Mark 8:2), also deserves our attention. While the actual miracle of feeding thousands with just a meager number of loaves and a few fish is noteworthy in itself, it may not even be the key element in the account.

What stands out strikingly in all these cases is that compassion was always followed by action. The widow of Nain has her son restored to life. The man possessed with demons is made whole. The father forgives and restores his prodigal son, and the

Good Samaritan succors and carries the injured wayfarer on his own account. Jesus fed the multitudes that followed him into the wilderness both spiritually, with the gospel message, and physically, with an abundance of bread and fish. In this latter example we are treated with the stunning result that even though only a few loaves and fish were originally available, nevertheless — after the loving compassion of Jesus went into action —there were leftovers amounting to 12 baskets of fragments in the first case and seven in the second. When the Lord offers us compassion, he is not stingy in providing for us. Neither should we be hesitant or reluctant in offering compassion to others.

Takers and givers

It has been said that there are only two kinds of people in this world: "takers" and "givers". Takers are selfish; they are only concerned with their own needs. They are always demanding things of others. Takers often will spend irresponsibly and will let you down at every turn if you depend on them for anything. Takers always want to know, consciously or unconsciously, "What's in it for me?"

On the other hand, givers are considerate of the needs of others. If someone is in trouble, they will always dig deep to provide emotional, physical and financial support. Givers are usually the first ones to volunteer if a job needs to be done. If they say they will do something, you can bank on it. Givers are willing to sacrifice themselves for others, while takers expect everyone else to make sacrifices for them. In short, givers are compassionate people and takers are not. What sort of people ought we to be?

The greatest compassion

The gospel of John records these words of Jesus:

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

This was the ultimate act of unselfish compassion. We can go one step further and consider the compassion of our heavenly Father:

> *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).*

By these examples, we know what sort of persons we ought to be if we are to be his disciples. We must be givers, compassionate to the needs of others even when self-sacrifice may be needed.

May the world know by our compassionate actions that we are truly the brethren of Christ.

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. "Passion = A powerful emotion of appetite, such as love, joy, hatred, anger or greed." (*Not a hint of suffering here!)* Quoted from *The American Heritage Dictionary* (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, MA, 1976).
2. *Oxford Universal Dictionary,* Oxford University Press, Amen House, London (1964 edition).

Bible Study

Thoughts from The Letter to the Hebrews: (2) "Let us go on..."

Two cryptic phrases summarize much of the teaching of the Letter to the Hebrews. They are "Let us" and "Lest we", as used in the King James, or Authorized, Version of the Bible. The first is one of commitment and determination, an encouragement to ***go forward,*** whereas the second is a warning against ***going away,*** declaring danger if one succumbs to that temptation. In the context of the letter, the two phrases are used particularly with reference to the Law of Moses and its requirements. The encouragement was to leave the ritual and to move forward to freedom and life "in Christ", rather than to return to the old ways of ritual obedience.

This teaching is epitomized in the phrase: "Let us go on, lest we go back." A detailed review of all these phrases will be helpful to us. (The wording quoted is from the King James Version, but the principle is true for other versions also.)

Let us fear...	4:1
Let us labor to enter...	4:11
Let us hold fast...	4:14
Let us come boldly...	4:16
Let us go on...	6:1
Let us draw near...	10:22
Let us hold fast...	10:23
Let us consider...	10:24
Let us lay aside...	12:1
Let us run the race...	12:1
Let us have grace to serve...	12:28
Let us go forth...	13:13
Let us offer the sacrifice...	13:15

Lest we let them slip	2:1
Lest there be an evil heart	3:12
Lest any of you be hardened	3:13
Let us therefore fear, lest there...	4:1
Lest any man fall...	4:11
Lest ye be wearied and faint...	12:3
Lest... ye be turned out of the way	12:13
Lest any man fail...	12:15
Lest any root of bitterness...	12:15
Lest there be any fornicator	12:16

What an exhortation! All of us, without exception and without distinction, must serve the Lord positively, looking forward to the future age in faith and confidence — rather than looking backward to the past with longing and wistfulness. The best is yet to be. Christ is yet to come and the Kingdom yet to be established. Let us go forward! If we do not, we shall go backwards to death and destruction.

The centerpiece of this exhortation is to be found in the following passage:

> *"Having therefore brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus... **Let us** draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith... **let us** hold fast the profession of our faith... and **let us** consider one another to good works" (Heb. 10:19-25).*

Because of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus we are able to enter into the presence of God. Or, to be more precise, because of the ascension of Jesus, we have a new relationship with God; therefore we have access into His presence by prayer. We need to consider the significance of the ascension if we are to understand the centrality of its importance in the Letter to the Hebrews. The ascension of Jesus is often ignored in our teaching, yet it is a vital component of our faith; without it the high priesthood of Christ could not begin.

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest went into the presence of God by entering into the Most Holy Place on behalf of the whole nation of Israel. He left the nation awaiting his return with mingled hope and fear — hope that their sins would be forgiven, fear that the high priest would not return and the wrath of God would descend upon them.

This is the background of the verse:

> *"For yet a little while and he that shall come will come and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:36,37).*

The passage is an exhortation to faith: while their high priest was absent in the Most Holy Place, they should maintain their faith. This can be transferred directly to ourselves: we who wait for the return of our high priest must maintain our faith in our Master's return.

To return to the teaching about the Ascension, The Most Holy Place was a symbolic representation, although literal, of the Sanctuary in heaven where God dwells and into which Jesus entered upon his ascension. This event is probably described in Daniel:

> *"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom that all nations should serve him: and his dominion is an everlasting kingdom, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13,14).*

Other passages which could be considered in this way are Revelation 5:6,7; Psalm 16:10,11; and Psalm 110:1. All of these may refer to aspects of the ascension of Jesus into the presence of God, events foreshadowed by the entry of the high priest into the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement.

Now, we return to our thoughts on the Letter to the Hebrews. It is apparent that the exhortation we have identified and quoted above (Heb. 10:19-25) has as its background the entry of the high priest into the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement. For us, that event foreshadowed the entry of Jesus into the presence of God at his ascension, from whence he will return to the earth. The high priest returned to the people after making due representation before God on the Day of Atonement. We wait in faith, just as they did.

> *"For ye have need of patience... for a yet a little while and he that shall come, will come..." (Heb. 10:37).*

The return of the high priest to the nation was a parable of the Second Coming of Jesus. Just as the people had to wait in faith and patience, so do we.

We need to look forward, anticipating the day of our salvation. It is extremely tempting to look backward constantly with wistfulness, as if the past were always better than the present. The Jews were guilty of that mistake: they looked back to the time of ritual and sacrificial laws. I am sure that they thought "people knew what to do in ***those*** days", and that they saw Christianity as but another strand of Judaism. Thus, throughout the New Testament, the constant refrain is that "Christ has set us free from the law." It was epitomized in the phrases, quoted frequently in the Letter to the Hebrews: "Let us go on... lest we go back."

The Jewish converts to Christianity were preoccupied with making sure that they retained the essential Jewishness of their worship. Although the teaching of Christ was dynamic, the early disciples found it difficult to be "total" converts to Christianity, to "move on" to a new dimension of understanding. Many believers wanted to retain the Law of Moses — seen in terms of circumcision, keeping of the feasts, the wearing of certain clothes, and the slavish acceptance of ritual.

This teaching was challenged by the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews as "going back" to an out-of-date, outmoded manner of life. On the other hand, Christianity was new and progressive, looking forward to the Second Coming of Christ rather than looking back to the Law of Moses.

There is a clear message for believers today. We must be aware of the danger of always looking backward rather than forward. But we must always remember that the best is yet to be, so that we might "go on" to the Kingdom rather than "go back" to sin and perdition.

Colin Edwards (Newbury, UK)

The preacher was wired for sound with a lapel microphone, and as he preached, rather ferociously, he moved briskly about the platform, jerking the mike cord as he went. Then he moved to one side, getting wound up in the cord and nearly tripping before jerking it again.

After several such exercises, a little girl, watching carefully, leaned toward her mother and whispered, "If he gets loose, will he hurt us?"

Reflections

Mary's Dream

I
had a
dream,
Joseph.
I don't under-
stand it, not really,
but I think it was
about a birthday
celebration for our son.
The people had been pre-
paring for about six weeks. They
decorated the house. They'd gone
shopping and bought elaborate gifts.
But the presents weren't for our son.
They wrapped them beautifully with
lovely bows, and put them under a tree.
Yes, a tree, Joseph. The branches were full
of glowing balls and shining ornaments. There
was a figure on the top, something like an angel,
beautiful. Everyone was happy and excited about the
gifts they gave to each other, Joseph, not to our son.
I don't think they knew him since they never mentioned his
name. It seems odd for people to celebrate someone's birthday
and not know him. I had the strongest feeling that, if our son had
gone to this celebration, he would have been intruding. Everything
was so beautiful, Joseph, and everyone so full of cheer, but it made me
want to cry. How sad for Jesus not to be wanted at his own birthday
celebration. I'm glad it was only a dream. How terrible,
Joseph,
if it
had
been real.

The Potter's Wheel

"Yet, O LORD, You are our Father.
We are the clay, You are the potter;
We are all the work of Your hand"
(Isaiah 64:8).

I'm only clay on the potter's wheel,
Going 'round and 'round —
Formless... molded with water and clay,
Fashioned from the ground.
With the skill of the Master's Hand
He has turned, on His wheel,
A vessel to suit His needs,
To enable His will.

I'm the vessel He fashioned, and I listen and am still.
He has tempered me thoroughly; He wants me to do His Will.
His promises are plenty; I love to sing them in song,
There are many who yearn, who'd like to sing along.

So I carry His message of patience and delight,
I carry the letters that speak of hope and sight.
He has a purpose for me, and — yes — for you!
To carry His Word of Truth,
To let His love shine through.

Can you be a vessel that bears the Master's light?
You'll travel a narrow road, guided through the night.
You may not have freedom; you may not have riches.
But you'll carry His wisdom; you'll carry His wishes.

Can you be...?

Only clay on the potter's wheel,
Going 'round and 'round,
Molded with water and clay,
Fashioned from the ground.
With the skill of the Master's Hand
He has turned, on His wheel,
A vessel to suit His needs,
To enable His will.

Marieke Garner
(Hamilton Ewen Road, ON)

"I would not be here if it were not for you"

If my father had not remained faithful to God after my mother died when I was only three years old, if he had started dating and partying as most young men do, I wonder whom he might have met and what would have happened.

If my Aunt Em had preferred to dedicate herself to pursuing boys and getting married rather than moving in and taking care of me and Dad, I wonder what would have happened.

If my Aunt Mary Styles, my mother's sister, had not accepted my father's proposal and the challenge of a nine-year-old boy, things would have been different.

If Mary had not bribed me into going to Wilbraham when I was 13, by agreeing to pay my way and telling me there were other boys like me who were going, I would not have gone.

If the brethren who ran Wilbraham Bible school had thrown me out, which would have been the reasonable thing to do, I would never have made the close friendships there that became an anchor to my life through the teen years... and are still of my fondest memory. It was my spiritual lifeline.

If my parents had not done the Bible readings every night, and drilled into me the difference between Christadelphian beliefs and all the rest of what passes for Christianity, I would never have become a conscientious objector.

If Bro. Curt Rankin hadn't taken me down to Byberry and introduced me to Mr. Richards, I might not have gotten the job at the mental hospital and the draft board matter might have gone even worse.

If Bro. Alvan Brittle had not recommended me to Bro. Otto Sticht, I never would have gotten that job with Bernzomatic, and I might still be serving hamburgers at Howard Johnson's on the New Jersey Turnpike.

If the brothers and sisters in the Midwest had not been serious in the Truth, and warm and welcoming, it would have been a lot harder to maintain the ties.

If there had been no brotherhood in California and no clear teaching that we should only marry in the faith, how would I have ever met Bonnie? And had four children and eight grandchildren? And met Bro. Bob Lloyd and gone into business?

If it were not for Dr. Thomas and those who went before, how would I have learned the Truth? I would not have searched it out when I was young.

If men had not learned Greek and Hebrew and Latin... and translated the ancient texts, I would have no Bible, and none of the study helps that Young and Strong and others dedicated their lives to produce.

And if there were no ecclesia of God with whom I could meet, where would I be? I didn't get here on my own, and I could not maintain on my own.

I would not be here if it were not for you.

Ken Sommerville (Simi Hills, CA)

A Correlation

Every now and then someone will ask: what can we do to attract our young people? Are our talks catchy enough? Are we providing the right information? What can we do to keep them?

On the one hand, there are some who feel that our kids are spoiled — they can sit for three hours and watch a movie without once getting up, but can't sit still in the meeting for one hour; so it's all a matter of discipline. They should know that 'church' is important and be expected to discipline themselves.

On the other, some feel that kids should be allowed to make their own decisions. If they are not interested in a religious way of life, then maybe one day, when they are older, they will develop an interest. In the meanwhile we should try and keep them entertained — going to all lengths, even if it means relaxing some of the Scriptural principles.

And not only the kids, but also we adults... do we require various forms of entertainment to keep our attention at the meeting, or to bring us to the meeting in the first place, for that matter? I was thinking of possible reasons that would be acceptable to miss a meeting. Some of the 'good' ones are:

> 'I have to prepare a talk. After all, it's a Bible class I have to prepare — so it is okay if I stay home today and get my talk done.'

Or,

> 'A cousin is getting married, and she would be very upset if I didn't go to the wedding.'

In some parts of the world, weddings are still performed on Sundays. And so the reasoning is:

> 'Well, since they are only getting married once *(So they say!),* then I can skip meeting this week.'

Some 'not so good' reasons:

> 'My non-religious relatives are visiting, and I cannot leave them to go and serve God!'

Or perhaps,

> 'I just woke up late and simply cannot make it!'

The young people are watching us! They will emulate what they see. This is what I have seen growing up in the truth. When I think about all the families that I have been around, either at the meeting or in their homes, I see a startling correlation between the spiritual dedication of the female leader in the home and the attitude of the children to ecclesial life.

By no means am I attempting to excuse the male. He could be an excellent brother, studying his Bible, giving good talks. He could even be an arranging brother. However, when he does not have the support of a sister to help him to motivate the children in a spiritual direction, we see less and less of the children. In some cases, the young unmarried girls show up one day with their own children! I know we strongly disapprove of this. However, since boys do not get pregnant,

they may be involved in all sorts of improper behavior yet nevertheless escape this particular disapproval.

But back to our mothers. In almost all of the families I have known, where Mom was completely behind the kids, bringing them to the meeting from birth, not distracted by the annual awards event at school, not giving in to the whines about not feeling well today, those who were once little boys and girls are now assisting in nurturing their ecclesias, and are fully supportive of all their activities.

On the other hand, Mom may have been more concerned about whether Sam would get into Harvard, or getting Raj to his extra lessons on Sundays or instead of the mid-week Bible classes, so that he can achieve high marks at his school, or allowing Sandy to miss Sunday school because it's her grand performance at the Majestic Piano Finale... then that is exactly where the kids are today! Not at the meeting but everywhere else.

Of course, there are exceptions to the rule, and by no means am I trying to lay blame solely on the mother. I am simply pointing out my observations over the years. And I cannot help but notice a strong correlation between these two factors.

Perhaps it's because children tend to gravitate toward Mom's feelings more so than toward Dad's. So, since we live in an age where females are becoming more and more influential, may I suggest that — following the advice of Paul in 1 Timothy 5:14 — our mothers take a more active role in bringing and keeping the future brothers and sisters at our meetings:

> *"I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."*

Gideon Drepaul (Brooklyn, NY)

Jesus' Unlikely Conversions: (5) The thief on the cross

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him:

> *"Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"*

But the other criminal rebuked him:

> *"Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."*

Then he said,

> *"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."*

Jesus answered him,

> *"I tell you the truth today... you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:39-43).*

There is something that always touches me when I consider people in Scripture like this wonderful man. I feel the same when I remember Rahab, the harlot who left that lifestyle to join the people of the living God, or Zacchaeus, the small man with large courage and faith who humbled himself to climb the tree to see Jesus and was so greatly rewarded for doing so.

And when I consider the woman taken in adultery (John 8), who was dragged before Jesus and then saved by him from the stones of her accusers, I would very much like to think that she "sinned no more", became a dedicated follower of her Savior, and will receive eternal life.

Although we won't know his name until the Kingdom, there are some things we do know about this astonishing man, the thief on the cross. Quite likely he was, along with his partner in crime, a follower of Barabbas (the one the crowd chose to release instead of Jesus). This would mean he was also an insurrectionist and in all likelihood a zealot.

But it's also possible, too, that he was a lapsed disciple. I would suggest this based on his amazing insight about Jesus (which will be considered shortly). And if this is the case, then we have an answer to the vexing question, 'How could he be saved, not being baptized?' For, as a disciple — even a former disciple, so to speak — he would have been baptized either by John the Baptist or Jesus' apostles.

Even if it turns out that he wasn't baptized earlier, it is true that he literally died with Christ. Isn't that what baptism represents?

As to the thief's beliefs, we can tell the following from his statements to the other thief and to Jesus:

1. Jesus was sinless: "This man has done nothing wrong" (v. 41).
2. He himself was a worthless sinner: "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve" (v. 41).
3. Jesus was "Lord" (AV), i.e., the Messiah (v. 42).
4. Jesus would rise from the dead. For how else could Jesus eventually remember the thief when he came in his kingdom?
5. Jesus would ascend to heaven — the same reasoning as before, based on Psalm 110:1: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."
6. Jesus would come again. "Lord, remember me when you ***come***."
7. At his coming Jesus will raise the dead: "Remember me!" Of course, the thief knew that within hours he would be dead!
8. "Remember me" also implies discrimination (judgment) between those accepted and those rejected, so he had to have known Jesus would be the judge.
9. His coming would also establish a kingdom. So here again is his understanding that Jesus will be the king in this glorious kingdom.

A couple of other points: The other thief had just said to Jesus, "If you are the Christ, save yourself ***and us!"*** This is similar, of course, to what the mockers

were saying — "Come down from the cross." Also, the unrepentant thief was saying, ***"Save us too!"*** (v. 39). But, in contrast to the other thief, the righteous thief appeared to know that Jesus needed to die ***as a sacrifice for sins;*** therefore, he doesn't endorse what his companion said. Furthermore, in his rebuke to his companion he asks, "Don't you fear God?" — implying that he (the speaker) ***did*** fear God. Here was his open confession of faith in God and in His Son. He and his companion may have had the sympathy of the crowd, if it's true that they were followers of Barabbas (for most Jews would have had much sympathy for anyone who had tried to overthrow the yoke of Rome). But, if so, now he was forfeiting this sympathy, and choosing rather to share the reproach of Jesus.

Isn't it rather extraordinary that at this point there may have been only three people, ***in the world,*** who knew for certain that Jesus would rise from the dead, ascend to heaven, and eventually come in glory to establish God's kingdom? One is this criminal, this nameless thief, and the other two are the soon-to-be despised Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (both hated by their own associates in the Sanhedrin). The apostles and close friends of Jesus would soon understand it all, but for them that came later, on the following Sunday, when he appeared to them.

*****

Paul makes an important point about all these conversions, when he writes to the Corinthians:

> *"Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him" (1 Cor. 1:26-29).*

And in another passage, also from 1 Corinthians, he adds this thought:

> *"Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a 'fool' so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight" (3:18,19).*

So it was with Simon of Cyrene, Malchus, the Roman centurion, Joseph, Nicodemus, and the righteous thief. They were from wide and varied backgrounds, but they all had one thing in common. They saw the truth when it presented itself — that the suffering, apparently friendless man whose life was ebbing away ***was*** the Messiah, the judge of all the earth, Son of David, the future king of the world — and ***their*** Lord and Savior.

Come what may, they all chose to attach themselves to him — and not let go.

Brothers and sisters, we must do the same.

Wesley Booker (Austin South, TX)

Acknowledgment: For this article in particular, the author owes much to Bro. Harry Whittaker and his ***Studies in the Gospels****.*

Nullifying the Word

I was given great pause for thought during a recent exhortation where the tradition of "Corban" was discussed. The morning reading was from Mark 7.

While the practice is perhaps not fully understood by us today, "Corban" is generally taken to be a policy or formula whereby a man could dedicate his wealth to the temple and thereby circumvent his responsibilities to his parents. A son need only declare that what he had intended to give his father and mother be considered "Corban", i.e., a gift devoted to God, and then it could no longer be designated or used for the care of his parents.

By devoting the gift to God, a son did not necessarily promise it to the temple nor did he prevent its use for himself. What he did do was to exclude legally his parents from benefiting from it (Mark 7:12). Thus the very purpose for which the commandment regarding parents was given was set aside by the tradition. This is what Jesus meant by "nullifying" the word of God (Mark 7:13).

In the exhortation, the brother certainly broadened the application of this particular practice of the Pharisees. He provided potential examples of our dealings with our failing elders, helping to bring the "Corban" concept into our own time. This is certainly within the context of Mark 7. Any self-respecting Pharisee could "spin" it this way. For example, if your aged parents did not wash properly around your clean and godly house, as the law of Moses prescribed, then this fact trumped the fifth commandment (Exod. 20:12). Cleanliness became the higher ideal, above the command to honour your father and mother, etc. Excluding your parents for this reason could also become "Corban".

In Mark 7, Jesus clearly contrasts the "commands of God" and the "traditions of men". While the discussion obviously included the whole subject of cleanliness, it was also directed toward a far more urgent consideration. Following is a useful quote from *The Expositor's Bible Commentary:*

> *"It is clear that this great body of Jewish tradition had failed to get to the heart of God's commands. It was supposed to fence in the law so that the people would not infringe on it. Actually, however, the tradition distorted or ossified the law. In fact, it had even become a means of getting around God's law" (Vol. 8, p. 678).*

At the time of Mark's writing, these "traditions of men" consisted of a great mass of oral tradition that had arisen around the law during the previous three to four hundred years. About 200 AD it was all written down in what became known as the Mishnah, but in Jesus' day it was still in oral form.

The purpose of the oral tradition was to regulate completely every aspect of life. When the law was ambiguous or even silent on a matter, tradition was explicit and vocal. It was promulgated by the leading rabbis, was passed down from one generation to another, and was considered binding. It had the effect of replacing God in the hearts of the people with the more visual and imperative reality of the local religious power elite. Of course, if Biblical and godly principles reigned

within the hearts of the people, then the elite would be to a large extent "out of business".

The real issue, of course, is that we are all easily tarred with the same brush. It is common for human nature of all ages to trump the commandments of God with the traditions of men. Our own "idols" are very compelling.

As good Bible understanding and exegesis become less common, we all need constantly to re-examine everything we do, say and think. We need to make certain it is in accordance with the will and commandments of God, rather than the more easily applied and often more attractive and tempting traditions of men.

Clyde Snobelen (Victoria, BC)

"Go... wash in the Pool of Siloam" (John 9:7)... "the gently flowing waters of Shiloah" (Isaiah 8:6).

"Beneath Moriah's rocky side
A gentle fountain springs,
Silent and soft its waters glide,
Like the peace the Spirit brings.

"The thirsty Arab stoops to drink*
Of the cool and quiet wave,
And the thirsty spirit stops to think
Of him who came to save.

"Siloam is the fountain's name,
It means 'One sent from God';
And thus the holy Saviour's fame
It gently spreads abroad.

"O grant that I, like this sweet well,
May Jesus' image bear,
And spend my life, my all, to tell
How full his mercies are!"

(R.M. M'Cheyne)

** Probably the Arab is mentioned because this was composed in the early nineteenth century, when very few if any Jews lived in Jerusalem.*

Letters

What will happen to "the other fellow"?

Dear Bro. George,

Your meditations on "what I don't know" are very thought-provoking. One in particular caught my attention, "What will happen to 'the other fellow' " *[November, p. 471]*.

I have often quoted the comment of Jesus to Peter: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me" (John 21:22,23). But my thoughts on this issue are more focused on the people of the world in general. As one who has been to many different countries primarily for Bible mission work, I meditate a lot on the plight of the apparently spiritually "helpless" people I see all around. All too often I hear brethren quote that "God is not willing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9), implying that their salvation is in His hands, that it's up to God. But as I read the context of Peter's short epistle, I am not sure we correctly understand his point. He seems to me to be saying, 'He is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any ***[of us]*** should perish.' Two verses further on he says, "Since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ***you*** to be?"

In the previous chapter Peter laments those who have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord, yet who are in danger of being entangled again: "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness..." (2:20,21). Peter sees that, in one sense, it is better for people to remain in ignorance than, having escaped from darkness into light, to be entrapped again by the darkness. They have been called and have responded; it seems it is these of whom God is not willing that any should perish — just as Jesus was not willing that any of his disciples should be lost. (In the end, despite their "little faith" on several occasions, he only lost one, "the son of perdition.")

True, we can quote the words of Jesus to Peter, telling him to focus on himself and not be concerned about the future of fellow believers. But the larger picture is another issue. It is all very well to dismiss it as something I do not know, but in my experience it will not stay dismissed.

I meditate on God's standards of judgment especially when I hear brethren say, in effect, 'Unless you understand the Scriptures just as we do, and act just as we do, you will not be in the Kingdom!' Are we right to think this way? Or is this something else we should put, at least partly, in the "what I don't know" basket?

To whom much is given, of him much is expected (Luke 12:48)! Is this a significant principle of judgment? Jesus said it will be "more tolerable" for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment (Matt. 10:15; 11:22), and that the men of Nineveh would "rise up" in the judgment (Matt. 12:41). The Potter's judgment of the various types of vessels He has made is something we

cannot know. We can see in the history of Israel the cold fact that, for most of the time, they failed in their role as God's witnesses. Did this matter to God, that is, the failure of His people to be a true "witness"?

It is one thing for some to have access to the 'fullness of the knowledge of the Son of God' (Eph 4:13), and then to turn away from this and forsake the assembling of themselves together (Heb. 10:25). It is very much a different thing for one to whom little knowledge is given, to embrace what he is given with a willing heart. But having said this, I say at the same time, how to deal with this difference is "what I don't know"!

The question refuses to go away for mission workers — as they scatter the seed and see it germinating in virgin soil in largely pagan lands, and yet have such limited opportunity to tend and water it. There is a brother, the first to be baptized in a remote state of India, who keeps telling me how he is preaching to nearby illiterate tribal peoples. He tells me they believe the fundamental message about Jesus, his Kingdom, the hope of resurrection, etc. He tells me he has "examined" them and they give the "right" answers! "Can I baptize them, Uncle?" he asks. What answer do I give? "I don't know"?

One line of thought sometimes expressed is that, since only eight were saved in the times of Noah, we should expect to see only a small remnant saved today. The small 'splinter groups' of our brotherhood like to quote this. The reasoning on this seems very thin. I cannot accept the reasoning that the world population exploded enormously before the flood. There were only eight generations from Cain and Seth to Noah. Although they lived exceptionally long lives, we have no indication that they were continuously having many, many children. Those who claim they spread out over all the earth are stating something they simply 'don't know'. The building of the ark over a great many years — possibly 100 — must have been a landmark on the earth, and it would be its own testimony to impending doom. Furthermore, we note that Noah is described as "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5). So the warning to the world was visual and verbal, and there is reason to think that many if not most of those living then would have heard the message. But they did not have ears to hear.

Paul writes, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, *so that they are without excuse*" (Rom. 1:20). "Without excuse", since the days of creation, if they do not believe in God and His power — and what else? The context suggests that the physical evidence of a Creator is part of a wider mix of the "gospel" (vv. 16-19). But Paul does say, "Since the creation... they are without excuse." This invites us to consider the degrees of what we like to call "responsibility", and therefore "knowledge", at the different stages of human history — right up to the six billion-plus in the world today. Once again, we admit "we don't know". But with the admission comes, at least for me, the feeling that I should be careful what conclusions to reach about the nature of the judgment to come.

So 1 Timothy 2:4 tells us God "desires all men to be saved and come to the knowl-

edge of the truth." In what context does Paul make this statement? It is written against the background of how the believers should behave, the image they should present to the world, and how they should pray "for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we might lead a quiet and peaceful life..." (vv. 1,2). This corresponds to the behavior Peter advised for wives of unbelievers, that by their conduct they might win them to Christ (1 Pet. 3:1). The lives of believers need to be such that all who see us should be encouraged and not hindered, because God desires all to be saved.

We keep coming back to the telling illustration of God as the Potter. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, 'Why hast thou made me thus?' " (Rom. 9:20). We have to leave it at that, as we ponder the way in which the fields are "white to the harvest", and our responsibility in all this. We are workers together with God (2 Cor. 6:1). The challenge facing each one of us is to see the ways He is at work.

David Caudery (Dandenong, VIC, Australia)

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 online 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. Website: wcfoundation.org.

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

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*.

Addresses for Bequests and Donations
(Continued)

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*.

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.

Anderson Family Support Fund provides help for Bro. Grant Anderson's family after Grant's serious car accident. Mail checks payable to Christadelphians to: P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. *www.milfordroad.net/Andersons.html*

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L4V7, Canada.

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

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.

The Jordan River flows south through the Sea of Galilee, and then continues southward. The Sea of Galilee takes in fresh water, and sends out fresh water. What it receives it gives back. This sea (really a freshwater lake) supports fish and is a good source of water for irrigation. It is living, and life-giving.

The Dead Sea, further to the south, receives the Jordan's fresh water but does not give any away. Nothing flows out. Its salt concentrations are so high that it cannot support any kind of life. All around it is barren and forbidding landscape. It is aptly named the "Dead Sea".

Too often we don't want "living water" — which refreshes us and flows out to others also. We would rather have a cistern, or tank, that is exclusively ours to dip into when we feel like it — we don't want to "share".

The Sea of Galilee or the Dead Sea — which should we be?

Bible Mission News

Mexico

The calm after the storm…

We were unaware of our traveling companion as we flew from Europe to Mexico to support the preaching activities, first in Mérida followed by four weeks in Guadalajara. It was not until we had been safely transported to the home of Bro. Hector and Sis. Linda Farías that we were informed our companion was called "Dean", and Mérida lay directly in the path of this hurricane — following the route of its predecessors Gilbert, Isidor, Emily, and Wilma. Fortunately for us, "Dean" changed its trajectory. However, the full force of wind and violent water brought economic and personal tragedy some distance south of the city.

This event afforded us a topical opportunity to write about the Gospel in a regional newspaper. The journalist was aware of our arrival due to the recent publicity of several Bible course adverts. On other occasions, this particular newspaper has been keen to print most of what we have submitted, with no extra charge, describing our beliefs and our activities in the region. This visit was no exception. Our free publicity resulted in five people coming to the Sunday evening Bible study.

In Guadalajara, we were generously hosted by Bro. Carl and Sis. Cynthia Paiva. The ecclesia is now blessed with premises centrally located in the city. This new location now lends itself to a variety of innovative preaching efforts. On this occasion the brethren had arranged for us to give a series of special talks throughout the four weeks on "Forgiveness", "Names and Titles", "Studies on the Third Day", and "An Introduction to Nehemiah". There was also a six-session seminar presentation in which five brothers helped with the speaking. On average, five Bible contacts attended each session.

Another experiment each day was an "open house" at the meeting room, which is on a fairly busy street. Carol and I sat in the room from 1 until 5 pm, inviting people to drop in and ask questions on the Bible. This attracted some interest. Here are just a few of the questions visitors asked:

1. Why was Canaan cursed?
2. Who is the messenger of Satan in 1 Corinthians 12?
3. Why the "contradiction" between Mathew 28:19 and Mark 16:15,16?
4. Can infants be baptized, according to Acts 16:33?
5. What was Jesus' mission?
6. What is the significance of the repetition of 30 in Judges 10:3-5?

7. Was Jesus crucified on a cross or a stake?
8. What does 'Christadelphian' mean?
9. Why don't you have apostolic authority?

Many of these give a clear indication of the questioner's religious background.

The "calm after the storm" manifested itself in so many ways during our time working alongside our Mexican brothers and sisters. We thank our heavenly Father for the encouragement this has given us in our walk to the Kingdom. On the last Saturday of our visit, we couldn't help but meditate upon these experiences in another land and another language as we witnessed the baptism of Francisco Castillo — see photos accompanying this article. He broke the surface of the still waters of a baptism pool, died, and rose again to a new life in Christ. He, along with the other brothers and sisters in this land, would love to share their faith with you. There is so much opportunity for preaching the Word in Latin America, and the spiritual blessings are many.

Bill and Carol Rawson
Fieldworkers on behalf of the CBMA

Baptism of Bro. Francisco Castillo in Guadalajara

The Guadalajara ecclesia

South American Update: Bolivia, Peru and Chile

After months of planning, we left for South America on October 25, 2007, to visit ecclesias and support preaching activities in La Paz, Bolivia; Lima, Peru; and Santiago, Chile.

Bro. Robert Alderson, of the Waitakere Ecclesia in New Zealand, took care of most of the in-country details, such as hotel accommodation and lecture rooms. Bro. Jim and Sis. Jean Hunter sent out lecture invitations by postal service or email to hundreds of contacts in Lima and Santiago, while invitations to the lectures in La Paz were mailed by the ecclesia in that city.

Miriam and I went to La Paz, Bolivia, first, a city of 1.5 million, where we stayed with Bro. Jacob and Sis. Fiona Styles, resident missionaries in Bolivia. The Styles have settled into life in La Paz, as well as being involved in intensive Spanish language training. Plans are underway for a December 15 wedding of two members of the ecclesia — Bro. Martin Mostacedo and Sis. Laura Avila. They have been friends for many years, but since their baptism into Christ in early 2006, their relationship took on a new meaning. They have asked Jacob to marry them, so this will certainly make the Styles' first six months in La Paz busy! Activities at the ecclesial meeting room were supported by members and friends, with 16 visitors present at the two advertised lectures on Saturday. Sunday, October 27, after the memorial service, we were surprised when a regular attender, Aleyda Villaroel, told everyone she had made up her mind that she wanted to be baptized. She has been attending with her husband and three children for about two years, and a full review will begin in earnest to prepare her for this commitment to the Lord.

We left for Lima, Peru, a city of eight million on Wednesday, October 31, to

meet Robert, who had arrived a couple of days previously. Lectures were held four evenings in a row, with an average attendance of eight. We had expected more contacts in attendance, but it would appear that the variable delivery of the country's postal system had affected attendance. Those students who did attend the lectures form the core group whom we have seen on a number of previous occasions. Several of the attendees agree with our understanding of the Scriptures and would like us to establish an ecclesia, so that they can attend.

Early Saturday morning, November 3, the three of us departed for Santiago, Chile. This is a very busy city of about six million in a country full of business and agriculture. There are only three members in this city, but we now have a small room rented for them and in order to provide a location for regular visitors to attend. An average of ten contacts attended each of the three special lectures held on both Saturday and Sunday.

The growth in each country is steady, and the overall support for the special lectures was encouraging. We anticipate baptisms in all three countries during the next year, God Willing.

Don Luff
CBMA Latin American Committee

Attendees at the Lima, Peru, lectures.
Bro. Robert Alderson is on back row, the first on the left.

Thisisyourbible.com Website

October continued to be an exciting month for the website. Our featured question last month was "Do Christians need to read and understand the Old Testament?" This resulted in over **1200** downloads of the pamphlet entitled "Christ in the

Old Testament". There were over **850** Minute Meditation readings, which is even higher than September. Once again, in October we exceeded one million hits in a single month — **1,430,866!**

The best news of all, though, is that we again saw an increase in Bible students **(over 332),** and also another 13 tutors signed up. At this rate we can still use some more tutors.

Comparing this year to last year, the site activity — i.e., number of visits — is up almost **500%**.

Now for the next baptismal story. Sis. JoAnn Cameron first encountered the This Is Your Bible website in September 2006, and her tutor was Sis. Laura Spry. She transferred JoAnn to Bro. Mike LeDuke when it became clear to Laura that she would not be able to mark JoAnn's lessons as quickly as JoAnn wanted to do them. Prior to that, in December, JoAnn encountered the link on the TIYB website to the Open Bible Forum — www.openbibleforum.org — and Bro. Tim Young directed her to the nearest ecclesia, Toronto East. One Wednesday she walked into the Bible class and said, "Hi! I'm JoAnn. I'm new!" Toronto East quickly took her into their care and nurtured her interest with engrossing Bible study and warm fellowship. After JoAnn completed the course, Mike alerted Bro. Russ and Sis. Muriel Dawes that she should be actively encouraged to begin instruction for baptism.

JoAnn's instruction began in earnest in April and continued with the Dawes for the next few months. She remained in contact with Bro. Mike, asking questions and sharing her insecurities about the "interview". With some encouragement and preparation for that event, she was interviewed and did very well indeed. She was baptized at the Toronto East hall on Sunday, October 21, 2007, with her children and grandchildren in attendance. Her son has also now enrolled in the Exploring the Bible course online.

All of us involved in the spiritual journey of this wonderful person are deeply grateful to our Father for using the website to touch such a good and honest heart. As JoAnn herself put it: *"Things fell into place beautifully for me. For every step I took on my own, there was someone who took me by the hand and gently guided me up to the next level. Gently being the operative word. My baptism was the product of a 'group effort'. That's how I see it anyway."*

How many more "JoAnns" are "out there" waiting to hear the gospel message? May it please our heavenly Father to continue to use our website as a means of calling out of the Gentiles a people for His Name in these last days.

Want to help?

- Visit the website and find out what it's all about (www.thisisyourbible.com)
- Become an on-line tutor; you can see from the statistics above that we need your help!
- Hand out the business cards available in your ecclesia — let us know if you need more
- Advertise the website in your local newspaper or as a link on your ecclesia's website

News & Notices

BRANTFORD, ON

We have very much enjoyed the fellowship of our Bro. Brian and Sis. Lorna Luke while they were visiting in Ontario. We thank Bro. Brian for leading several studies for us, including our Thanksgiving fraternal gathering.

God willing, our junior CYC and Little Disciples "Apps Mills" gathering is to be held on February 9, 2008, and our senior CYC gathering on February 16, 2008.

Daniel Billington

BROOKLYN, NY

Sis. Joyce King fell asleep in Christ, after being comatose for over two weeks. Her relatives from Brazil, Canada, Florida, New Jersey, and New York — including Sis. Pearl Haywood of South Ozone Park — were all gratified by the support of the ecclesia in their loss.

We were also supportive of Sis. Annie Nabriet who suffered the sudden loss of her husband, Bro. Marvin; and of Bro. Roy Lindo in the loss of his wife, Sis. Mavis.

Across the ocean, north and south, this regretful pattern continued with the sad news of the falling asleep of Sis. Carol Simpson (Birmingham, UK) and Sis. Alice Joseph (Eccles, Guyana). Sis. Carol and Bro. David Simpson labored diligently in Guyana as missionaries, especially in Berbice from 1968 to 1971. Their work was blessed by the growth of the New Amsterdam Ecclesia, and they saw the birth of the annual Bible school at Eccles in 1969. Sis. Alice and Bro. Eric Joseph saw the spiritual birth of grandchildren in the truth. Sis. Alice also served lovingly at the Annual Guyana Youth Camp, which spun off the Triennial Caribbean Camp, first hosted in Tobago in 1979.

The hymn "Hills of the North, Rejoice" was sung with deeper meaning in October: "The sleep of ages break, and rise to liberty."

Clive Drepaul

DETROIT LIVONIA, MI

We rejoiced in the marriages of Bro. Andrew Amis and Sis. Erin Kemp on May 19, 2007; Bro. Simon Gore and Sis. Hannah Styles on July 7, 2007; Bro. James Styles and Sis. Kristen Jennings on August 11, 2007; and Bro. Paul A. Styles and Sis. Mary Jane Abel on September 15, 2007. We pray for God's blessing on these couples' newly united walks to His Kingdom.

We received by transfer the following brothers and sisters: Bro. Nick and Sis. Jackie Giroux; Sis. Karen Muniz; Sis. Judy Muniz; Bro. Bryan and Sis. Keleigh Styles; and Bro. Roy and Sis. Betty Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI); Sis. Erin Kemp (Washington, DC); Bro. Simon Gore (Enfield, South Aust.); and Bro. Jason Bobis (Kouts, IN).

Bro. Jeff and Sis. Lynda Rolston have transferred their membership to the Milford Road, MI, Ecclesia, and we commend them to the care of the brothers and sisters there.

Jeffrey P. Adams

GEORGETOWN, GUYANA

In the month of September we said goodbye to Sis. Rhoda Andrews, who returned to Canada with her children, and also to Bro. Sydney Enebeli and daughter Serena, who left for St. Lucia to join his wife, Sis. Ruth. Brethren from all the Guyana ecclesias joined to celebrate the life of Sis. Alice Joseph, who fell asleep on September 18; she was laid to rest on September 22. Our prayers are with her husband Bro. Eric and the entire Joseph family.

In October special prayers were said for Sis. Lorraine Mitchell and Sis. Glancy Spence, due to the deteriorating health of their brother, Guy Spence. He has since left for Canada where he is under medical care. We wish to express gratitude at the kind donation of tapes along with Bible concordances and reading glasses that we received from Canada. To encourage reading of books in the library, a book exhibition was held every Sunday for the month of October. We have been encouraged by an improvement in the number of borrowed books.

Anthony Semple

MILFORD ROAD, MI

We are thankful for the many thoughts and prayers for our Bro. Grant Anderson. Our heavenly Father has certainly blessed him after the severe auto accident, through the progress he has made over the past several months. The family is looking forward to his return from the hospital by upgrading their home with wheelchair accessibility. Please continue to pray for Bro. Grant and the Anderson family during this time.

We welcome by transfer Sis. Annette Ammons from the Ann Arbor, MI, Ecclesia. On October 21, we rejoiced in the baptism of our Sunday school scholar, SETH MICHAELS, and we ask God's blessing upon our new brother.

We also thank the many visitors who have visited our ecclesia over the past months. We especially thank Bro. Mark Newth (Detroit Royal Oak, MI), and Bre. Michael Walker and Ron Kidd (London West, ON) for their words of exhortation.

Our new recording brother is Bro. Jeff Livermore. His mail address is 44043 Yorkshire Drive, Novi, MI 48375. His email address is jlivermore@aol.com.

Paul Sparacino

OAHU, HI

Our tiny three-sister ecclesia has been blessed with a new brother. On October 21, 2007, SHAWN HAYES, Sis. Diana Hayes' husband, was baptized. Bro. Paul Wade (Houston, TX) conducted the interview and the baptism, extended the right hand of fellowship, and exhorted. Truly a busy day for Bro. Paul.

Also in attendance was Sis. Pat Wade and Bro. Graham and Sis. Ruth Travers from Australia. Bro. Graham presided at our little meeting. What a joy it was to have a "live" meeting for our extremely small congregation, as we usually worship with brothers and sisters through DVDs.

The following Sunday, we were blessed with a visit from Bro. Stan and Sis. Eunice Newton (Huntington Beach, CA). We thank God for all the love and attention we receive from our brothers and sisters around the world.

Connie Wiedeman

PETERBOROUGH, ON

We have had a good summer of fellowship, and have been blessed with considerable help from brothers from many ecclesias coming to exhort, for which we thank our heavenly Father. We have been meeting on a bi-weekly program over the summer months, but we hope next year, God willing, to meet weekly over the summer months.

We were saddened last July when our Sis. Jean Gwilliam fell asleep in the Lord. Our sympathies are with Bro. Percy and Sis. Eva and family. Our sympathies are with our Sis. Sally Mogensen, whose husband also died in July.

We pray that our Lord will continue to bless us as we look for help in the coming year, if he still remains away.

Bryan Rose

SANTA BARBARA, CA

With sadness we announce the deaths of two more of our members. Bro. Harry William Farrell passed away on March 11, 2007, at the age of 89 after a number of years battling Alzheimer's disease. He and our Sis. Hazel had been married 12 years. He was a wonderful husband, and a very gentle and humble brother in Christ.

Sis. Janell Walker fell asleep in Christ on May 25, 2007, after a lengthy battle with liver cancer. She leaves her husband Bro. Fred Walker; her daughter Sis. Danielle Burris of Olympia, WA; and her step-daughter Sis. Melody Magness of Sharinwoods, CA, along with one other daughter and two sons. Sis. Janell was a very loving and compassionate sister who loved the truth. Both our brother and sister will be sorely missed.

Our Sis. Beverly Woods continues her fight against lung cancer. May God be with her and comfort her in her time of need. We long for that day when there will be no more sickness or death, when all these things will be swallowed up in victory at the return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.

After a good confession of his faith, we are pleased to announce the baptism of RICHARD MAXWELL on April 4, 2007. Richard was introduced to the truth, through the seminars in Lompoc by our Bro. Ron Stewart, and studied for many years both in Lompoc and Santa Barbara prior to coming to an understanding of the truth. May Yahweh bless our new brother as he walks with us toward the kingdom.

We welcome by transfer from the Verdugo Hills, CA, Ecclesia our Bro. Matthew Walker, the son of our Bro. Fred Walker.

Once again this year, we had our annual Labor Day picnic at the home of our Bro. John Seagoe, with many brothers, sisters, and friends attending. The activities began with a talk by Bro. Jim Seagoe (San Francisco Peninsula, CA), followed by great food and fellowship around the word.

On October 6, 2007, we celebrated our Bro. Floyd Elsas' ninetieth birthday, with many brothers and sisters and family attending from near and far. All had a wonderful day.

Since last February, we welcomed around the table of the Lord the following brothers and sisters: Bro. Ken Smith (UK); Bro. Dick and Sis. Jean Goodman (AZ); Bro. Tom and Sis. Judie Griffith (UK); Bro. Nigel Fletcher (Aust.); Bro. Brian and Sis. Sherry Walker (Canada); Sis. Danielle Burris (Olympia, WA); Bro. Gareth and Sis. Alyson

Jones (UK); Sis. Pam Vandiver (Rogue Valley, OR); Bro. John Meyer, and Sis. Wendy Johnson (BC); Bro. Larry King, Sis. Carrie Spencer, and Bro. Taylor Spencer (Jackson County, OR); Bro. Alistair and Sis. Jane Henderson (South Africa); and Sis. Amy Cousens (Canada).

We would like to thank the following brothers for ministering to our ecclesia with Bible classes and the word of exhortation: Ken Smith, Dick Goodman, Kim Carrell, Geoff Smith, Ron Stewart, Lou Pokol, Matthew Walker, Nathan Blanchard, Bryan Blanchard, Larry King, Jim Seagoe, Tom Madson, Alistair Henderson, and Russ Patterson.

It is our prayer that this will be the year of our Lord and Savior's return. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Craig Stickney

SPANISH TOWN, JAMAICA

On August 26, 2007, we welcomed IMOLYN FRANCIS into our family when she was baptized in the Kingston ecclesial hall, just a few days after Hurricane Dean ravaged the island. She is no stranger to the Spanish Town Ecclesia, as she has been visiting for nearly ten years and is the mother of Bro. Leon Walters. Heavy rain with flashes of lightning and echoing thunder accompanied the service; water flowed toward the rear of the hall from a leaking roof, damaged during the hurricane. However, this never dampened the spirits of the brothers and sisters who came to witness this joyous occasion. We pray that our dear sister will continue to walk in that light of life.

We continue to meet each Sunday at the YMCA on Monk Street for our memorial service. Our Bible classes are held on Friday evenings except for the last week of each month, when we have it on Saturday instead. This takes the form of an outing where we visit parks, zoos, historical sites, or homes of brothers and sisters who are able to withstand the "invasion".

Pray for us as we strive to do our duty of serving God and keeping His commandments.

Keith Kinlocke

SUSSEX, NB

We are very grateful for the visitors whose company we enjoyed in this beautiful part of God's vineyard. In September Bro. Peter and Sis. Ruth Edwards (Derby, UK) stayed for ten days. Bro. Peter also gave the word of exhortation. At the same time we also had Bro. Tim Baines (Mississauga West, ON) along with his wife Jane and daughter Lydia. Bro. Peter and Sis. Margaret Stonell visited us briefly, on their return home. We were also pleased to see Bro. Milan Duga from Barrie, ON.

Our Thanksgiving weekend in October was led by Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI) on the theme of "Godly Love". This thoroughly uplifting subject was enjoyed by us all, including visiting brothers and sisters from Boston, MA; Cambridge, ON; and Bedford, NS. We thank Bro. Ken for all his work, and also Sis. Diane and their son David for coming along too. Bro. Brian and Sis. Lorna Luke also came in October for a few days during their North American trip. Bro. Brian led a special Bible class on "Paul the Aged". We thank them for making a detour to come and visit us.

Cliff Baines

VERNON, BC

We are very pleased to announce three baptisms over the past few months. JAMIE CAWSTON, the daughter of our Bro. Ben and Sis. Helen Cawston, was immersed into the saving name of Christ on August 22, 2007, in the waters of Okanagan Lake. Sis. Jamie's baptism was witnessed by many brothers and sisters who, with our new sister, were attending Winfield Bible Camp. It was a wonderful and inspiring addition to our camp! We rejoiced again on September 29, 2007, when TOM and GWEN PALMER were baptized. This was a very joyful occasion as Bro. Tom and Sis. Gwen had been studying for several years with various members of our ecclesia. We pray for our heavenly Father's care upon our new brother and sisters as we walk together on the path to the kingdom.

Two of our elderly members have been facing declining health over the past few months. Both Sis. Hazel Holweg and Bro. Al Green are now in the same long-term care facility, and we ask for your prayers for our brother and sister.

David Zantingh

Minute Meditation

Impossible

It has been said that, if we feed our faith, then our fears will starve to death. Unfortunately, sometimes our fears are better fed than our faith is. Which are we feeding?

Faith is important. Mary McLeod Bethune said, "Without faith, nothing is possible. With it, nothing is impossible." The writer to the Hebrews tells us, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

So we need faith since, without faith, it is impossible to please God, and pleasing God should be our number one goal in life.

How do we get faith? Do we have enough faith? If it is weak, can we increase it? The apostles made this request to Jesus when they said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." No doubt the apostles realized that there was room for improvement in their faith department, and certainly it could also be true for us.

How do we increase our faith? Paul tells us that faith comes by hearing the word of God. We need to do our Bible readings.

But, we may be afraid that we are too weak, and we wonder if our faith is growing at all. Or perhaps we find it hard to absorb properly the words we read in the Scriptures. That word "impossible" may seem impossibly big, too big for us to overcome, and we may start feeding our fears instead of our faith.

To stop this way of thinking, Jesus explains, "The things which are impossible

with men are possible with God." The angel Gabriel reassured Mary, "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

So it is possible, with God's help, to overcome our fears and grow in faith — but how? Is there more to it than reading the Bible?

The answer is love. When we read the words our God has written for us in the Bible, we must respond with love and thankfulness in our hearts for all the loving kindness God has shown toward us — in giving His Son, and in His wonderful plan of salvation. The way to feed our faith and starve our fear is to love. The apostle John tells us, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love."

When we love the way God intends for us to love, fear is defeated, we grow in faith, and then, truly, nothing is impossible. What many consider to be the impossible dream, the hope of being with the Son of God in his kingdom, becomes a crown of rejoicing because our faith gives us confidence that God loves us and wants to save us and bring us into His Kingdom.

John counsels us, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

We need to be working at developing and increasing our love for God and our brethren by reading the Bible to learn more about the goodness of God towards us, and by showing love to each other. Our faith will grow as we grow in understanding and love for our heavenly Father. John tells us, "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." "If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us."

What a great way to live. Our life needs to be filled with faith and love. To do this, we must fill ourselves with God's word, for that is the only way we can truly understand the love God has for us. Realizing God's love for us will help us to develop the kind of faith and the kind of love that is pleasing to God.

Let us ask our heavenly Father to increase our faith, and to increase our love, so that nothing shall be impossible for us when these two virtues consume our very being. Then we will feed our faith and our fear will starve to death, for "perfect love casts out fear." As John says, "If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us."

Robert J. Lloyd

*"Faith is not only a commitment to the **promises** of Christ; faith is also a commitment to the **demands** of Christ" (William Barclay).*

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

DECEMBER

7-9 Worcester, MA CYC Weekend. Bro. James Diliberto (Echo Lake, NJ): "The Tabernacle: Lessons for Young People in the Wilderness of Life". Contact Bro. Aaron MacAdams aaronmacadams@hotmail.com 978-502-9690

25 Hamilton McNab, ON Study day. Millgrove Community Center. Bro. Dave Noble (North Industry, OH): "Zephaniah". Contact Bro. Carl Foster carlfoster@mountaincable.net 905-692-4640

JANUARY 2008

26 San Diego County Ecclesia Annual Study Day. Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI): "Little Words that Mean a Lot". 9:30 am Ecclesial Hall, lunch served. Contact Bro. Kent Ellis ellisk@san.rr.com 858-674-5645

FEBRUARY

3-8 Palm Springs Bible School. Bre. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD) and Michael Owen (Seaton, UK). Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau register@christadelphianbibleschool.org. Or visit website www.californiabibleschool.org

9 Brantford, ON Junior CYC and Little Disciples "Apps Mills" Gathering

16 Brantford, ON Senior CYC Gathering

16,17 Saanich Peninsula, BC Study weekend. Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): Subject TBD. Contact Bro. Richard Morgan richie.morgan@gmail.com

MARCH

15,16 Lompoc Valley, CA Annual study weekend. Bre. Don Pearce (Rugby, UK) and Paul Billington (Brantford, ON): "An Up Close Look at Bible Prophecy Being Fulfilled in Our Time". Registration: contact Bro. Ron Stewart ronandshirley777@aol.com or call 805-733-5577. Seating limited; we suggest an early response

29 April 5 Florida Bible School Christian Retreat, Bradenton, FL. Adult / teen classes. Bro. Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON): "Bumps along the Road of Discipleship"; Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD): "First Principles of Prayer"; Bro. Martin Webster (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON): "The Fifteen-Minute Exhortation". Contact Bro. Walt Dodrill 727-528-1197 waltdodrill@msn.com. Registration: Sis. Diane Jennings 727-528-1886 diane@dianej.net

APRIL

5 Boston, MA Study Day. Bro. David Levin (Baltimore, MD): "Becoming a Spiritual Person". 9:00 am, lunch served. Contact Bro. Jeff Wallace jeff@tecbs.org 508-763-2981

JULY

26-August 3 Midwest Bible School Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "Malachi: A Question of Innocence"; Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON): "The Fate of the Dead"; Bro. James Mansfield (AU): "How the Lord Treated People". Contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 44943 Yorkshire Drive, Novi, MI 48375 248-462-5740 mike.live@gmail.com

Index for 2007

Editorials, *G. Booker*

America the Beautiful....263
April 15, the parable of 107
"Decently and in order"....159
Loving his appearing....2
Milk and butter, nose and blood....55
Redeemed and redeeming....211
What I don't know....367,419,471,523
What is real?....315

Exhortations

Back to Basics, *W. Jackson*....529
"Crucify him!", *D. Caudery*....423
Dedicated to serving, *J. Lawrence* 319
Distraction, *M. Atkin*....216
Heating the frog slowly, *K. Sommerville*...372
Jonah, lessons from, *A. Booker*....60
Learning to pray continually, *J. Hagler*....474
Responding to tribulation, *C. Drepaul*....268
"Tohu bohu", *G. Booker*....163
When donkeys talk, *K. Sommerville*....109
"Woe is me if I preach not", *R. Hicks*....7

Series

Apologetics, *D. Levin*....118, 175,220
Ephesians, Paul's letter to, *T. Barling*....11,63, 113,170,225,277,322,376,426,478,532
Famous last words, *C. Sales*....15,135,281, 335,448
Hebrews, *C. Edwards*....89,542
Jesus' unlikely conversions, *W. Booker*....289,336,450,505,549
Little words that mean a lot, *J. Bilello*....384,434,483,537
Rightly dividing the Word, *B. Green*....66,124,180,230,271,327,380

Articles and Bible Study

Broken spirit, *C. Edwards*....274
Careless talk, *S. Whitehouse*....371
Nullifying the Word, *C. Snobelen*....553
Paul in Arabia, *E. Archard*....234
Search for wisdom, the, *C. Edwards*....431
Stones, *E. Henthorn*....183
Visions of the third heaven, *J. Dillingham*..70
"We object...", *J. Dillingham*....332
Women committed to the Lord, *P. Bartle*..491
Youth: Proverbs, *G. Booker*....17

Reflections

Bruce Metzger, *G. Booker*....249
Calming a quarrel, *G. Booker*....447
Compassion, *J. Harper*....245
Correlation, A, *G. Drepaul*....548
"Dear Sprout", *R. Mutter*....242
"Greater lov'd ye canno' be!", *G. Booker*....283
Fruits from the true vine, *C. Cooper*....35
"I'm one of those stars, Sam...", *S. Grazda*.287
"I would not be here...", *K. Sommerville*....547
Jonah and God's compassion, *P. Forbes*....16
Many aspects of love, *R. Webb*....340
Mary's dream....545
Minor, Bro. Bill....74
"Out of her poverty..." 449
Oyster, the, *A. Crouse*....445
Potter's wheel, the, *M. Garner*....546
Scenes in a country cemetery, *G. Booker*...338
Struggles within ..., *D. Andrews*....503
Virtuous Woman, A....344
"We're all babies in God's eyes", *S. Grazda*244

Signs of the Times and Current Events

Fig tree, parable of the, *J. Robinson*....85
Global warming, *M. Owen*....23
Holocaust archive, new....80
News from the Promised Land....395

Archaeology

Jerusalem escape tunnel....453
Muslim "trash" is Israeli "treasure"!....83
Sepphoris and Jesus, *G. Booker*....496

Music in Worship, *K/J Curry*

CD recordings of hymns....79
CD recordings, Sis. Julia Baines....444
"Hark, ten thousand thousand voices"....79
Harp, the, *B. Burr*....77
Instruments in worship, *M. LeDuke*....240
"Lone Mary comes at early morn"....239
"They'll hang the trumpet...", *B. Burr*....237
Trumpet's "uncertain sound", *B. Burr*....441
"We give Thee but Thine own"....443

Letters

40-year generation?....130
America the Beautiful....346,347
Best books?....29
Bible Companion, RR's preface to....190
Book reviews for the newly baptized....248
Bruce Metzger....348
Christadelphian books....191

Conscientious objection....29
"Crowned with glory and honor", *J. Hill*....92
Dignified farewell....131
Distractions....291,345
Flash flood in a "wadi"....133
Global warming....128,189
"Greater lov'd..."....393
Johnson family cemetery....452
Joseph and his brothers?....191
Lake Victoria....130
Preaching from a county jail....349
Simon and the cross....349
"Sprout" is here!....292
"This generation"....247,291
Types of the Father....28
What will happen to "the other fellow"?....554

Bible Mission

Argentina....38,295
Bolivia....39,295,455,560
CBMA/CBMC country listing....351
CBMA website....138
Chile....40,295,560
Costa Rica....402
Ecuador....193
El Salvador, 2006 Bible school....194
Guatemala....137,196,293
Latin American activities, 2006....91
Mexico....136,250,558
Missionaries in the field....457
Panama....402
Peru....295,507,560
Thisisyourbible.com website....41,139,299, 353,401,457,508,561
Truth Corps 2007 vacation Bible school....398
Truth Corps, "My experiences"....399

Miscellaneous

Christadelphian sampler, A....30
Difficult words in the KJV....389
"God makes a land barren", *RC Trench*....10
"Two other", *GC Morgan*....224

Minute Meditations, *RJ Lloyd*

An apple a day....256
Are we willing?....151
Fired with enthusiasm....413
Green and growing....361
Halftime....465
Impossible....567
Learning obedience....204
Majority is not always right, the....308
Temptation....49
We must decide....100
Your attitude....517

News

Austin Leander, TX....406
Avon, IN....198
Barrie, ON....406
Bedford, NS....198,301,407,511
Boston, MA....198
Bozeman, MT....252
Brampton, ON....252
Brantford, ON...142,198,301,407,460,511,563
Brooklyn, NY....460,563
Calgary, AB....253,407
Colon, Panama....408
Cranston, RI....511
Detroit Livonia, MI....44,142,563
Detroit Royal Oak, MI....253
Doha, Qatar....44,199,301
East Texas, TX....142
Echo Lake, NJ....44,199,301,408
Edmonton, AB....302
Elgin, ON....355
Guadalajara, Mexico....199,511
Guatemala City, Guatemala....142
Guyana....200
Georgetown, Guyana....564
Hamilton Greenaway, ON....94,200,408
Honesdale, PA....302
Houston North, TX....512
Jasonville, IN....94
Kamloops, BC....94,200
Kitchener-Waterloo, ON....44,143
Kouts, IN....201
La Paz, Bolivia....45
Largo, FL....45,253
Lompoc Valley, CA....512
London West, ON....143,513
Los Angeles Hispanic, CA....202
Manitoulin Island, ON....46,302
Maple Ridge, BC....513
May Pen, Jamaica....144
Mendocino, CA....461
Meriden, CT....461
Milford Road, MI....95,564
Mississauga West, ON....356
Moorestown, NJ....408

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
P.O. Box 530696 • Livonia, MI 48153-0696
Periodicals Postage Paid at San Dimas, California

Moulton, AL.....144
Nanaimo, BC.....144,462,514
New Westminster, BC.....46,145,254
Oahu, HI.....145,564
Orlando, FL.....303,514
Peterborough, ON.....565
Petersburg, VA.....304
Portland, OR.....145
Port Maria, Jamaica.....409
Prince George, BC.....95
Saanich Peninsula, BC.....410
San Diego County, CA.....254,304
San Francisco Marinwood, CA.....356
San Salvador, El Salvador.....514
Santa Barbara, CA.....146,565
Sarasota, FL.....202
Seattle, WA.....146
Shelburne, ON.....514
Shenandoah Valley, VA.....515
Simi Hills, CA.....147,462
Spanish Town, Jamaica.....566
Springfield, MA.....305
St. John's, NF.....356
St. Lucia.....202
Sussex, NB.....46,96,357,566
Thousand Oaks, CA.....147,357
Toledo, OH.....203
Toronto East, ON.....148
Toronto West, ON.....149,357
Treasure Coast, FL.....411
Tulsa/Joplin, OK.....357,516
Vancouver, BC.....358
Vernon, BC.....203,359,567
Victoria, BC.....47,411
Washington, DC.....47,360,516
Wichita Falls, TX.....255
Worcester, MA.....96,360,516

Announcements and Notices

A.S.K. Atlantic.....305
Anderson, appeal for Bro. Grant.....463
Ann Arbor Thanksgiving gathering.....516
Ballinfad, ON: adult study week.....96
Bilello, Bro. John.....5
Brothers' weekend.....43
Camp Hashawha.....463
CGAF, special invitation.....134
Christadelphian Heritage School, CA.....192
Christadelphian hymns.....305
Christadelphian Sunday School Union 307
Coy, Sis. Eunice.....98
Fairhaven Christadelphian Foundation.....464
"From Eden Lost to Eden Restored".....306
Galilee Bible School.....203
India — appeal for Calcutta.....464
Manitoulin Bible Camp.....150
Manitoulin Island appeal.....306
Mid-Atlantic Bible School.....96
New England Bible study weekend.....307
North American Sunday School Assoc.....150
New York Metropolitan Sisters' Retreat.....97
Pacific Coast Bible School.....98
Shaw, Sis. Marge.....308
Simi Hills Preaching Fund.....98
South Africa Bible tour.....255
Taipei Ecclesia, Taiwan.....99
Texas Youth Conference.....412
Two projects for the new year.....528
Used books for CBMA, overseas books.....255
Vancouver Island Bible Camp.....150
Victoria, BC, holiday unit.....149
Victoria, BC, senior housing.....465
Youth leader seminar.....99