

THE CRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

— of the Kingdom of God —

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Editor: George Booker

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What time is it?

What time is it? I edit The Tidings, and in the real world I also prepare tax returns. I have a problem with "time" in each place. When I work on the magazine, I'm usually working on next month's issue; thus I have trouble remembering what month it is in real time. Right now, as I write this, the "real time" is June 4, 2008, but in "Tidings" time it is July.

My problem at my other desk is the same, only different, as they say. When I prepare tax returns, I'm almost always working on last year's return; right now, I'm still preparing 2007 forms, and will continue to do so for some months.

This all means that, at this very moment, as I write this, the real time is June 4, 2008, but it seems like July 2007! But at least I know what I'm doing. I think.

Barbara is good with this; while I work partly in the future, and partly in the past, she is grounded in reality. I can always check with her to find out what year, and day, and time it really is.

Usually she tells me it's later than I think.

It probably is.

George

Editorial

‘When Lame Men Dance’

*“Like a lame man’s legs that hang limp
is a proverb in the mouth of a fool”
(Proverbs 26:7).*

In 1872 Lewis Carroll wrote *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*. There he told the nonsense story of the walrus and the carpenter who walked beside the sea in the middle of the night, when the sun was shining bright!

That was the reader’s first clue that many improbable things were about to happen. And, sure enough, they did. After a while, the walrus and the carpenter had walked a mile or so with quite a number of little oysters, whom they had coaxed out of the sea by the promise of a pleasant treat. Gathering the little oysters around them, they made them comfortable after their tiring walk — and so it had been, for of course the oysters had no feet.

*“The time has come,” the Walrus said,
“To talk of many things:
Of shoes — and ships — and sealing-wax —
Of cabbages — and kings —
And why the sea is boiling hot —
And whether pigs have wings.”*

Then the walrus and the carpenter decide that they could use a loaf of bread, with butter, salt, and vinegar. Now the oysters realize, sadly, that they have indeed been invited to a meal, but they are the main course!

It is thought that this is the origin of the sarcastic, ‘not likely’ phrase, ‘When pigs fly!’ That may be so. For my part, I think there is a distinctively Jewish character to the saying. In fact, it is not difficult to thumb through the pages of Proverbs and come up with a number of such sarcastic, humorous ‘not likely’ sayings. Let’s give it a try, shall we?

- ‘When men put fire in their pockets’ (Prov 6:27)
- ‘When farmers sleep during harvest’ (10:5)
- ‘When pigs wear gold rings’ (11:22)
- ‘When women tear down their own houses’ (14:1)
- ‘When slaves rule over princes’ (19:10)
- ‘When a man is too lazy to eat’ (19:24)
- ‘When a man lives on the corner of his own roof’ (21:9)
- ‘When a fellow heaps burning coals on your head’ (25:22)
- ‘When it snows in summer’ (26:1)
- ‘When maidservants displace their mistresses’ (30:23)

In the same spirit, Proverbs 26:7 might be entitled ‘When lame men dance.’

A lame man never shows his infirmity so much as when he tries to perform feats of agility or strength. Likewise, a fool never appears so ridiculous as when he takes a proverb or parable in hand and tries to teach wisdom. In this verse fool is the Hebrew “keciyl”: essentially a naïve or silly person, but not necessarily a morally corrupt person. Thus a parable when handled by such a person does not proceed smoothly, but falls of its own weight, and looks ridiculous in the process. As Proverbs 17:7 says, “Arrogant [or perhaps eloquent] lips are unsuited to a fool.”

The NIV speaks of “a lame man’s legs that hang limp”, while the KJV reads “The legs of the lame are not equal.” “Lame” is “piseah”, derived from “pasah”, to hop, skip, or even to dance (obviously, by moving in some irregular gait). This last possible meaning may have encouraged Martin Luther to render this verse, presumably with a tinge of humor: “Like dancing to a cripple, so is a proverb in the mouth of the fool.”

The Hebrew “dalal” (“hang limp” in NIV) means, literally, to be weak or feeble. The existence of a similar word (“dala”, to hang down), describing drawing water out of a well (as with a bucket or bag suspended on a rope) (cf Prov 20:5) has led to a number of conjectures. Are these two distinct Hebrew roots, or variations of the same root? The best authorities are divided: “Note that BDB,¹ 195, combines [the two words] under one entry. HAL,² 214, correctly distinguishes two roots, ‘dalal’, to be small, and ‘dala’, to dangle.”³ The “hang limp” of NIV and NET contains elements of meaning from both Hebrew words, and approximates most modern translations (e.g., RSV’s “hang useless”, ASV’s “hang loose”). The KJV’s “not equal” seemingly derives from “dala”: “drawn up” (as in water from a well) leading to the idea of “unequal” (in length).

In the Old Testament, lameness was often associated with paralysis. Mephibosheth became lame as a small child after being dropped by his nurse (2Sa 4:4). In the case of Jacob (Gen 32:25), the result of his wrestling was probably damage to a disk, resulting in a deformity and limp (v 32).

The proper use of tools

To understand something of the force of this proverb, we should pause to consider some Bible verses that describe a powerful and proficient use of God’s Word:

- Samuel’s Spirit-directed wisdom is likened to an arrow or spear that never falls to the ground, that is, it always reaches its target unerringly (1Sa 3:19).
- David, running forward toward Goliath, flung the smooth stone from his sling; it sped directly to the one unprotected part of the giant’s body, where it dealt him a fatal blow (1Sa 17:48,49).
- A soldier drew “his bow at random” [the Hebrew suggests it was a “complete, or perfect” shot], the arrow struck the one vulnerable spot in King Ahab’s armor (1Ki 22:34), and he died (v 37). Thus God fulfilled His promise, delivered through the prophet Elijah (1Ki 21:17-19).
- In Proverbs 25:11, “a word aptly spoken” may be rendered “a word spoken on its wheels”, suggesting the chariots of the cherubim (Ezek 1:15-21),

moving swiftly and efficiently in any direction as called upon, all to carry out the purposes of God.

- Jeremiah describes God's inspired Word as a "fire shut up in my bones" that he cannot hold in (Jer 20:9), and
- "a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces" (Jer 23:29).
- Finally, the apostle Paul describes God's Word as "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17).

These illustrations, and others we might list, convey something of the power of the Word of God, in the right hands, effectively to convey His will and complete His purpose. But, returning to the proverb here, we may say that putting the same instruments — bow and arrow, spear, chariot and horses, and so forth — into the hands of a person untrained or unable to use them, or handing a message to a lame man and ordering him to deliver it quickly, would be like giving a Bible to an unprepared person and expecting him to preach its Divine message powerfully.

'When unprepared brothers teach'

It is simply wrong to give Bible class forums or public platforms to those not ready to teach or expound the deeper things of Scripture. Proverbs, and their mostly New Testament counterpart parables, are among the "dark sayings" (KJV), or "riddles" (NIV), or "hidden things", of the wise (Prov 1:5,6; Psa 78:2). God Himself has carefully crafted these tools for the purpose of conveying divine wisdom, but like other fine tools they are useless or even dangerous in the hands of those untrained to use them.

Some will think, and say, that we are all brethren, and we all should have equal opportunity to express our opinions. But in so arguing, they seem to forget the warnings against putting too much upon novices, who may well be naïve as well as inexperienced, which is near neighbor to a "fool" (Biblically understood) (1Ti 3:6; 1Co 3:1; Heb 5:12,13; 1Pe 2:2).

Some will think, and say, that anyone can, and should, lead a Bible class, or prepare and deliver an exhortation or lecture. Some even suppose they can do so with very little study and preparation. What is so difficult anyway? Grab a concordance and put together a few apparently connected passages, stir for a minute, bake for twenty more, and out comes a "talk". (More likely, you simply... talk.) But there are those who have no aptitude for this work, or no inclination and desire to invest the time and effort to:

- (a) develop themes,
- (b) compare parallel passages,
- (c) trace meanings of Hebrew or Greek words or phrases through the Bible,
- (d) test the conclusions, and
- (e) put those conclusions into organized, easily-understood words and sentences and paragraphs.

Is Proverbs 26:7 true? Is a man who is unable to understand or explain a proverb comparable to a lame man trying to run, or dance? Until you have heard a foolish

“novice” (who might even be 40 or 50 years old) confidently “expounding” the intricacies of Zechariah, or seriously trying to “explain” the Song of Songs, or developing the types and shadows of the Law, you simply cannot appreciate just how ridiculous a dancing cripple can be.

What does the Bible say? “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak” (James 1:19). “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly” (James 3:1).

A simple test

Here is a simple test to see if you qualify as a “teacher”: Have someone else select at random a difficult chapter (from Isaiah, perhaps, or an obscure minor prophet), a complex parable of Jesus (the unjust steward, or the good Samaritan), or a section of Romans or Ephesians. Without preparation, simply read the passage, slowly and distinctly, giving the sense of each verse (Neh 8:8; Eccl 8:1).

- After every one or two verses, pause and explain the passage, taking (from marginal references or your own memory) other Scriptural allusions and echoes that bear upon it.
- Don’t forget to put the passage in its proper context, with what comes just before and just after, and in the broader context of the entire Bible book.
- Consider what the passage must have meant to its original hearers or readers.
- Clear up any difficulties in the translation you are reading by comparing with other translations and, when appropriate, the original text through the use of concordances and lexicons.
- Finally, keep in mind all along that you must be telling your prospective listeners what the passage should mean to them: ‘Tell them what to *do* about it.’ (And if the passage being examined cannot be used to teach, rebuke, or train in righteousness, or if the prospective lesson means nothing to them, then you must be wise and observant enough to realize this, leave it alone, and replace it with another passage that is pertinent, relevant, and helpful.)

This may seem like a tall order, and you might well complain, ‘But no one can do that, surely not the first time around.’ That may be so. But there is a simple solution to *that* problem. Make sure it isn’t the first time you have ever done such a thing. And how do you make sure of that? The Bible itself answers your question:

“Receive the message with great eagerness and examine the Scriptures every day” (Acts 17:11).

“Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift... be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them” (1Ti 4:13-15).

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter” (2Ti 2:15,16).

Persevere at this work, in the same way that engineers and physicians learn their disciplines, in the same way that athletes achieve championship skills, and in the same way that musicians develop concert-worthy repertoires. Prepare in this way, without fretting about *when* you will be able to “display” your “talents”. At the same time, pray often and diligently for understanding and knowledge and wisdom, that God — and not you — will be glorified in all you say and do. Pray that He will use every means at His disposal to rid you of pride, ambition, and selfishness.

Where did the Mutual Improvement Classes go?

It is to be lamented that the Mutual Improvement Classes have fallen out of fashion in our community. It’s true that sometimes they may have been conducted in a very firm manner that hurt some sensitive feelings. But when well taught, they performed a very useful service, equipping young and less experienced brothers with the tools, and giving them the practice, to develop their skills in the Word. Thus, at the very least, they were better prepared to serve as competent (and thus spiritually helpful) presiders and speakers.

Whether in a formal class, or by your own initiative and private study, prepare yourself in the way outlined above, making use of the writings of earlier Christadelphians and other expositions, but not following them slavishly. An excellent primer for this work is Harry Whittaker’s *Exploring the Bible*, along with its sequel *Enjoying the Bible*.⁴ Each contains advice and examples of productive Bible study methods.

To young brothers (and perhaps those not so young also), we say: Prepare in this way, and pray in this way, and then you may be reasonably sure that, when your opportunity comes, you will not embarrass yourself. More importantly, you will not bring shame upon the wonderful truths you seek to preach. Most importantly, you will not bring shame upon the God you profess to serve. Thus you may ensure that this proverb, about lame men trying to dance, will never be applied to you.

When a lame man *did* dance

There is a wonderful footnote to these thoughts. There actually *was* a cripple who did walk, and run, and leap joyfully and well! He was the lame beggar sitting at the Beautiful Gate in Solomon’s Porch, who pleaded for a handout from Peter and John (Acts 3). He didn’t receive silver or gold, but his feet and ankles were made strong, he was lifted upright, and he followed the apostles, praising God as he went. He became a living, running, dancing proverb of the healing power of God’s Word through Jesus Christ. In so doing, he “preached” in the Sanhedrin to the rulers, elders, and teachers of the Law, so that they could say nothing against him and his new Lord (Acts 4). (By the way, the lame man was “over forty years old” when he was healed: v 22. It wasn’t too late for him to learn how to dance.)

Thereby we learn that, even though we may limp like lame men at one time, there is no need for us to remain spiritual cripples all our lives. Through the name of Jesus Christ, and by faith accompanied by our own dedicated efforts, we can be

healed and made strong (Acts 4:10), mentally and spiritually in the Word as well as physically in body.

If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well.

George Booker

Notes:

1. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford, 1907.
2. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Hendrickson, 1996.
3. Willem van Gemeren, Editor, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, Zondervan, 1997.
4. Both books are available (1) in the U.S. from Sis. Karen Guist, 6698 Bramblewood Lane, Mayfield Village, OH 44143-1575 klg44143@sbcglobal.net 440-227-0212, and (2) in the U.K. from Sis. Muriel Whittaker, 9 Stock Lane, Shavington, Crewe CW2 5ED murielwhittaker@googlemail.com. Exploring the Bible only is available in Australia from Sis. Fran Caudery, 35 Jeffery Street, Blackburn, VIC 3130 dcaudery@optusnet.com.au. Enjoying the Bible only is available (1) in the U.S. from Thousand Oaks Christadelphian Library www.bigbrand.com/library/home.html, and (2) in the U.K. from The Christadelphian Office www.thechristadelphian.com

Exhortation

Touching

There is something we humans often do when we come together. It doesn't matter much whether it is family, friends, associates, or brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ. We greet one another, with our hands to shake or our arms to hug or our lips to kiss.

When we do this, what is it exactly that we are doing? True, we might be passing on a little jam from breakfast, or a few random germs, but what are we *really* doing? We are touching. We are coming in contact with another human being, someone else like ourselves, a creation of God. We may not even realize how important touching is; we may take it for granted. But touching is as important to humans as the sense of smell is to many animals. We learn so much about one another by touch. Is she cold or hot? Is he happy or excited? Is she feeling strong, or frail? Without thinking, we are gathering information about all these things and more.

We might not think that touch is an important thing, but we would be wrong. Children need to bond with their caregivers in order to develop properly. Touch is by far the most important way of establishing contact with those caregivers. I read about a study in Romania after World War II, conducted in an overcrowded orphanage. One hundred infants were fed, clothed, and kept relatively safe. But they spent most of their time in oversized cribs, and actual human contact was

severely limited because of a shortage of nurses. One third of the children died before their third birthdays; nearly all of the remaining children suffered some form of retardation or mental instability.

This does not just apply to children. Touching helps adults and young people to explore, to communicate, and to bond with one another, as well as to trust. Who among us has not felt the joy and comfort of a child or even a pet when we soothe him or her after a hurt, whether it be a skinned knee or a mashed tail?

“Touch” is one of those English words with so many indirect meanings or uses. We say, that someone is ‘in touch’ when he is well informed about a subject, or truly understands his own feelings or emotions. We say she is ‘out of touch’ when she isn’t paying attention, or doesn’t care about this or that. We say, ‘Keep in touch’ when we want to hear from someone. Every parent of two or more children has heard those not-so-welcome words, ‘He’s touching me!’ When I sometimes carry on imaginary conversations with one of our cats, my wife says, ‘You’re touched.’ And there are many more uses of the word.

What the Scriptures say

Now what do the Scriptures say about touch? In the Old Testament the most common Hebrew word for touch is “naga”: “to touch, that is to lay hands upon.” However, it implies so many things. It can mean to grip, strike, join, punish, defeat, throw, or simply to reach out and touch.

Here are some uses of “naga”:

- (a) “Neither shall ye **touch** it [the fruit of the forbidden tree], lest ye die” (Gen 3:3). God was not saying, ‘If it falls off the tree and accidentally hits you, you will die.’ He was stating, ‘If you grasp it with the intention to eat it, then you will surely die.’ Adam and Eve plainly understood they were not to *eat* of the tree.
- (b) In Job 1:11, the adversary says, “**Touch** all that Job hath and he will curse thee.” The adversary did not say, ‘Just lay your hand on him, God.’ He was saying, ‘Hurt him, and he will curse You.’ In one way or another, most believers will experience this kind of “touch” by God, a touch that causes us pain, and tests us. It is a wise, and faithful, brother who when so touched by God can say, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21).
- (c) “None should **touch** the young man Absalom” (2Sa 18:12). Plainly, David was pleading, ‘Don’t kill him!’
- (d) There are many verses in the cleanliness laws of Moses that do actually mean, ‘Don’t **touch** it; don’t even come close to it.’ The lesson is to keep that unclean thing far enough away so there is no real chance you’ll contact it even accidentally,

In the New Testament the most common Greek word for touch is “haptomai”. It often means, in the simplest sense, “come in contact with”:

- (a) “If I may but **touch** the hem of his garment, I shall be healed” (Matt 9:21).

(b) “Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and ***touched*** him” (Mark 1:41).

Of course, we realize that in these two examples the real point is faith, but this faith was coupled with the action of touching.

Touching the sacrifice

The words of Leviticus 4:15, given by God, provided for the removal of trespasses. The elders were to lay their hands on the head of the bull as it was being sacrificed. They were required to touch the animal as it died. What was God teaching them? That they should get close to, and associate with, the sacrificial animal, and recognize that it represented them, and that they should have been killed. Yet for their sakes and through God’s great mercy, another was slain instead. As the animal died, they could not help but feel, in touching it, the lifeblood of that animal slipping away. And God wanted them to see their own sins, and vow not to repeat them.

The touch of healing

“And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed” (Matt 8:2,3).

There are other such passages, e.g., Matthew 8:15; 9:29; Mark 7:33; Luke 22:51. There were other lepers, other blind, other deaf and deformed whom Jesus healed. And there were yet others who were healed without being touched. Why did Jesus touch some and not others? I believe it was because our Lord knew which ones not only needed to be healed, but also needed the comfort and compassion of a human touch.

The touch of comfort

Who here has not felt burdened with pain, sadness, loss, or trial? I could say to you, ‘I am sorry for your trial,’ and, hopefully, that would console you. But if I touched your hand or your arm, or hugged you, while expressing sympathy, would you not feel considerably more comforted? Look at Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration:

“And when the disciples heard the voice, ‘This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased,’ they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.”

What does Jesus do?

“Jesus came and touched them, and said, ‘Arise and be not afraid’ ” (Matt 17:6,7).

He could have simply commanded them, ‘Stand up,’ but he did more. The disciples were afraid, just as we too can be afraid. We can only imagine how reassuring it was to the disciples when Jesus touched them. But we all have experienced that kind of comfort and reassurance when we were frightened or upset, and someone gave us a caring touch.

Sadly, we live in a world where touching is often mistaken for something else, or — sadder yet — some may take advantage of the privilege of touching for wrong

motives. But such considerations cannot change the need we have to touch others, and be touched by others. It has been demonstrated that many people experience lower blood pressure, less stress, and better overall health by having a pet around. Convalescence homes use the help of friendly, trained dogs and cats to provide such benefits. Do pets possess magic powers to heal us? Of course not. However, petting or touching an animal is not only comforting to the animal, but it is also comforting to the person doing the petting.

The father's touch

One of my most favorite parables is the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). I have been that lost son, and at one time or another you have been, or will be, that lost son too.

“When he came to himself” (v 17a).

When he was touched by the reality of his situation — when he realized that he was lost and only the love of his father could help him, and could make him whole again — then he said:

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.’ And he arose, and came to his father” (vv 17b-20a).

Here is one of the best lines in this parable. No matter how many times I read it, it still chokes me up:

“But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (v 20b).

He touched him, his lost son who had returned, who was now found. Why did the father touch him? He loved him, he had compassion on him, and he wanted to show this son that he loved him.

This is exactly what God did for us. In whatever way He did it, God touched each of us. Each of us in our own way, said, ‘I must turn — or return — to God in the hope that He will make me His servant.’

God guided us with that touch all the way to the waters of baptism.

We are servants now of the Most High God. Through God's guiding touch, through our touch of His Son in the fellowship of his sufferings and death, we who were lost are now found; we who were dead in trespasses and sins now have hope of life everlasting.

The touch of cleansing

As his disciples assembled for the last supper, Jesus knew of course what was about to befall him. Yet his concern was not for himself, but for his disciples. He girded himself with a towel and washed the feet of the disciples (John 13:4,5). He knelt before each of his disciples, took their feet in his hands, and washed them. He humbled himself before the disciples, setting the example for them to humble themselves and help each other.

Jesus' example worked with the disciples, with the tragic exception of Judas. Judas left the meal, but those who remained were faithful to that example. They were touched by Jesus, not just a physical touch, but especially a spiritual touch. Did he remember, at this time, the woman who washed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair?

Touching his body and his blood

On the table before us are bread and wine, symbols of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. We might say that in partaking of these we are touching our Lord, our great High Priest. We might say that, like priests, we are partaking of the altar of which we only have the right to eat (Heb 13:10).

How can we touch others with the great goodness with which we have been touched? We can do so by giving them something of the precious Word of God. By showing them hope and love. By offering them real tangible help. And, perhaps, along the way, simply by touching them. Touch is such a simple thing, but touch is also a powerful thing and a precious thing.

Especially, let us never lose touch with our Father, or His precious Son, or our own beloved brothers and sisters.

George Brown (Austin Leander, TX)

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:

(17) Paul Completes His Survey of a Disciple's Obligations

In our previous study, we saw what considerable attention Paul gave to the husband-wife relationship in the Lord, because it is in itself of the utmost importance for believers. Furthermore, it is a symbol of that higher relationship which all disciples bear to the Lord Jesus, as constituent members of his bride. (In Colossians, by contrast, this relationship of husband and wife is only summarily mentioned, in 3:18,19.)

"Children..."

Continuing his counsel to parents, the apostle says at the beginning of Ephesians 6: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right" (see also Col 3:20). Rebellious and undisciplined children can be a menace not only to family unity but also to the wellbeing of society. Tragic evidence of this unpleasant fact is accumulating in western societies. Timothy, a precious associate of the apostle, had been given an exemplary education in divine matters (see 2Ti 1:5), although his father was a Greek (Acts 16:1). This is evidence of what a godly family can do.

Continuing his instruction to children, Paul says:

"Honor thy father, and mother (which is the first commandment with promise)" (Eph 6:2).

This indeed is so, for the Decalogue, with its insistence upon sins to be avoided, strikes this positive note:

“Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long on the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Exod 20:12).

The importance of this for Israel is testified by the fact the commandment is subsequently repeated, in Leviticus 19:1-3, and by Moses in Deuteronomy 5:16. Thus respect and affection for parents, whose duty to their children Paul will presently consider, is an indication of how important family life is to society at large and to the families of disciples especially. Where children become wayward and disobedient, a phenomenon so often apparent today in rich societies, social and other problems are increasing at an alarming rate. After the visit to Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus was “obedient to Joseph and Mary” (Luke 2:51, NIV). Although the circumstances of his ministry were such that they led to an estrangement from his family, yet on the cross he acted in a most caring way for his anguished mother (see John 19:26,27).

The apostle warned that, in the last days, children would be disobedient to parents (2Ti 3:2), as they were in the first century (cf Rom 1:30). While there can be many calls on the services of able fathers, it is sad, sometimes tragic, that the needs of the family can be neglected. In this matter, as in so many others, there needs to be a proper balance.

The multiplication of wives, as practiced in Israel, could have disastrous effects. We think of the tensions between Leah and Rachel, and between Penninah and Hannah. Whatever qualities David possessed, some of the children of his various wives, such as the lustful Amnon and the self-seeking Absalom, brought him much grief. Thus, on reflection, we can appreciate the importance both of the commandments to Israel and to the followers of the Lord Jesus. In the New Testament an admirable husband and wife come to our attention, Aquila and Priscilla, and demonstrate what fine service can be rendered by a united couple. Paul met them in Corinth, and their presence and company were a great comfort to him. They subsequently travelled with him to Ephesus, where Paul left them in charge (see Acts 18:19). From Romans 16:3-5 we learn their home was where the ecclesia assembled, as was the case apparently in Ephesus (see 1Co 16:19). These passages enable us to appreciate the quality of this couple.

“Fathers...”

Having started with an admonition to children, Paul then speaks directly to fathers, warning them against intemperate behavior, which can only generate resentment and often rebelliousness:

“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (v 4, NIV).

“Slaves...”

In verse 5, the apostle addresses himself to the question of the relationship between believing slaves and their masters. Such slaves were, for obvious reasons, subject to their masters, whether they too were Christian disciples or not. In all

circumstances slaves were to be respectful to their masters, and to regard their service to them as service to the Lord Jesus. Increasingly, we can see how Paul is endeavoring to cover all aspects of a disciple's life. The admonition is reinforced in verse 6, where service is not to be thought of in terms of pleasing men, but service as a slave is to be viewed as service to the Lord Jesus, and coming from the heart. We note how Paul dwells upon this matter, as though there is danger of the matter being glossed over, or forgotten:

"With good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not men" (v 7).

What really matters in the life of a disciple is that he is a disciple, that he has embraced a new way of life through faith and baptism. There is nothing casual about this. In his new life, he is subject to the Lord Jesus and his commandments, and a loving response to him is what matters. In the ancient Graeco-Roman world, slavery was universally practiced, and there is much evidence that quite a large number of slaves obeyed the gospel. How many none can tell, but the way the subject is dealt with in Ephesians and Colossians 3:22-25 attests to the fact that in Asia Minor, where all the ecclesias addressed by Paul were located, it was a major issue. Other references to the service to be rendered by believing slaves may be found in 1 Timothy 6:1,2, where the apostle mentions slaves in the service of non-believing and believing masters. Titus likewise is given this counsel, and Paul specifically mentions the temptation to pilfer from their masters (see Tit 2:9,10). We can understand that in a large and wealthy household petty thieving could very easily go undetected, and a baptized slave could all too easily rationalize and justify his action, especially if the master was an unbeliever.

What is so fascinating about the situation in Colosse is that the issue had presented itself in a challenging and realistic manner. The person who was accompanying Tychicus on his mission to Colosse was a runaway slave who had absconded from the service of his master, Philemon. It does appear Onesimus had fled to Rome, so often the sanctuary sought by runaway slaves, and had there been converted by Paul. But clearly the apostle was constrained to do something about this, and so Onesimus was being sent back to Philemon in the company of the faithful Tychicus (Col 4:7-9). We can scarcely doubt that Paul, before sending Onesimus back to his master, had instructed him thoroughly in his new way of life.

"Masters..."

The section of Ephesians 6 now being considered is rounded off by an admonition addressed, first to both slave and free, and then particularly to masters:

"Knowing that whatsoever good thing each one doeth, the same shall he receive again from the Lord, whether he be bond or free, And ye masters, do the same things unto them, and forbear threatening: knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him" (vv 8,9).

This is a reminder that is ever timely. There is only one judgment which eventually counts, and that is God's.

Paul reminded Jews of this fact, in Romans 2:5-11 (see also in this connection

James 2:1, and especially Peter's momentous declaration at Caesarea in Acts 10:34,35).

In Ephesians 6:10-24 Paul goes on, in his final words, to speak of a conflict — not with flesh and blood, but with the world-rulers of darkness. This is a passage not without its difficulties, with which we hope to deal in a concluding study.

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Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (10) Hope

*“Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart,
all ye that hope in the LORD” (Psa 31:24).*

In the summer of 1946 my grandfather decided to move his family from a row-house tenement to a new home. In the backyard there was enough room to plant a fig tree. Within a few weeks of taking possession of the property he planted a fairly large fig tree, which he had to obtain by mail order from a nursery in California since no one in Brooklyn, New York, stocked a fig tree. My grandfather gave this fig tree a name; he called it “*Speranza*”. I must admit this didn't make much of an impression on me as a young boy. I had no knowledge of my grandfather's Italian language. Like most children of first generation immigrants, my parents wanted their children to be real Americans; this meant speaking only English so we would fit in to the predominantly Anglo culture.

It wasn't until many years later, about a decade after my grandfather had passed away, that employment circumstances led me to acquire a working knowledge of my ancestors' language. One night as I was reading through the Italian Bible, a legacy from my grandfather, I ran across the following note which he had written in the margin opposite Mark 13:28: “*speranza d'Israeli*” = “*speranza fico albero*”. Loosely translated this phrase means: “the fig tree represents the hope of Israel” (hope = *speranza*). To my grandfather, associating the name “*Speranza*” with his fig tree must have been his way of remembering, every time he looked at this plant, the hope of Israel.

What I did not know in 1946, and in fact did not even appreciate until some 30 years later, was that planting a fig tree in Brooklyn was a tremendous act of faith. It seems this is about 600 miles too far north to expect a realistic chance of cultivating such a tree.

Not only did my grandfather need to plant it in a sheltered spot with plenty of sunshine (or at least as much as one could expect in Brooklyn), but he also had to take many other measures necessary to insure the survival of the tree. I

remember how much tender loving care my grandfather lavished upon his fig tree to keep it healthy and fruitful. I recall him saying many times that this was a type of God's concern for His people Israel.¹ Besides the usual fertilizing and bug spraying that grandpa performed on his vegetables, and on myriad species of flowers in his garden, the fig tree required extra special care to survive in an urban environment. As autumn ended, he wrapped the entire trunk and major branches with tarpaper tape to protect the fig tree from frost. He also raised a mound of earth several feet high around the whole perimeter of the tree. Later in the winter he would add extra wind buffers by placing burlap cloth on stakes near the tree to shield it. The thing that I remember most, with a degree of awe, was the numerous times, when severe winter cold threatened, that my grandfather would shovel burning coals from his house furnace into several pails and carry them out to the vicinity of the fig tree to relieve the chill.

Figs require full sun all day to ripen palatable fruits. Trees become enormous, and will shade out anything growing beneath. Therefore this is not a fruit tree for small places. Grandpa severely pruned back the tree every year to keep it within the bounds of his postage-stamp yard. Miraculously it survived beyond any reasonable expectations, and we enjoyed bountiful fruit from this tree until grandpa passed away in 1964.

The common fig tree bears a first crop, called the breba crop, in the spring on the previous season's growth. Then it bears a second crop in the fall on the new growth; this is known as the main crop. As soon as the leaves come out in the spring, this early crop of small figs develops and is ready to eat six to eight weeks later, when the leaves are full-grown. Therefore, when Jesus saw the fig tree with well-developed leaves (Mark 11:13), he had every reasonable expectation of finding fruit, but he didn't. The passage in Mark goes on to say, "*For the time of figs was not yet.*"²

The firstfruits crop is smaller than the later harvest; while they are edible, they lack the full sweetness of the larger figs that develop on the new growth in the fall. My grandmother generally used the spring crop for cooking and preserving as jams, while the fall crop was usually eaten freshly picked off the tree, or wrapped with prosciutto as an appetizer, or alternatively served after the meal as a dessert soaked with a little Marsala. In Bible times the variety of fruits and sweets we have today did not exist, and freshly picked ripened figs were a diet mainstay, as ubiquitous as bread. Thus, the fig tree is a truly fitting symbol to represent a highly desired fruitful nation; consequently in Scriptures it is used to depict Israel. When the fig tree of Israel proved unfruitful, it was no longer profitable to keep it.

"He has laid waste My vine, and ruined My fig tree; He has stripped it bare and thrown it away; its branches are made white" (Joel 1:7, NKJV; see also 1:12; 2:22).

The connection of the fig tree with the *hope* of Israel comes from the words given by the Lord Jesus Christ in the Mount Olivet prophecy:

"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you

also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near — at the doors!” (Mark 13:28,29, NKJV; also see Matt 24:32 and Luke 21:29).

As we have demonstrated above, when the fig tree exhibits fully developed leaves its first fruits are ready for harvest. Thus the parable of the fig tree given in the Olivet prophecy foretells the rebirth of that nation, and gives promise of a time when the faithful will be gathered for the harvest of the redeemed — this was *the* “hope” that founded our community. This is *Elpis* Israel — the *Hope* of Israel.

In the 19th century, the writings of our community were sprinkled liberally with the Greek word for hope, “*elpis*”. To our early brethren this word pointed invariably to the One “hope”, which meant the hope of the restoration of the Jews to their ancient homeland. From the writings of Bro. John Thomas we read:

“Hence 1866–7 promises fairly for momentous events. I do not know the day or the hour of the advent, but I have full assurance of faith and **hope** that it is nigh, even at the doors. I doubt whether I shall have time for the writing and publishing of Eureka III. I **hope** not, for the present state of existence is anything but congenial to a rightly constituted, and Spiritually enlightened mind.

“The termination, then, of 1865 in the passover seasons of 1866 introduces Micah’s 40 years. Sincerely do I **hope** that this will prove to be the case. It will be better for the saints than having to wait till 1868–9. The 2400 is a period of 48 jubilees. There have elapsed from the Exodus to A.D. 1860 the whole number of 3486 years, which are equal to 69 jubilees and 36 years. Hence, the 70th jubilee from the Exodus will end A.D. 1874, being 3500 years from the passage of the Red Sea. A.D. 1865 = A.M. 5954; hence the world will not be 6000 years old until 46 more years have elapsed — that is, till A.D. 1911.”³

Ten years later Bro. Robert Roberts wrote:

“All these events (*i.e., current happenings that transpired in 1875*) are so signally in the channel of our expectations (entertained for many years past on the strength of the sure word of the prophecy), that we cannot but feel, on entering the new year, both thanksgiving for the almost visible operations of the hand of God in the affairs of the nations during the past twelve months; and strong **hopes** that a much longer period will not elapse without the great occurrence to which they all point, and on which many hearts in various parts of the world are set with strong desire: the re-appearance of him to whom is appointed the great work of breaking up the system of the present evil world, and establishing a new order of things, in which, after a transition period of terrible experiences of judgment, all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Christ’s own heart is much more intently on the situation than ours can ever be: and while he saith, ‘Surely, I come quickly,’ doth not every true heart fervently respond, ‘Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly’ ”? ⁴

Obviously, both of these predictions proved wrong. When my grandfather planted his fig tree in 1946, it was precisely at the time when the dire news of the

magnitude of the Holocaust on the Jewish people was being fully revealed to the world. It was probably the lowest ebb in all the long painful history of the people of Israel. I vividly recall several neighbors, and not a few of my grandpa's non-Christadelphian relatives, belittling his *hope* in the fig tree of Israel. Yet only two years later, as we all know, the fig tree was planted again in the ancient land of the patriarchs. In spite of all odds against them, approximately 600,000 Jews defeated a consortium of armies from lands with a combined 100 million inhabitants and established themselves as a nation after almost two millennia of dispersion. It was a lesson in patience that we need to learn again and again:

"For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come; it will not tarry" (Hab 2:3).

We cannot stop hoping, because the concept of time to God exists in an entirely different framework from our own: *"For a thousand years is as one day with the LORD. And the Lord is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish."*⁵ We can never give up hope, because hope is one of the three pillars of our life in Christ: *"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three..."*⁶ We need to realize that hope is not just a yearning for prophetic fulfillment, but a first principle that should energize our lives. The apostle Paul makes this clear when he sets forth "hope" as an essential first principle of our faith in his letter to the Ephesians:

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling" (Eph 4:4, NKJV).

He amplifies this belief in hope as a first principle in his discourse to the Roman Ecclesia:

"For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?" (Rom 8:24, NKJV).

If we are saved by "hope" we can have no doubt about this concept being a profound first principle. In this passage the apostle remarkably mentions the word "hope" four times in the same sentence. Any decent English language editor would surely have apoplexy reading such syntax. We can have no doubt however that the apostle Paul knew exactly what he was doing and in the Greek it was a way of being supremely emphatic.⁷ Indeed a life lived without hope is a futile existence. We will certainly all face death — it is only a matter of time: *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable" (1Co 15:19, NKJV).* It is this hope of an eternal future that brightens our lives. This powerful hope should get us past all disappointments and all sorrows. No matter how saddened we may be by life's tragedies, we should not let anything dampen our faith, for we know for certain the day will eventually come when we will be redeemed.

"Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope" (Psa 16:9).

The certainty of our hope (*of the resurrection*) is confirmed by the sure word of prophecy, whereby we have witnessed either directly (as in the case of us elders), or through recorded history, "the hope of Israel" being fulfilled in 1948, with that nation being resurrected from the valley of dry bones (cp Ezek 37). The hope of Israel, *Elpis Israel*, that our forbearers looked for has occurred and gives us as-

surance that our own hopes will ultimately be rewarded:

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope” (1Th 4:13, NKJV).

We are the people who have been rooted and grafted into the fig tree (*“If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”*: Gal 3:29). It is only reasonable, then, that the Lord expects us also to yield fruit in due season, both individually and collectively as an ecclesia. We have seen the rebirth of the fig tree of Israel; a nation replanted in its ancient land. Never in history has such a remarkable event occurred. Israel even recognizes the fig tree as one of its ancient symbols, as witnessed by a postage stamp issued to that effect. Though we may not know the day or the hour, or even if we will live until the Lord Jesus Christ returns, yet we know with certainty that it will occur. We have been privileged to witness the Jewish nation restored — a sure sign of prophecy fulfilled and a clear indication of the hope of even better things to come. Therefore, brethren and sisters, we should not live lives of despair; whatever is troubling us will ultimately be conquered:

“Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, ‘Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you’ ” (Isa 35:3,4, NKJV).

My grandfather and I spent many a warm summer evening sitting under his vine and fig tree in his garden in Brooklyn, talking about the Word of God, and life in general. But I know now what I never appreciated then, that his *fico speranza* — his **fig tree of hope** — was his way of looking forward with **hope** to the day spoken of by the prophets:

“But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it” (Mic 4:4; cp also Zech 3:10).

My prayer is that we may all be so blessed, to sit under a vine and fig tree in the garden planted by the Lord Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God, in that day when he comes again. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(Next: A visual and verbal look at the “Bema”)

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Notes:

1. See Isaiah 5.
2. The NIV here says, “It was not the season for figs.” Fig trees around Jerusalem normally begin to get leaves in March or April but do not produce figs until their leaves are all out in June. This tree was an exception in that it was already, at Passover time, full of leaves (NIV Study Notes).
3. The Christadelphian Magazine, Vol. 3, 1866, p. 26.
4. The Christadelphian Magazine, Vol. 13, 1876, p. 39.
5. 2 Peter 3:8,9.
6. 1 Corinthians 13:13.
7. In English we use an exclamation point to be emphatic, whereas in ancient Greek such punctuation did not exist and emphasis was made by repetition. This is why, for example, we often read Jesus saying “Verily, verily.”

Apologetics

The Hard Questions:

(28) Providence: How Can I Sense God's Presence?

The most recent article in this series [February 2008] covered one of the two ways we directly experience God, in prayer. This article offers some observations about providence, the other way we connect with God. It also reinforces the position of the previous one: God is more interested in our spiritual growth than our temporal welfare. We have a number of nooks and crannies to explore. However, the main thrust is pretty simple and straightforward: *We should consider the mishaps, difficulties, and pains of life as spiritual growing pains. Furthermore, we should consider them as much acts of Divine intervention as those instances of rescue or redirection that we readily attribute to providence.* It's easy to escape from a near disaster and comment, "God interceded on my behalf," but these words might not come so readily in difficult times, when the disaster overtakes us. When we recognize that God always *works for good* — but does not always *work good things*, as we measure them — we are on the right track to discerning providence.

As with the previous article, I am not attempting a full account of providence, but only of those aspects that relate to the Hard Question, "How Can I Sense God's Presence?" If we set our providence-detector only to "deliverance by unusual and inexplicable circumstances", we will miss most of what God is doing in our lives, and we will incur an increased risk of disillusionment if a hoped for deliverance fails to materialize.

I will add here another reminder: when we are discussing providence, we are discussing experiential knowledge, not book knowledge, of God. Almost any believer will agree that God does indeed work in his or her life, but how many of us feel entirely confident that we do meet God daily in our lives? How many believers who can navigate the high seas with their book knowledge feel marooned when it comes to having any sense of really engaging the Divine, even occasionally? Unmet expectations can result in disappointment, and perhaps even disillusionment. If we have unrealistic expectations of how God works in our lives, then we can find ourselves in big trouble, regardless of our intellectual grasp of Bible precepts.

How do we decide what is providential?

An event will typically earn the "Divine intervention" label when some unusual or unusually timed event rescues or redirects us from an imminent or potentially untoward occurrence, *or* the event provides some benefit or temporal blessing. The essential criteria for deeming an occurrence as "providential" are:

- (1) the occurrence provides some positive temporal benefit for us, and
- (2) the means of intervention involves some specific timing, or unusual or unlikely turns of events.

Consider this fictional, but entirely plausible, event that would likely elicit major beeps and flashes from anyone's providence-detector: A young family is on their way home from a wonderful week at Bible school. Shortly after exiting a narrow, twisting mountain road, their vehicle suffers a steering failure and they run gently off the side of a straight road into a cornfield, where they emerge from the car shaken, but unharmed. Had this malfunction occurred just a mile up the road, they would likely have rolled down a steep ravine. The parents comfort the frightened but safe children, and offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the divine intervention afforded them. Seems like a clear case of providential intervention, but let's ask a few questions that might generate some further reflection:

1. Do atheists ever experience "close calls?" How do we know when God specifically intervenes or when an event is just "happenstance"?
2. If the family had an uneventful ride all the way home, would God *not* have been involved? In other words, if a near-miss signals God's presence, does the lack of any near-miss signal God's absence? In short, does uneventful equal non-providential?
3. What if a truck had gone out of control and slammed into another car that passed by on the mountain road just moments after the family's car was in that spot? Was it "providential" that another family was wiped out?
4. What if the above situation happened, but the family never learned about their close call and had an otherwise uneventful ride home? Would they give thanks to God for sparing their lives?
5. Suppose there was an accident on that road not ten seconds after the family's car went by, but 20 seconds, or a minute. Is this still "providential?" What about 10 minutes, or an hour, or however long? Where do we draw the "close call" line that seems to delineate providence? We all routinely drive on roads that have had fatal accidents. Every one of us has been exactly at the spot of a fatality many times, but have we felt our life was spared?
6. What if the power steering failed during the winding mountainous descent and the car plunged into the ravine with grave results? Would this not be providential? Did an angel miss his assignment?
7. What if the power steering went out during the descent, but as the family's car was going off the road, it collided with another vehicle traveling in the opposite direction? This collision prevented the family from plunging into the ravine and certain death; the occupants of both cars had serious but not devastating injuries. How would we rate that outcome on the providence-meter?

Can we determine what is/is not providential?

I pose these questions and alternate scenarios to expose a mistaken notion about discerning God's providential activity: thinking that *there is* actually some way to tell what is providential. Each of us will have our providence-detector tuned differently, and we can become like Pharisees trying to define exactly what constitutes "work" on the Sabbath. The paradigm won't accommodate how God really works.

We can never establish any criteria that will conclusively distinguish between the normal and the paranormal. Red Seas opening up might be obvious cases, but not much else in our lives is. Some people tend to think God winds up the clock and lets it run on its own, while others see God involved with us at every step and every moment, directly controlling every event of our lives. There is no one answer. How providence works is a plastic and systemic process. The real situation is far more complex than locating a level at which God works; it is an interactive process between God and believer wherein God works with us in accordance to our faith. In short, for those who believe God is in everything, He is. But for those who see the world as essentially a series of naturally succeeding steps, and occurrences that run on their own with perhaps only the exceptional interposition of God, for them the world works that way. It's interactive and complex, but that's the gist; we do, in a sense, "create" a God of our own projection (Luke 19:22) and then live with that image of God.

It's not the point of this article, as I said, to discuss *how* or *to what extent* God works in our lives, although our position on that issue absolutely shifts our perspective on the question that this article does want to address: "How do we *sense* God's presence?" That is a different question. If God is indeed working with us directly, and we don't sense it, we've missed much. If God is working indirectly, through some seemingly ordinary means that don't fit the standard criteria of "clearly providential", we can miss that also. We can have "false negatives", that is, instances where God worked directly in our life and we didn't recognize it; we thought it was just life happening as it ordinarily does. We can also have "false positives", that is, attributing some event to the direct hand of God (something that wouldn't have happened otherwise) when in fact the event was a normal occurrence that would have happened anyway. The issue is not whether or not God directly or indirectly caused an event; the issue is whether a specific occurrence is some deviation from the ordinary that qualifies as "providential."

Asking the right question

So our question is not, "How do we know if God is working this specifically?" The better question is, "How do I sense God's presence, however and whatever and whenever that presence may be sensed?" The answer to the last question, the "whenever" question, is the key, and it has an easy answer: *always*. God is always with us. The "however" question is easy to answer but much harder to appreciate in real life: God works in every possible way.

The main issue in how we sense providence is not so much how and when God works; rather, it's how *we perceive* God working, and the most commonly used filter or criterion here is an extraordinarily poor one: our own comfort level. When we receive (figuratively) water from the rock in the desert, we say, "God is working in my life"; but it is the same God who is taking us through the parched land. When we walk through the land of abundant water, we drink very well indeed, but we may not perceive the same God and the same providence that brought the water from the rock in the desert.

I would like to take you back a couple of years to an earlier article on theodicy, the “problem of evil” article with which I started this series. I started with theodicy because it is the leading route to disbelief. People, in general, have lost more faith over that one issue than probably all other reasons combined. It’s a huge problem, not from a theological perspective (where it’s quite resolvable) but from the human perspective. On this level we gauge that an all-powerful God could easily have prevented ethnic cleansing and Huntington’s Disease and tsunamis. These evils do exist, *ergo* an omnipotent, omnibenevolent God (of the “Judeo-Christian tradition”) does not exist. However, this argument is based entirely on a *human* perception of evil, and thus fails entirely to address the issue of evil from *God’s* perspective, and that’s the issue at hand.

People lose their faith, sometimes, when they encounter what they perceive as evil. They do not see that God is providentially acting in their lives to bring about faith. If we set our “providence detector” to only register unusual beneficial events, then we will miss providence when it occurs in an uncomfortable fashion.

Properly perceived providence

Our late and highly beloved brother, Gary Burns, did not suffer from this disillusion. Struck down with acute myelocytic leukemia while yet a very active man in his early 50s, Gary knew that the disease was God’s providential way of teaching him faith, dependence on God, humility, and love. He never felt closer to God in his entire life of good health and prosperity than in his last year and a half of misery (from both the disease and the draconian treatment regimen). When I visited with Gary in his hospital room shortly before he died, he told me God had used this disease to purify his heart. God was not present in a miracle cure or even in any “ordinary” cure. The chemo failed and the bone marrow transplant failed. Massive prayer on his behalf failed. It was not God’s will that Gary would survive his leukemia, but Gary felt the closeness of God in a sense that those who live without tragedy and suffering might never experience. Gary’s providence-detector wasn’t set to his physical comfort, but to spiritual development through trial.

God clearly tells us that He is very close to us when we suffer, and these chastenings are clearly acts of providence. If our providence-detector fails to register them, then we ask, “Where is God?” when He’s sitting right next to us. Scripture teaches us that through physical and emotional pain and privation we develop dependence on God, faith, perspective on life, priorities, and more (e.g., James 1:12, Heb 12:5-11).

Eagles’ wings only?

*“They that wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,
They will mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint” (Isa 40:31).*

Some time ago I heard a powerful meditation on this beloved passage. The speaker was a minister who had lost a young daughter to leukemia. He recounted his prayers and hopes for God’s miracle deliverance. That didn’t happen. He recounted

his prayers that the doctors could find a cure or somehow bring remediation of her disease. That didn't happen, either. When his daughter died, in his hour of utter despair, he prayed only that somehow God could give him strength to go on just one day at a time.

The speaker related his experience in terms of the three metaphors in Isaiah 40:31. Sometimes we mount up on eagles' wings; that's when God works an obvious miracle and rescues us from dreadful circumstance. Sometimes there's no miracle, but God does provide (often subtly and indirectly) the means by which we can resolve the problems that beset us, and thus we run and do not grow weary. Lastly, there are those times when we neither fly nor run, but we do manage to walk without fainting. There is neither deliverance nor resolution, but we manage to walk anyway, while God's presence keeps our burdens from crushing us.

Miracles still happen, and I don't discount anyone's tale of deliverance or rescue that is attributed to Divine intervention. I'm also quite sure that God works in many ways that we fail to recognize because we have our providence-detectors set on "rescue". However, God is most present when we walk and do not faint. It is when the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune overwhelm us, when the whips and scorns of time assail us, when we don't fly anywhere but sink in a sea of troubles... it is then we are most likely to encounter the God of providence. It may be our false expectation that God works only in "eagles' wings" experiences that quashes our sensitivity to His loving presence at all other times.

(Next: Dealing with Disillusionment)

David Levin (Baltimore, MD)

Take a little honey

"If it must be, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift — a little balm and a little honey" (Gen 43:11).

That was the advice Jacob gave to his sons when they were going down into Egypt to buy food. They took many gifts: balm, spices, myrrh, nuts and money. But wise old Jacob added, 'Take a little honey.' People may take with them on the journey of their lives ability, training, initiative, ambition and so many good things. Yet they fail because they forget kindness. If they had been just a little sweeter in spirit what a difference it would have made. We can learn how to be able to disagree without being disagreeable. Simple, warm kindness will work wonders. Some say this is a hard, tough world and if we ever expect to get anywhere, we have to be hard-boiled. That kindness stuff, they say, might work at a Sunday school outing, but it has no place in business. But kindness works everywhere. On the journey of life don't forget to "take a little honey."

Charles Lamb

Youth

A Baptism in Austin Leander

A Letter Requesting Baptism

Dear Christadelphians,

God has always been evident in my life. I have gone to Sunday school and memorial meeting since before I can remember. Every Sunday I was taught countless lessons, morals, and beliefs, each of them centering upon a single book.

I believe the Bible is the inspired word of God. It relates to us the history and laws of God's chosen people, Israel, prophecies that have been fulfilled and others that have yet to happen, the gospel concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and the commandments to be obeyed. I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, given to fulfill the Covenants of Promise. He was born a mortal man, baptized, given the Holy Spirit, tempted, and found sinless. He then ministered to his people, performing miracles on a massive scale. He was crucified, by Jews and Gentiles alike, to offer us the hope of salvation, and the possibility of repentance and deliverance. He was raised from the dead three days later, was made immortal, and ascended to Heaven to sit at his Father's right hand. At some time in the future, he will return to earth to set up his Father's kingdom. At this time there will be a resurrection of the responsible and a judgment. Christ will reign for 1,000 years over the entire earth, thus realizing the entirety of the promises given to Noah, Abraham, and David.

It is this belief that makes me responsible. The next step in my walk with God is to be baptized into His Son's saving name.

I do not pretend to understand even close to the amount you do, but I know enough — enough to be at that judgment, and enough to understand I have to devote my life to trying to be on the right side instead of the left.

*Thank you for your time and consideration,
Hannah Hill*

After an interview, Hannah was baptized June 1 (see News and Notices). Before the baptism, Bro. Ethan Bearden gave an introductory talk.

Hannah: A Name to be Favored

Names are something unique, something special. We use them all the time. Names are words that at one time expressed meaningful identities. They conveyed meanings that the individual was meant to live up to. For example, my name is Ethan Joel Bearden. Of course Bearden isn't in the Bible, but Ethan and Joel both are.

Ethan means “steadfast”. Joel means “in the Lord”. Combine the two and you get “steadfast in the Lord”, quite a name to live up to.

Other notable names in the Bible include:

- a. Jacob, meaning “heel catcher”, because he reached out and grasped Esau’s heel at birth;
- b. Abraham, meaning “father of a multitude” — this was the promise made to him; and
- c. Paul, meaning “little”, the name given to Saul of Tarsus after his conversion, probably to remind him that, without God’s strength, he was weak and little.

And so, in the spirit of names, and in the light of today’s events, we have read, in 1 Samuel 1, the story of Hannah. In this story Hannah is confronted by Eli while she is praying. Note the power of this prayer, how fervent she was. Have you ever been fervent in prayer? Praying so hard that you can’t hold it in your heart; it has to escape through your lips? Imagine, praying so fiercely that you even sway a little, unable to keep still, because the power of your prayer is so strong that keeping it inside is too much. This is the kind of prayer that Hannah prayed.

Eli, the high priest comes to her:

“How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee” (v 14).

Of course we know that Hannah wasn’t drunk or under any sort of influence other than her own prayer. Still, she remains calm as she replies to Eli:

“No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto” (vv 15,16).

Note the word Belial. It is capitalized, like a name, signifying importance, suggesting that Hannah emphasized this word. According to Strong’s, Belial means “unprofitable, worthless, ungodly, especially in regards to *man*.” Hannah was pleading not to be considered a worthless or ungodly person, but rather one favored by God. How do we know this? Why, look at what the concordance says about Hannah’s name. Hannah means “favor, or favored.” She was asking not to be considered a daughter of Belial, but rather Favored (Hannah) by God.

Now how does this play into the issue of baptism? The key is in her prayer, and in her gift from God:

“She was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head” (vv 10,11).

She prayed for a son, *fervently*, with tears and sorrow, eagerly asking for a child. But more than that, she prayed for a child so that she could give him back to God.

When a woman gives birth, the connection is so strong that one could say the life of the mother and child are intertwined, almost as one. Thus Hannah was praying for life, but only to give that very life back to God.

What do we see here then? It is a baptism, the very reason we are here today! After all, what is it to be baptized?

But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Rom 6:22).

Baptism is a confession of sins, a plea with God to become His servant, and thus to *give back* that life, just as Hannah gave back her son, the one thing she so dearly wanted. Hannah speaks to us all in this respect, for we too have come before God, praying through the high priest, begging for a new life, a new beginning that we may devote to God. We are not asking for a child when we are baptized, but rather we are asking that we *become* the child, born again. Born again we become children of God, as opposed to followers of men.

What a beautiful image we have here. And what a lovely name is born out of this prayer. Hannah was asking, in effect, to be baptized, just as *our* Hannah has asked, to gain new life in order to give it back to God, to prove she is worthy of the name “favored by God”.

And that is why we are here today. We have another Hannah, who has also confessed her faith, who has prayed to God that He might give her a new life to be given back to Him. It is not a child she prays for, but rather to be a child, a servant favored by God. She has separated herself from the ways of Belial, the ways of man, and instead has chosen to be like Hannah of old, fulfilling her name, and beginning her new life in the Lord. In this moment, we can rejoice in seeing a beautiful event unfolding: another young one choosing God over man.

In a few moments, Hannah, you are going to be immersed in the waters of baptism. This symbolizes the death and resurrection of Christ, and your rebirth as well, born again as a servant of God. Before we go I would like to end on a few words of advice for you — and of course we all may benefit from these things.

You are taking a big step. Great responsibility has been placed upon you. You are choosing a path of righteousness, of getting rid of the ways of sin. Bear in mind that this is the beginning: it is a rebirth, not an ultimate salvation. You are just getting started, just setting out. Until now, you have been packing, getting ready. Now you are beginning your journey. It is not easy. Being baptized, taking on the saving name of Jesus Christ, does not remove hardships and trials. You will be tempted and, Lord willing, you will overcome. The path is narrow, but it is a good path, a favored path. It is a wonderful opportunity you are choosing, the chance to serve God, forever, in his Kingdom. Always keep that in the forefront of your mind.

Never be afraid to pray for help, to pray for guidance, even in the simplest of issues. Rely on God fully.

We are here for you. Just as you reach out to others with helping hands, never hesitate to reach out to us for help. We are your family in Christ Jesus. There will

always be a lot to learn. You are now a role model more than ever before, to the young people as well as the older. We have just as much to learn from you as you have to learn from us.

Above all, seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness. And so many wonderful things will be given to you.

Hallelujah. Amen.

Ethan Joel Bearden

Before the breaking of bread, Rec. Bro. Fred Bearden (Ethan's father) welcomed our new sister Hannah into fellowship.

Welcome to the Family

Sis. Hannah, It has been a great pleasure for all of us here to watch you grow up in this Sunday school. We have all come to know you as a very kind and, at times, a very soft-spoken person. However, your conduct as a young person, your confession of faith, and your obedience to God through baptism into a new life (a life you are willing to give to God) have spoken volumes to convince us all that your parents named you well. We realize we must remain in God's favor in order to receive eternal life, and we pray that you will always remain in His favor.

It is my privilege and great pleasure to represent the brothers and sisters of this ecclesia, as well as all Christadelphians worldwide who meet on the basis of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith, in offering you the "right hand of fellowship".

Always seek out your new family in times of your own need and be ready to help when others need you. Remember this is a very imperfect family. By joining us, you have helped us take one more step toward a more perfect family, in the glory to God.

May God bless you and keep you! Remember to be strong and of a good courage, just as your father reminded you yesterday. May your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Fred Bearden

*"O give me Samuel's ear,
The open ear, O Lord,
Alive and quick to hear
Each whisper of Thy Word;
Like him to answer at Thy call,
And to obey Thee first of all"*

(Hymn 146, James Burns)

History

President Truman and the State of Israel

A number of important dates and events define the modern State of Israel, most of them wars and conflicts: the Suez War (1956), the Six-Day War (1967), the Yom Kippur War (1973), the First Lebanon War (1982), the First Intifada (1987), the Oslo Accords (1992), which provided for the establishment of a Palestinian state within Israel, the Second Intifada (2000), and the Second Lebanon War (2006). But most prominent of all was, of course, the War of Independence (1948).

On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was officially established with the words of David Ben-Gurion in Israel's Declaration of Independence: "By virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, [we] hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel." There is also a less well-known date that is almost as important in this context: November 29, 1947 — the day the U.N. passed Resolution 181, and the day that marked the initial beginning of Israel's decades-long struggle for independence and recognition. For the next six months, prior to the official May 1948 declaration, Israel fought for its independence and even its very existence while the world sat back and watched.

Israel, without Christ in the world

This year, 2008, marks an important milestone in Israel's history — not one of war or defense, but of growth and development, and of success retrieved from the very brink of failure. This year is the 60th anniversary of the birth of the State of Israel. Sixty years of struggle and fighting, bitterness and anxiety. Sixty years of passion for freedom and hope for the future. Israel was born out of the fires of Nazi Germany and continued to be paid for with yet more sacrifices in its struggle for nation status. It has grown and developed through the 20th and 21st centuries, despite overwhelming odds against it.

The irony is that, while all of this may be impressive from a historical perspective, it is Israel's continuing failure to recognize God and His Son that leaves us, for now, unsatisfied.

Of course we take an interest in events and happenings involving Israel. It is the Land of Promise, the inheritance God promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. It will be the center of His soon-coming Kingdom and the place where God will dwell with man. But we also need to remember that the Jews are still lacking a belief in Jesus as their Messiah. Most practicing Jews do acknowledge Jesus as a historical figure, but to them he is primarily a "Christian" figure who means very little to them. Some might admit he was a prophet, but still feel that Christians have been carried away with their belief in him. And just as in our own society, some won't acknowledge him at all, while others couldn't care less, one way or the other.

Who can blame them for their lack of interest in Christ, given the examples that Christianity has provided? The mainstream Church incorporates polytheism in the guise of monotheism, a devil with his demons resembling nothing so much as a pagan deity, and a history of intolerance toward the Jews (and no, not just by the Catholic Church) over the last two millennia. Christian theology has changed so much from the first century, when true Christians still met in Jewish synagogues and argued in the Temple courts. Even modern Jewish theology bears the marks of those 2,000 years of dispersion from their land. Absent the correcting influences of God and His message, as delivered through His prophets and His Son, the Jews are at least as far from God as the priests and Pharisees were in the time of Christ.

Despite this, they are still God's people

But there are still Biblical aspects to this most improbable of nations and its history. God's people may have left Him and wandered far from His sheltering wings, but they are still His people and He still has plans for their future, and ours. In observing the modern world, there is perhaps nothing as remarkable as seeing God's hands almost visibly pulling strings and orchestrating events on the world stage.

Just such an example was hinted at in Richard Holbrooke's article "Washington's Battle Over Israel's Birth", published recently in *The Washington Post* (and reprinted here by permission). It is a brief account of President Harry Truman's efforts in support of the birth and recognition of the State of Israel. Holbrooke focuses on the immediate happenings around the May 14, 1948, declaration of independence. We see a president who, against the advice of some of his most senior and trusted advisers, purposefully chooses to support the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine. It was not a politically expedient thing to do, despite the part Jews played in American politics at the time. And as in today's world, so in 1948: a Jewish state in the Middle East did not go over well with its Arab countries.

Did Truman choose Israel, or did God choose Truman?

What was Truman's reasoning for recognizing the nation of Israel? What did the United States stand to gain from aligning itself with Israel in the face of both national and international opposition? Why did Truman put himself out to help Israel when he had little to gain but a lot to lose by so doing? Holbrooke suggests this was a moral choice for Truman, as stated by one of the principals, presidential aide Clark Clifford. He suggests that Truman acted out of a sense of duty to support a potential democracy in the face of opposition, and that it was also the reasonable thing to do for a people which had just suffered, and barely survived, the Nazi death camps.

Presidents, prime ministers, and other rulers may seem to come to power by selection processes or by political maneuvers, but to Bible believers there is no doubt that God picks individual leaders for His own purposes. Truman's support of Israel may best be explained by this larger divine purpose.

However, Truman's personal history seems to explain God's choice. He had a religious upbringing and was well read on both Biblical and historical topics. He grew up with Jewish neighbors, was close friends with their son, and would help them perform necessary household functions forbidden to Jews on the Sabbath. After World War I, he became a friend and business partner of a fellow Army veteran, a Jew named Eddie Jacobson, who would later prove to be of considerable influence in the State of Israel.

Doubts and misgivings

Despite all of this, however, Truman still exhibited the mild anti-Semitism that was typical in America at the time. Numerous private letters from Truman to friends and family indicate a stubborn annoyance with and resistance to Jewish lobbying. Upon taking office in 1945, President Truman alternated between supporting and criticizing Jewish initiatives at home and abroad, as well as the Zionists' aims of creating a Jewish state in Palestine. He endorsed increased immigration of Jews from Europe to the United States while at the same time decrying the appeals for U.S. troops to support a Jewish state. He refused Jewish lobbying delegations at times while still secretly meeting with Chaim Weizmann, leader of the Zionist movement, and the man who would become the first President of the State of Israel. Public support for Israel rose and fell, as did the President's attitudes. Prior to the very public return of the refugee ship *Exodus* from Palestine to Germany in July 1947, public sentiment was fairly split. However, upon seeing film and photos of the ship, the condition of its inhabitants, and their treatment on either end of their journey, many Americans made a pronounced swing toward the partitioning of Palestine.

As discussion of the partition of the land of Palestine (U.N. Resolution 181) progressed in late 1947, pressure also increased on Truman. Despite general leanings toward helping the Jews, Truman was hesitant, due to the sizeable numbers of troops thought necessary to enforce the ruling, as well as the impact on existing Middle East relationships. Significant members of his staff and of the State Department were also distinctly opposed to partitioning Palestine. However, in an October 1947 meeting brokered by his friend Eddie Jacobson, Truman was finally convinced by Chaim Weizmann to support the partition initiative, rather than a U.N. trusteeship or a scaled-down partition plan (one that gave significant portions of Palestine to the Arabs).

As the vote approached, Truman aligned U.S. policy in support of partitioning. Initial polling of voting countries indicated that the resolution would not get the two-thirds majority necessary for ratification. Voting was pushed back several times as lobbying on both sides increased, even including the private threat of a rubber embargo of Liberia by the U.S. manufacturer Firestone. As late as the morning of November 29, achieving a two-thirds majority was still in doubt. However, the resolution did pass with a vote of 33 in favor, 13 opposed, 10 abstentions, and one absent. (A change of only three votes would have defeated the measure.) Countries that opposed the resolution were Afghanistan, Cuba, Egypt, Greece, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and

Yemen. Eleven of the nations were Arab or Islamic countries, or had significant Muslim populations, while both Cuba and Greece were opposed to it based on disagreements with the United States.

But U.S. support of partitioning was also contingent on a peaceful existence between Jewish immigrants and their Arab neighbors, since Truman still did not want to use troops to support the Jews in Palestine. War broke out in December 1947, when Arab forces within the disputed territory of Israel, as well as neighboring countries, began fighting for every inch of land the Jews sought to claim. With very little support, and quite a bit of resistance from local and international sources, the fledgling State of Israel pushed forward with securing its proposed borders in advance of the May 14, 1948, deadline. But this very fighting, without the aid of U.S. troops, allowed Truman to continue his support for Israel, even if privately for the moment.

Opposition to Truman's choice

Outside the land of Israel, political winds were shifting, sometimes for and sometimes against Israel's fight. The divide between Truman and his State Department continued to widen after his support for the partition in November. One occasion in the months leading up to May 14 highlights this continuing rift. In March the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Warren Austin, announced publicly that the U.S. did not consider partitioning a viable option any longer, despite Truman's support for the plan. Truman did not find out about this until the next day, and he did not react well. From Truman's diary we read: "This morning I find that the State Department has reversed my Palestine policy... I'm now in the position of a liar and a double-crosser." Further meetings with Weizmann in April 1948 resolved the issue personally for Truman, but still left the U.S. with a seemingly divided foreign policy regarding Palestine, since it had first supported partitioning but then publicly condemned it.

Truman was also personally informed, a month in advance, that the Jews in Palestine would announce the formation of the State of Israel promptly on May 14, 1948, at 6:00 pm Washington time. However, he kept decidedly quiet about it, not even informing the U.S. delegation to the U.N. or anyone in the State Department. On the evening of May 14, a letter was delivered to the President informing him of the State of Israel's declaration of independence and asking for his recognition. The letter was received and signed shortly after 6:00 pm, though the actual announcement of official U.S. recognition of the State of Israel was delayed until 10:00 pm, when the U.N. was no longer in session. Upon hearing the news, U.N. Ambassador Austin resigned, and several countries harshly criticized the U.S. for what they saw as its duplicitous policy.

"In your mother's womb"

However, it was not till the years following the official recognition of the State of Israel that we see more of the remarkable motivation behind Truman's actions. In a 1949 meeting with Truman, the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Isaac Herzog, told him, "God put you in your mother's womb so you would be the instrument to bring

about Israel's rebirth after 2,000 years." A witness to the meeting reports that: "On hearing these words, Truman rose from his chair and, with great emotion, tears glistening in his eyes, he turned to the Chief Rabbi and asked him if his actions for the sake of the Jewish people were indeed to be interpreted thus. Was the hand of the Almighty in the matter?" While this is a remarkable admission from a rabbi, it also shows what Truman thought of his own actions.

"I am Cyrus!"

Later, while visiting a Jewish theological seminary in New York, Truman was introduced by his friend Eddie Jacobson as "the man who helped to create the State of Israel." Truman's response is remarkable on its own merit but also because of the possible insight into Scripture. Interrupting Jacobson, Truman exclaimed, "What do you mean '*helped* create'? I *am* Cyrus. I *am* Cyrus!"

"This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name. For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me... I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight. He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward, says the LORD Almighty" (Isa 45:1-4,13).

"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you — may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem' " (Ezra 1:2).

While one might question whether Truman really fulfilled prophecy or not, Truman's own motive is clear. Over the course of several years, while Israel's very existence was being hotly debated, Truman battled his own mix of emotions and interests. These included support for the Jews, a touch of anti-Semitism, international politics, national concerns, personal friendships, contrary advisers, and a sense of his place in history and God's plan. It is this last factor that shows just what the passages above might have meant to him.

The hand of God

For a brief moment, we may glimpse the hand of God at work in the world. Truman saw it in his own actions and marveled. In the end, however, all the presidents and prime ministers, all the kings and emperors, matter very little. God planned for the Jews to be gathered and restored to their own land. God set the stage and placed the pieces perfectly. He will continue to do so until the time of His Son's return. By comparison, men's plans are absolutely fleeting and inconsequential.

But God's plans are eternal and steadfast. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, one of the prominent figures in the history of the world, and of Israel, testified:

"The Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men... His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?'" (Dan 4:17,34,35).

Adam Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

SPECIAL: Washington's Battle Over Israel's Birth

By Richard Holbrooke

The Washington Post

Wednesday, May 7, 2008

In the celebrations next week surrounding Israel's 60th anniversary, it should not be forgotten that there was an epic struggle in Washington over how to respond to Israel's declaration of independence on May 14, 1948. It led to the most serious disagreement President Harry Truman ever had with his revered secretary of state, George C. Marshall — and with most of the foreign policy establishment. Twenty years ago, when I was helping Clark Clifford write his memoirs, I reviewed the historical record and interviewed all the living participants in that drama. The battle lines drawn then resonate still.

The British planned to leave Palestine at midnight on May 14. At that moment, the Jewish Agency, led by David Ben-Gurion, would proclaim the new (and still unnamed) Jewish state. The neighboring Arab states warned that fighting, which had already begun, would erupt into full-scale war at that moment.

The Jewish Agency proposed partitioning Palestine into two parts — one Jewish, one Arab. But the State and Defense departments backed the British plan to turn Palestine over to the United Nations. In March, Truman privately promised Chaim Weizmann, the future president of Israel, that he would support partition — only to learn the next day that the American ambassador to the United Nations had voted for U.N. trusteeship. Enraged, Truman wrote a private note on his calendar: "The State Dept. pulled the rug from under me today. The first I know about it is what I read in the newspapers! Isn't that hell? I'm now in the position of a liar and double-crosser. I've never felt so low in my life..."

Truman blamed "third and fourth level" State Department officials — especially the director of U.N. affairs, Dean Rusk, and the agency's counselor, Charles Bohlen. But opposition really came from an even more formidable group: the "wise men" who were simultaneously creating the great Truman foreign policy of the late 1940s — among them Marshall, James V. Forrestal, George F. Kennan, Robert Lovett, John J. McCloy, Paul Nitze and Dean Acheson. To overrule State would mean Truman taking on Marshall, whom he regarded as "the greatest living American," a daunting task for a very unpopular president.

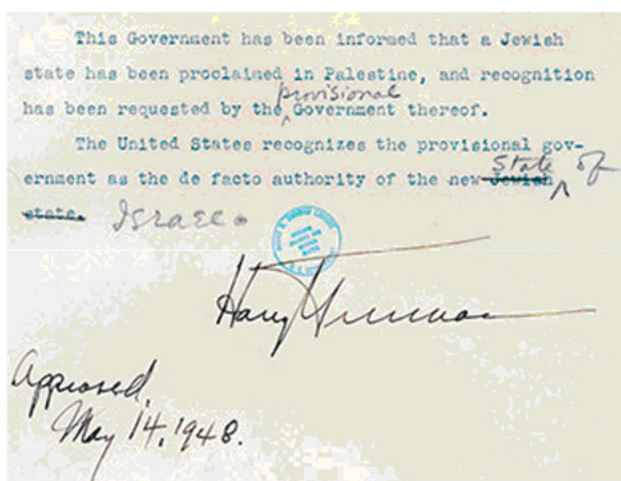
Beneath the surface lay unspoken but real anti-Semitism on the part of some (but not all) policymakers. The position of those opposing recognition was simple — oil, numbers and history. “There are thirty million Arabs on one side and about 600,000 Jews on the other,” Defense Secretary Forrestal told Clifford. “Why don’t you face up to the realities?”

On May 12, Truman held a meeting in the Oval Office to decide the issue. Marshall and his universally respected deputy, Robert Lovett, made the case for delaying recognition — and “delay” really meant “deny”. Truman asked his young aide, Clark Clifford, to present the case for immediate recognition. When Clifford finished, Marshall, uncharacteristically, exploded. “I don’t even know why Clifford is here. He is a domestic adviser, and this is a foreign policy matter. The only reason Clifford is here is that he is pressing a political consideration.”

Marshall then uttered what Clifford would later call “the most remarkable threat I ever heard anyone make directly to a President.” In an unusual top-secret memorandum Marshall wrote for the historical files after the meeting, the great general recorded his own words: “I said bluntly that if the President were to follow Mr. Clifford’s advice and if in the elections I were to vote, I would vote against the President.”

After this stunning moment, the meeting adjourned in disarray. In the next two days, Clifford looked for ways to get Marshall to accept recognition. Lovett, although still opposed to recognition, finally talked a reluctant Marshall into remaining silent if Truman acted. With only a few hours left until midnight in Tel Aviv, Clifford told the Jewish Agency to request immediate recognition of the new state, which still lacked a name. Truman announced recognition at 6:11 p.m. on May 14 — 11 minutes after Ben-Gurion’s declaration of independence in Tel Aviv. So rapidly was this done that in the official announcement, the typed words “Jewish State” are crossed out, replaced in Clifford’s handwriting with “State of Israel.” Thus the United States became the first nation to recognize Israel, as Truman and Clifford wanted. The secret of the Oval Office confrontation held for years, and a crisis in both domestic politics and foreign policy was narrowly averted.

Clifford insisted to me and others in countless discussions over the next 40 years that politics was not at the root of his position — moral conviction was. Not-



ing sharp divisions within the American Jewish community — the substantial anti-Zionist faction among leading Jews included the publishers of both The Post and the New York Times — Clifford had told Truman in his famous 1947 blueprint for Truman’s presidential campaign that “a continued commitment to liberal political and economic policies” was the key to Jewish support.

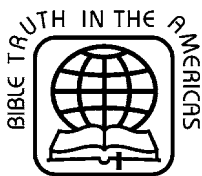
But to this day, many think that Marshall and Lovett were right on the merits and that domestic politics was the real reason for Truman’s decision. Israel, they argue, has been nothing but trouble for the United States.

I think this misses the point. Israel was going to come into existence whether or not Washington recognized it. But without American support from the very beginning, Israel’s survival would have been at even greater risk. Even if European Jewry had not just emerged from the horrors of World War II, it would have been an unthinkable act of abandonment by the United States. Truman’s decision, although opposed by almost the entire foreign policy establishment, was the right one — and despite complicated consequences that continue to this day, it is a decision all Americans should recognize and admire.

[Richard Holbrooke writes a monthly column for The Washington Post. He co-authored Clark Clifford’s *Counsel to the President: A Memoir*.]

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Bible Mission News

La Paz, Bolivia — Lectures and Visitors

In May we arrived in La Paz, Bolivia, to visit the ecclesia and support the preaching activities there. Bro. Jacob and Sis. Fiona Styles, from the Newcastle Ecclesia in Australia, are serving as resident missionaries in this country, along with Sis. Carolyn Thiele of the Cumberland Ecclesia, also in Australia. Carolyn is presently serving in the Spanish Truth Corps. We are pleased to report that Jacob and Fiona now have two boys: Zadok their firstborn and Judah, who was born in La Paz on April 9, 2008.

Special lectures delivered by Bre. Hugo Petrilli (Rosario, Argentina) and Don Luff (Canada) were advertised by placing ads in newspapers, handing out flyers, and sending invitations to those on the contact database. Fifteen visitors attended on Friday, May 2, and ten on Saturday, May 3, as well as several friends who have been visiting the ecclesia on a regular basis. One woman who has supported almost all ecclesial activities for a couple of years is receiving baptismal instruction at this time.

Bro. Hugo was also in La Paz during April and May to help with regular ecclesial activities. He gave a series of special studies on “The Apostle Paul — His Life and Work”.

Lima — The First Lampstand in Perú

Since newspaper ads and the internet (www.labiblia.com) have together generated 600 contacts, the CBMA Latin American Committee has made Peru a new area for scheduled special lectures in the last few years. All contacts have been invited to weekend lectures two or three times a year for several years, resulting in attendance on each evening varying from 10 to 25 visitors. A core group of eight contacts have been preparing for baptism during the last year. Bro. Jim and Sis. Jean Hunter have made a few extra visits to Lima over the course of the last six months to provide group and one-on-one instruction.

Over the weekend of May 10 and 11, Bre. Robert Alderson (New Zealand) and Don Luff delivered some special lectures, to which all contacts were invited, as well as completing final baptismal interviews with two men, César Franklin and Julián Enríquez León. César left the Catholic Church years ago, and although he became involved with other churches, he never felt that he had found the true teaching of the Bible, as he understood it, until he found us on the web. The last church he attended and where he taught classes, actually called him a “rebel” for

studying with us. Julián, on the other hand, first met the Christadelphians while visiting La Paz in 2004, when he was invited by a friend to one of our weekend lecture series. His friend stopped attending, but Julián, a Peruvian, stayed in touch with us upon returning to his native country.

Both César and Julián were baptized on Sunday morning, May 11. A conference room and a small pool on the roof of a hotel in this capital city were rented for a combined baptism and memorial service, followed by a short study on the basic



Two new brothers in Lima: Julian (left) and Cesar (right), just after their baptisms

principles behind the fundamental act of baptism, for our two new brothers and our visitors. Besides César and Julián, the six other students studying for baptism were present, accompanied by a few family members. It was a very happy day and at times, a very emotional one — especially for César, a very sincere man, who had been searching for some time. He stated at the beginning of his baptismal interview: ‘He encontrado la verdad’ (‘I have found the Truth’). We

spent parts of two evenings interviewing César — he gave a very full confession of his faith. Julián had been interviewed by Bro. Jim over the course of two days in April. The gospel message with respect to the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, which includes the apostle Paul’s confidence in the “Hope of Israel”, along with our combined emphasis on both Old and New Testament, is not often taught in Latin American churches. For many who have attended our lectures, they have been hearing a message they have never heard before.



**Attendees at first breaking of bread in Lima.
Six adults here are preparing for baptism**

The group of eight have already developed a bond together, especially in recent months, and they are committed to keeping in touch with each other, as we will with them — in particular César and Julián. Our prayer and appeal to God is that since the other six witnessed these two baptisms and were present for the first breaking of bread in Lima, they too will now be encouraged to make their decision to commit their lives to the Lord.

*In anticipation of our Lord's return,
Robert and Christine Alderson, and Don and Miriam Luff
On behalf of the CBMA Latin American Committee*

Santiago, Chile — Braving the Elements

Following their visit to Lima and witnessing the first baptisms in that country, Bro. Robert and Sis. Christine Alderson continued to the cities of Santiago, Chile, and Córdoba, Argentina — thus completing the circuit of preaching activities and support of our brethren in the southern region of South America.

Our three brethren in Santiago continue to meet in the small rental premises in the heart of the Chilean capital. They are enthusiastically planning ways to put to better use this ideal location to share the message they have embraced. The number of visitors who came out to the three evenings of studies was modest. Chile is currently being ravaged by early winter storms, floods, and earthquakes, as well as the well-publicized eruption of the Chaiten volcano. None of these factors encourage folks to go out at night. However, those who did brave the elements to come out expressed a real interest in the subjects, particularly the Middle East situation, and Israel at its 60th anniversary.

Córdoba, Argentina — A Promising Future

A good group of about sixteen or seventeen brothers and sisters, friends, and visitors from other countries met together several times in Córdoba, Argentina, from May 22-25. The meeting place in Córdoba is a small conference room in a central hotel. The primary focus of this visit was a series of six first-principle studies, to which friends and correspondence students were invited. The group continues to work towards the goal of baptism, and we hope to have news of a new sister in Christ over the next few weeks. Of great encouragement was the attendance of a correspondence student and his wife for the first time. Having progressed through the correspondence material, they expressed a determination to pursue a correct baptism, based on a correct understanding of the Scriptures. The local brethren will be working with these students.

With the new presence of brethren in Lima, Peru, and the new groups of brethren in South America, we pray that ongoing support by visits and other communications will lead to continuing growth in this region, to the Father's glory.

*In the Hope of Israel,
Robert and Christine Alderson
On behalf of the CBMA Latin American Committee*

Thisisyourbible.com Website

Have you checked out the new www.thisisyourbible.com website for the new and amazing look and features? As with all websites, in case you didn't know, the "look and feel" needs to be changed on a regular basis to keep people coming to look. This is our first real change since the website began a couple of years ago. The way the new version of the site is built will allow us to change and administer it much more easily. Also, we will be able to add new content with more graphics and video more easily.

Tutors: Last year the Toronto West Ecclesia got involved as tutors for a large campaign in the Bahamas to drive students to the website. Sis. Tanya Wilson, one of the tutors, writes of her experience:

Being a thisisyourbible tutor for the Exploring the Bible course has been and continues to be a wonderful and exciting experience. I have learned to use Bible knowledge in real life experiences. Showing my students what we Christadelphians believe, and how I have come to understand some difficult passages, has strengthened my grasp of first principles. It has also shown me just how important it is to share and pass along this knowledge.

To talk openly and on a one-to-one basis creates a feeling about the message we have to share. I have created some friendships that I pray will continue. I cannot stress the importance of putting first principles into practice. For some of the questions that have been given to me, I have had to ask help to answer, and this helps me to learn too.

As a stay-at-home mother, I have found it a challenge to do personal Bible study with small children around. I have found working with my students allows me to work at my own pace, when I can arrange the time. Refreshing my own grasp of first principles and having my own personal Bible study, while helping spread God's wonderful message, has been a very positive and exciting experience for me.

I have also found it helpful to talk with other tutors to see how they handle questions and difficult passages. This builds positive and constructive communication among the brethren.



Baptism: We thought you might want to see how one of the latest baptisms came about. Once again it shows the necessary link between student, tutor, and the ecclesias.

We are delighted to announce the baptism of Bro. Emmanuel Okochi, a Bible student from Nigeria who is living in Volgograd, Russia. Our new brother writes:

I want to give praises to God Almighty who by His grace saved me. I was living a life without knowing or believing totally what is written in the Bible. So my beliefs back then were as follows: that when I die I will

go to heaven; there is still power to do miracles as it was in time of the apostles; the kingdom of God will not come here on the earth; and the devil or satan is a living being, living on earth or beyond the sea and living just as we are.

But I came to realize these things were very wrong. So when I met a friend whose name is Christopher, he introduced me to this website thisisyourbible.com, and I started doing the Bible course online. Then I began to read my Bible very carefully to find out if all these things were so. Also, I started asking questions to my tutor, who explained so many things. All her explanations were supported by Bible quotations, and so things became clearer to me.

I was still not convinced and I was invited to a camp, or Bible school, held in Kazan, Russian Federation, in July 2007. There I met with my tutor, Sis. Kathryn Pearce, and we talked more of the Word of God. She asked if I was convinced to be baptized as a brother in Christ. I said no, because I had been baptized in my local church in Nigeria, and that was how we left the subject at the close of the Kazan Bible School.

As we left the camp, she continued to tell me the need to give up my old belief and accept what is written in the Bible, and to be baptized so as to be worthy of God's kingdom — a kingdom that will be established on earth at Christ's return, the hope of every believer in Christ. She continued tirelessly in her prayers until God touched my heart; then I accepted and immediately I asked for water baptism. She made an arrangement for a group that came from England to Russia, and we discussed more about water baptism. I was asked lots of questions, but thanks to Almighty God all were answered. Bro. Mark and Sis. Ruth Basten and others baptized me on May 18, 2008.

Want to help?

- Visit the website to 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, since the contacts in your area will come back to you and can be managed by your ecclesia
- Continue your CBMA/CBMC financial support either individually or as an ecclesia. If you are not a CBMA/CBMC sponsoring ecclesia, please consider becoming one to support the important work on the website and in the mission field

*Sis. Jan Berneau
CBMA/CBMC Publicity*

"A man who stands on hill with mouth open will wait a long time for roast duck to drop in" (Confucius).

"Whoever looks at the clouds will not reap" (Eccl 11:4).

"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2Pe 1:10).

Faith at Work

Many of you remember that, in the past, we have come to you on special occasions for items needed in the missionary field above and beyond the normal annual budget items. We have such an “adoption” request at this time.

The Broughton, Jamaica, Ecclesia has recently embarked on a number of events and activities. As you well know, feeding members is something that, for the most part, we do — and take for granted — in our meeting halls here in the US and Canada. But in certain countries it is much more difficult. In this case a refrigerator and stove, at a cost of about \$360 US, would serve the ecclesia well. There is adequate space for these appliances, and there have not been any security risk or history of vandalism at this location or in the surrounding area.

Donations can be sent to either of the two addresses found on the Addresses for Bequests and Donations page of this magazine.

CBMA/CBMC Publicity

The Stone(s) the Builders Rejected

In our current physical state, we are not privileged to bear the Holy Spirit gifts, but from time to time God gives us spiritual gifts. Such gifts help to bear us up, strengthen us, direct us, and give us confidence to go forward with the task at hand, in the knowledge that He is always aware of our needs. These are little moments of shocking realization, life-altering decisions or circumstances that make us stop and take notice. Sometimes, these moments can be both profound and humbling. I believe they are sent as wake-up calls through the still, small, whispered voice of reason.

Our ecclesia, London, Ontario, was recently able by God's grace to obtain a hall in the city after years of searching and praying. Along with the ecclesial building, there was an 80-year-old house on the same property. The ecclesia offered the Christadelphian Save the Children Fund the use of the house as a new headquarters. The fund began November 2001. Since then it has been providing Sunday school supplies, Bible school attendance subsidies, and CYC needs throughout the ecclesial world out of various venues. Sometimes the Fund has used unheated garages and storage facilities, which were quite limited in space and life's little comforts. A full realization of what it was like to have no heating in one's home became physically evident.

When we inspected the house, it was in total disarray, and not deemed cost effective to renovate for use by the CSTCF. There were thoughts of demolishing the building. However, as the property around the house had been left unattended for quite some time, we set about to clean up the landscaping around both the house and the ecclesial building. While doing so, we found the most incredible items. Amongst the rubble by the house three stones bearing the words “Courage”, “Hope”, and “Faith” were discovered. The profound spiritual thoughts overwhelmed us, stilled our negative thoughts, and moved us to forge ahead

with renovations. God is in control of our lives and His message is clear: "Take courage, hope in the Lord, and have faith." All things are possible through prayer and supplication.

This wonderful find reminded us of the times of Nehemiah:

"Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work" (Neh 2:18).

Our decision to renovate became even more compelling when we stripped away layers of dirty, old, threadbare carpets; beneath we found beautiful wood flooring. This brought to mind what God does to our lives when He strips away our ragged clothes of despair and sin, and clothes us with grace and mercy, and eventually with immortality and permanence. We are never more amazed by the circumstances of life than when at the edge of ruin we are turned about. Where man destroys, God builds. Where life delivers despair, God redeems.

Let us remember that under our outer garments of wretchedness and disarray, God sees our potential, our talents, and our ability to rise up and build. Man never knows what lies beneath the surface, but God does. These stones, now mounted on the wall of the CSTCF house, will be a constant reminder of our resolve to serve God's heritage until our Lord's return, and to teach our children to be compassionate and giving to those in need.

Let the thoughts behind these words be echoed by those who find their hands working in God's vineyard. Let such thoughts give them direction and focus:

"This may be a sign among you... when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What mean ye by these stones?'" (Josh 4:6).

Some live with loneliness and isolation, and are not privileged to share fellowship with those of like precious faith. May they be able to pray:

"Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands" (Neh 6:9).

"With God all things are possible" (Matt 19:26).

"I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phi 4:13).

Among those who need our prayers, we particularly mention the brothers, sisters and children of Kenya. An order for Bibles for the children is currently on hold until the civil unrest is resolved.

Our fond memories of the Kenya youth conference sponsored by the CSTCF seem so distant today. May our Lord's return remove the political tensions, and the worldly pressures that impinge upon our ecclesial families.

Louise Birchall (London, ON)

Any brothers or sisters or ecclesias wishing to avail themselves of the supplies and services offered by the CSTCF should inquire through their Bible Mission linkmen, or write to the CSTCF. The address can be found on the website www.christadelphian-children.com. Due to the expanded facilities, the fund is better prepared to provide Sunday school supplies to needy children throughout the world through the request of the CBM linkmen, brothers and sisters, and/or Sunday school superintendents.

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

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

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.

Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

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

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.

Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

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

Christadelphian Heritage College

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

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

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

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

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

AUSTIN LEANDER, TX

We are pleased to report the baptism of another of our Sunday school scholars, HANNAH HILL, on June 1, 2008. She is the daughter of Bro. Joe and Sis. Kathy Hill.

We have welcomed the following visitors from out of state since our last reporting: Bro. Don and Sis. Ellen Styles (Ann Arbor, MI) and Sis. Nicole Nevers (Meriden, CT). We thank Bro. Don for his encouraging words of exhortation.

Our annual youth conference for those 13 and older was held again at the T4C camp. We thank Bro. Jeff Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA) for leading the classes. Sis. Kellie was able to accompany him, as well as Bro. Luke Gelineau and Sis. Heather Kelso.

Fred Bearden

BEDFORD, NS

We rejoiced with the angels in heaven when JOSEPH WAYNE SAMPSON of Upper Tantallon, NS, became a brother in Christ on February 23, 2008. He has been a student of the Learn To Read The Bible seminar for some time. We thank Bre. Michael Carr and Dale Crawford for their untiring leadership in the seminar.

Recent visitors have been Bro. Matthew and Sis. Elizabeth Bennett of the Victoria, BC, Ecclesia, as well as Debbie Sampson, from Upper Tantallon.

Ronald A. A. Hill

DETROIT LIVONIA, MI

Bro. Andrew and Sis. Erin Amis were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Kate Moylan, on February 21, 2008. Our happiness in this event is tempered by sadness at the falling asleep of our Bro. Norman Styles on April 2, 2008. He now awaits the resurrection, and our prayers are with his surviving wife, Sis. Hazel, and their family.

Bro. Ryan Vaughn has transferred his membership to the Royal Oak Ecclesia, and we commend him to the care of the brothers and sisters there.

Jeffrey Adams

GUADALAJARA, MEXICO

We are pleased to report the baptism of LUIS GERARDO MACÍAS CRUZ on April 6, 2008. Bro. Luis attended ecclesial activities for a couple of years. After baptismal instruction, he had a successful interview with Bro. Bill Rawson from Valencia, Spain. We thank Bro. Bill and Sis. Carol Rawson for six weeks of dedicated service to the ecclesias in Guadalajara and Merida, Mexico, during March and April.

We express our great appreciation to the San Diego, CA, Ecclesia for their continued support of the Guadalajara Ecclesia by means of the ecclesial partnership program. Members of the San Diego and Guadalajara ecclesias are in regular communication with each other. During the month of May several members of San Diego visited Guadalajara and helped with speaking duties, and another group has a trip planned for June.

Don Luff

SEATTLE, WA

We thank our heavenly Father for the continued growth of our ecclesia, as with great joy we announce three additional baptisms in the last couple of months. On January 6, 2008, DAN and PENNY WHITCOMB were baptized and given the right hand of fellowship. Our new brother and sister had met for many years with another Christian denomination, but they learned the truth through their own personal studies and through contact with Christadelphians online. After a short few months in our “interested friends” class, they were ready to be baptized. We welcome them along with their children, Kyle, Addie, and Ben.

We rejoice also in the baptism of SANDRA ZALAYA on March 2, 2008. Sis. Sandra is a native of Nicaragua, and more recently an employee of our Bro. Fred and Sis. Margot Jahns, through whom she was introduced to the truth. After attending a couple of seminars, followed by a correspondence course in Spanish with our Sis. Jean Hunter, Sis. Sandra was ready to be baptized. Our thanks to Bro. Gordon Dangerfield of the Victoria Ecclesia, whose command of Spanish was invaluable in the baptismal interview and exhortation. We also enjoyed a couple of hymns from the Christadelphian Spanish Hymn Book, which made our rejoicing complete.

Anthony Ball

TORONTO CHURCH STREET, ON

With joy we announce the baptism of PAUL HUTTON on July 28, 2007. Paul is a close friend of Bro. Norm Smith of the Brampton Ecclesia. Norm baptized Paul in Lake Ontario with a number of us watching from the beach. It was a very happy and uplifting occasion. We are also very pleased that KRYSTEN PERKS was baptized on August 12, 2007. Sis. Krysten is the daughter of Bro. Jim and Karen Perks. DUANE DEORAJ was baptized on February 3, 2008. We are also happy to report that WINNIE REYNOLDS was baptized on March 16, 2008. Sis. Winnie was a student at our Learn to Read the Bible Effectively seminars.

In addition, we also witnessed the baptism of FANG HE on April 13, 2008. Fang was introduced to the gospel by Bro. Nima Panahi. Bro. Nima, recently from Iran, met her at his English classes. Nima and Fang were married on April 27, 2008, at the Church Street ecclesial hall. We pray for God's blessing on all our new brothers and sisters as they begin their walk to the kingdom.

We are pleased to receive, from the Toronto Ossington Avenue Ecclesia, Bro. Chris and Sis. Jennifer Wubbels. We also welcome by transfer: Sis. Myriam Badger from the Handsworth, UK Ecclesia; Bro. Tim Cooper from the Manitoulin Island Ecclesia; and most recently Sis. Sarah Budhan from the Brampton Ecclesia. We appreciate the energy, enthusiasm, and talents these younger brothers and sisters have brought to our ecclesia; we pray for God's blessing as they continue with us on their walk to the kingdom.

We commend by transfer Bro. Alan and Sis. Jean Prowse to the London, ON, Ecclesia, and Bro. Gregg and Sis. Christine Dunn to the Toronto West Ecclesia. We will miss them and all the help they gave us. We pray they will continue to work and support their new ecclesias, and be encouraged by their fellowship at their new ecclesial homes.

With sadness we report the deaths of Bro. Allen Vinall on Oct. 3, 2007; Sis. Peggy Roberts on November 5, 2007; Bro. Harold Ashley on December 14, 2007; and Sis. Grace Newnham on February 6, 2008. They fell asleep in the Lord after many years

of faithful service to our ecclesia. We pray for the kingdom to come soon, when we will be together again with our loved ones.

On a happier note we welcomed into the world Gordon David Hill. Gordon was born to Bro. Kevin and Sis. Karin Hill on November 24, 2007. We ask for God's blessing on this little family.

We continue to sponsor the Truth Booth at the Canadian National Exhibition and Learn to Read the Bible Effectively seminars. The CNE booth provides a preaching effort in which many Ontario ecclesias assist. We also had a special lecture in September at our hall, entitled "Israel, the West Bank, and the Bible". This proved very successful, with over 30 interested friends, some of which attended our seminars.

On December 1, 2007, we hosted a study day, assisted by the nearby Ossington Avenue Ecclesia, in which Bro. Karam Ram (Handsworth, UK) spoke on "The Old and New Covenants". Bro. Karam's main point was showing how God, through His covenants, is building relationships and, ultimately, a people to bear His Name. We must also strive to build and develop these relationships, as Christ has demonstrated. Jesus challenges us to "love one another, as I have loved you." Jesus' love caused him to lay down his life for us. We must seek to follow his example.

Rick Hill

VERNON, BC

Sadly, we announce the falling asleep in Christ of Bro. James Henry Young on February 29, 2008. Bro. James had suffered from poor and declining health for many years, yet always was a faithful attendee, greeting all with warmth and brotherly love. Our sympathy is extended to our Sis. Clair and their family. We know Bro. James looked earnestly to the Kingdom Age, and was assured in the hope of resurrection when our Lord returns.

We have welcomed, from the Arlington, VA, Ecclesia, Sis. Tammy Toews. Sis. Tammy was baptized in the Winnipeg Ecclesia and has now returned to Canada to reside. We welcome her to our meeting and look forward to walking with her on the road to the kingdom. We also welcome back into fellowship our Bro. Robert Toole. We are thrilled to have him in our midst again after several years' absence. In accordance with the request of Bro. John Barling, we have transferred his membership to the Teignmouth, UK, Ecclesia.

David Zantingh

Camp Hashawha

The Washington, DC, Ecclesia extends a loving invitation for all to our Bible Study Weekend at Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. The weekend is planned, God willing, for November 28-30, 2008. Bro. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA) is scheduled to lead classes entitled "Only Forgiveness".

For additional information, contact Bro. Robert Kling by phone at 301-498-5245, or by email at rkling@acm.org. Further details will be forthcoming. For now we would ask that you add us to your calendar of upcoming events.

We look forward to an uplifting weekend of fellowship and study around the Word of God.

David Fertig

Minute Meditation

How Much Do You Care?

When we share our faith with our friends and acquaintances, our hope is that they will listen with open minds and accept the call of the gospel. If we could read the minds of our listeners, we might be surprised to discover they are thinking, 'I don't care how much you know until I know how much you care.' We are often judged more by our caring than by our knowing.

There are some very smart people who know a tremendous amount of information, but what good is all that knowledge if they do not care? John tells us, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." It is not our words but our deeds that show our love.

The Lord Jesus knew more about the ways of God than any man who ever lived, but we love him so much because he cared so much. One example of how Jesus showed his caring in action was when two of John's disciples were sent by John to see Jesus and ask him, "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" Jesus did not answer the question with words. He answered the question with deeds. "That very hour he cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind he gave sight." Then, "Jesus answered and said to them, Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them." John's question was answered by hearing how Jesus cared for the needs of others by healing them.

There are many Biblical examples of people who knew a lot but did not care about others. A classic example is Luke's record of Jesus telling about a judge who obviously was knowledgeable enough to be a judge but unfortunately cared for no one but himself. Jesus tells us, "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming.' " The unjust judge was forced to care for the widow because of her persistence. It shouldn't be necessary for someone in need to ask us over and over again for help.

Jesus 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." James wrote, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." We must care for the needs of others. No matter how well we know our Bibles, when we tell others of our faith, they observe how we treat them and think, 'I don't care how much you know until I know how much you care.'

Here's the way Peter described Jesus to Cornelius: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him." Peter explained who Jesus was by pointing out not only the power he was given, but also what he did with that power. We are to follow in the steps of Jesus by showing how much we care for those around us. We show this by doing good and helping them. Jesus felt compassion for those in need, and he tells us to feel the same way.

The best picture Jesus gives us of the judgment seat shows how important it is for the faithful to care for others.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

We show our love for Jesus by the caring things we do for others. It is all well and good to be able to speak eloquently and teach lessons based on our deep knowledge of the Scriptures, but we need to remember that there are other things that are important, too. We show that we are trying to follow Jesus by taking care of the needs of others.

I don't care how much you know until I know how much you care.

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)

JULY

June 27 - July 5 St. John's, NF, Campaign Bro. Peter Forbes (Glenfield, UK): "Gospel Cameos in Genesis". For more information and to register online: register.explorethebible.com
Contact: Bro. Jim Keating 709-753-3578 jkeating@nf.sympatico.ca

June 28 - July 6 Mid-Atlantic Bible School Shippensburg, PA. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK): "A Holy Nation"; teens: "We Have Found the Messiah"; Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON): "The Fate of the Dead"; teens: "Resurrection of the Dead, Who

and When?"; Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA): "The Servant and His Songs (Isaiah 40-66)"; teens: "How Readest Thou?". Information at www.christadelphians.net/MACBS

4-7 North Battleford and Saskatoon Ecclesias, SK Shekinah Study Weekend. Bro. Bernard Burt (Coventry, UK): "Lo, I Come — In the Volume of the Book It is Written of Me". For information and registration contact Sis. Laura Jackson, RR#1, North Battleford, SK S9A 2X9 t.Jackson@sasktel.net 306-246-4808

6-12 Southwest Bible School Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry, UK): "Built Together in Him" (adults), "A Holy Nation" (teens); Bro. Maurice Beale (Wanganui, NZ): "Six Lessons from Olivet" (adults), "God's Faithful Young People" (teens); Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "Wonders of the Kingdom" (adults), "What Jesus Really Taught" (teens). Contact Bro. Joe Hill 512-288-0353, 11110 South Bay Lane, Austin, TX 78739, joehill@io.com. Forms at www.planofgod.org/SWCBS/swcbs.htm

12-18 Manitoulin Island, ON: THE NEW Manitoulin Family Bible Camp: Theme: "The Kingdom of God — Past and Future". Bro. Jim Cowie (Brisbane, AU): "Cameos of the Kingdom" (adults), and "Events Subsequent to the Return of Christ" (teens); Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): "David: A Character Study of His Friends and Foes" (adults and teens). For additional information, please contact Bro. Mike Moore michael.l.moore@rogers.com 519-756-0175

19-27 Eastern Bible School Acutney Mountain Resort, Brownsville, VT. Bro. Stan Isbell (North Houston, TX): "Pillar and Ground of the Truth: Finding our Role in the Body of Christ" (adults), "Samson: Freefalling to Faith" (teens); Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT): "Pentecost Revisited" (adults); "The Time Will Come When They Will No Longer Endure Sound Doctrine" (teens); Bro. Devon Walker (Manchester, UK): "Jesus in Prayer" (adults), "Biblical Soap Operas" (teens). Contact Bro. Peter Dixon peter@tecbs.org

20-26 Pacific Coast Bible School Idyllwild, CA. Bro. Maurice Beale (Wanganui, NZ): "Encounters with the Lord"; Bro. Anthony Whitehorn (Maidenhead, UK): "A Life Worth Living"; Bro. Jim Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI): "Galatians: Salvation by Grace, Not Works of Law". Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065 mail@gelineau.org, or Bro. Gary Patterson garympatterson@hotmail.com, or website www.californiabibleschool.org

26-August 2 Manitoulin Bible Camp Theme: "Come out of her and be ye separate". Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD): "Jude: Keep Yourself in the Love of God"; Bro. Richard Morgan (Saanich, BC): "Our Spiritual Exodus". Contact Bro. Alex Browning jabrowning@rogers.com 416-284-0290

26-August 3 Midwest Bible School Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "Prophetic Images"; 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

27-August 2 Western Bible School Menucha Conference Center, Corbett, OR. Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "That I Might Know Him" (adults), "The Gospel of Adam" (teens); Bro. Colin Edwards (Newbury, UK): "Twenty-one Centuries Later: A Comparison Between Their Ecclesial Life and Our Own" (adults), "How Not to Get Lost in a Large Bible" (teens); Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA): "From Paradise to the Promised Land" (adults); TBA (teens). Registration and other information at www.menuchabibleschool.org or contact Sis. Jane Szabo szabojj@peak.org

AUGUST

3-9 Rogue River Bible School Prospect, OR. Bro. Jim Cowie (Brisbane, AU): "Messiah in the Judges"; Bro. David Wisniewski (Brantford, ON): "Ruth: It Hath Fully Been Showed Me"; Bro. Jim Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI): "James: Becoming Doers of the Word". For information, contact Sis. Pat Posey 541-474-6963 or Sis. Liz Posey robandlizposey@gmail.com

9-15 Niagara Falls Bible School St. Catharines, ON. Bro. Nigel Patterson (Cornwall, UK): "Preparing for the Coming King" (adults); Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "Powerful Lessons from Mysterious Scenes in the Bible". For information contact Bro. David Brierley david.brierly@sympatico.ca 416-236-5295, www.NFCBS.com

10-16 California Kids Camp Camp Arnaz, Ojai. Bre. Nathan Lewis (NZ) and Jim Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI): "The Life of Abraham". Contact Bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com or website at kidscampcalifornia.com

16-22 Winfield Bible School Okanagan Valley, BC. Theme: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." Bro. Steve Hornhardt (Australia): "Behold I come! Blessed is he that watcheth"; Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON): "Paul's Letters to Timothy"; Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI): "A Study of the Lives of Hannah and Samuel". Contact Bro. Harold Cawston h_jcawston@shaw.ca 250-478-0343

23-29 Vancouver Island Bible Camp Camp Pringle, Shawnigan Lake, Vancouver Island, BC. Bro. Devon Walker (UK): "Jesus in Prayer" (adults), "Biblical Soap Operas" (teens); Bro. Gordon Dangerfield (Victoria, BC): "In the power of his might (Ephesians)" (adults), "Let this mind be in you" (teens); Bro. Martin Webster (Kitchener/Waterloo, BC): "Jonah, the Prophet of the Great Reformation" (adults), "To know wisdom and instruction" (teens). Contact Sis. Wendy Johnsen wendyjohansen@yahoo.ca #7-3855-9th Avenue, Port Alberni, BC V9Y 4T9, Canada. Tel 250-724-0501 Fax 250-723-9321

31 Victoria, BC. Fraternal gathering. Bro. Devon Walker (UK). Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen fraternal@csll.ca

SEPTEMBER

6 Hamilton Greenaway, ON. Fraternal gathering. Wildwood Manor Ranch, Georgetown, ON, 2 pm. Bro. Ian Neblett (Toronto East, ON): "For in him we live, and move, and have our being". Picnic supper at 4:30 pm

7-12 Adult study week: The Bible school with a difference. Wildwood Manor, Ballinfad, ON. Topic: Zechariah 8-14. 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

12-14 Texas Sisters' Weekend Glen Rose, TX. "Challenges We Face". Sis. Gerry Ann Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA). For registration information contact Sis. Maritta Terrell mt-ct@swbell.net or Sis. Kathy Hill kathyrebhansar@aol.com 512-288-0353

20 London, ON, Annual Fraternal Gathering Bro. Colin Badger (Cambridge, ON): "Josiah". Please note new location: new ecclesial hall at 101 Wistow Street, London. Details to follow. Contact Bro. Dave Birchall 519-668-7081 dalefinancial@rogers.com

20,21 Paris Avenue, OH Study weekend. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK). For information, hotels, times, etc. contact Bro. Greg Misko, Jr., 330-784-7159

26-28 Bozeman, MT Fall fraternal gathering / study weekend. Bro. Matthew D. Link (Washington, DC): "Galatians"

27,28 Manitoulin Island, ON Study day. Bro. Jamin Wigzell

OCTOBER

4,5 Portland, OR Fraternal Gathering Bro. Christian Russell (Verdugo Hills, CA)

10-12 Simi Hills, CA, Sisters' retreat Sis. Mary Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI): "We shall be like him". Clocktower Inn, Ventura, CA. Contact Sis. Bonnie Sommerville kenandbonnie@simihills.org 19111 Kinzie St., Northridge, CA 91324

11,12 Baltimore, MD Study Weekend / Baltimore-Washington Gathering. Bro. Michael Moore (Brantford, ON): "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD". Three classes starting Saturday 2 pm; supper; evening public lecture. Sunday 10:30; lunch. Contact Bro. Andy Bilello 410-357-4612

11,12 Sussex, NB, Thanksgiving Fraternal Gathering Bro. Mark Carr (Toronto West, ON): "Joseph — I Seek My Brethren". Contact Bro. Cliff Baines for further details 506-433-1728 christad@nbnet.nb.ca

18,19 Kouts, IN, Fraternal Gathering Woodland Park Community Center. Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "The Kingdom of God Applied". Contact Bro. Joe Bennett 219-762-2704 purepro18@aol.com

NOVEMBER

8 Brantford, ON, Prophecy Day Copetown Community Centre, Copetown, ON. Doors open at 12 noon; first talk starting 1 pm. Bre. Roger Long and Don Pearce (UK); Paul Billington. Theme: Sixty Years of the State of Israel: What Does It All Mean? Contact Bro. Gary Smith 519-758-0362 hgarysmith@sympatico.ca

28-30 Washington, DC Bible study weekend, Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. Bro. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA): "Only Forgiveness". Contact Bro. Robert Kling 301-498-5245 rkling@acm.org

DECEMBER

27 - January 3 Fourth Annual Texas Youth Conference. Texas Christadelphian Camp and Conference Center, Freestone, TX (near Buffalo, TX). Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): "The Life of Jacob". To register, contact Bro. Jeremy Wolfe wolfe518@gmail.com. Information at www.texasyouthconference.com