

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

— of the Kingdom of God —

Vol. 71

September, 2008

No. 8

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Editor: George Booker

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

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

The Tidings is published on the 25th of the month for the month following. Items for publication must be received by the 10th of the month. Correspondence to the Editor: George Booker, 2500 Berwyn Circle, Austin, TX 78745-3559. E-mail: editor@tidings.org. Administrator: Rose Madge: rm_madge@yahoo.com. Production Editor: Kathy Hill. Home page: www.tidings.org. Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF. Copyright 2007, Tidings Publishing Committee. Reproduction in whole, or in part, without permission is prohibited.

Subscriptions

United States: \$24, Canada: \$32. Checks payable to *The Tidings* and sent to P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to the same address. Changes of address and other subscription matters to Rose Madge at the above address or by e-mail at rm_madge@yahoo.com. **Australia: \$39.** Mail checks to Fran Caudery, 35 Jeffery Street, Blackburn, VIC 3130. **New Zealand: \$39.** Mail checks to John Beer, P.O. Box 559, Te Awamutu 3840. **South Africa: R 140.** Mail checks to Anthony Oosthuizen, P.O. Box 50357, Durban 4062. **United Kingdom: £14.** Mail checks to Malcolm Cross, Grange Farm, East Cottingham, York YO42 4TB.

"It is appointed unto men once to die" **(Hebrews 9:27)**

There was a merchant in Baghdad who sent his servant to market to buy provisions. In a little while the servant came back, white and trembling, and said, "Master, just now when I was in the marketplace I was jostled by a woman in the crowd. When I turned I saw it was Death who jostled me. She looked at me and made a threatening gesture. Now, lend me your horse, and I will ride away from this city and avoid my fate. I will go to Samarra and there Death will not find me."

The merchant lent him his horse, and the servant mounted it. He dug his spurs into its flanks, and he went as fast as the horse could gallop.

Later that day the merchant went down to the marketplace. He saw Death standing in the crowd, and he went to her and asked, "Why did you make a threatening gesture to my servant when you saw him this morning?"

"That was not a threatening gesture," Death said, "It was only surprise. I was astonished to see him in Baghdad, because I have an appointment with him tonight in Samarra."

Editorial

Treasure Hunt

“My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God” (Proverbs 2:1-5).

To seek knowledge is to seek God, who is the source of all knowledge (Mal 3:16; James 1:5). These verses lead us to recognize that the wisdom of the Bible is not necessarily to be found on the surface, but requires “digging”. The hiding of Wisdom might at first glance seem counterproductive from God’s point of view, but it serves an important purpose: that which requires some effort to obtain is naturally valued more.

“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings” (Prov 25:2).

The hidden treasure recalls Christ’s parable of the treasure hidden in a field:

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field” (Matt 13:44; cp Job 3:21; Isa 45:3; Jer 41:8).

There can be no doubt that men who seek hidden treasure are enthusiastic. Even the laziest of couch potatoes would dig up his whole backyard if he thought bars of gold and silver were buried there. This is the way we should seek for wisdom and knowledge.

God’s wisdom exists, and we must find it, buy it, and get it, for it is of more value than all riches (Prov 4:7; 16:16). And Jesus tells us that God’s kingdom is life’s great priority (Matt 6:33), and he illustrated it by telling yet another parable — of a man selling all he has in order to buy a great pearl:

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it” (Matt 13:45,46).

One might ask: why are there two parables (the hid treasure, and the pearl of great price) which make essentially the same point?

Well, it seems that in the first parable, the man stumbles upon the treasure. He was evidently not seeking it at all; he didn’t even know it was to be found. But in the second parable, the merchant has been searching long and hard for the greatest treasure, the greatest “pearl”. He has sifted through and evaluated other pearls; he knows the worth of what he seeks, and he knows immediately when he finds it: ‘Eureka! I have found it!’ ‘This is it — my heart’s desire.’

But, in each case, whether by apparent accident or by design and tireless effort, the man who at last finds the great treasure will do anything, and sell anything, if only he might acquire it.

And so it might be with the knowledge of Christ that leads to eternal life. Never has there been, nor ever shall there be, such a treasure as this. One man may happen upon it, in what looks like mere coincidence (but really isn't, of course): a leaflet picked up and casually flipped through in an idle moment, a word or two heard at just the right moment. Another man may seek diligently, over a whole lifetime, until he finds the real and satisfying truth of the Bible. Each path is acceptable, and each path has been taken by many, many men and women. The point is that each path leads to the same goal: the "treasure" at the end of the "rainbow" (truly: see Gen 9:13, where the first rainbow signified God's covenant with mankind).

Obtaining spiritual wisdom isn't a once-a-week hobby; it is the daily discipline of a lifetime. But in this age of microwave ovens, fast foods, TV 'sound bites', reader's 'digests', and numerous 'for dummies' books, many people are out of the habit of spending time and energy each day digging into the Bible and learning wisdom from the Lord. Thanks to television, their attention span is brief; thanks to religious entertainment that passes for worship, their spiritual appetite is underdeveloped. It's no wonder fewer and fewer people take time to learn about God, and more and more people are led astray by distractions along the way.

"Buy the truth and do not sell it" (Prov 23:23).

Wisdom is a reward to those who ask and work for it. Our God is a jealous God, Who will not give His riches in exchange for an on-again, off-again, lazy, feeble effort. God will reward serious seekers (Jer 29:13).

Our Lord sought God all night on a mountain top (Luke 6:12). And while others slept in Gethsemane, he searched for the treasure of God's favor with tears and bloody sweat (Luke 22:39-46).

Everything has a price. What are we prepared to "sell" in order to "buy" the Truth?

George Booker

*"The Bible does not yield its treasures to its critics."
(John Carter)*

*"Sophistication and lifestyle is understanding
the difference between trinkets and treasures."
(Jim Rohn)*

*"Speak to us, Lord, till, shamed by Thy great giving,
Our hands unclasp to set **OUR** treasures free;
Our wills, our love, our dear ones, our possessions
All gladly yielded, gracious Lord, to Thee."
(Author unknown)*

Exhortation

One

When looking at photographs of the Earth taken from space, we can be awestruck by our planet's simplicity. It appears to be a giant peaceful orb, floating in space. Although it is one physical planet, as its inhabitants, we know of its complexities and its deep divisions.

Having recently migrated to Australia from the UK, part of my acclimatization has involved becoming familiar with a new driving culture. There were a number of road signs which grabbed my attention. In particular, there was one that had been graced with graffiti. In the cover of darkness...

FORM

1

LANE

had become

FORM

1

PLANET

One planet

What a good idea — form one planet! This of course is God's plan for the earth, to unite all people together. It will be a time to throw away passports, forget visa requirements, and abolish immigration policy. Sometimes in life we can lose track of this amazing promise of unity. Let's consider the words David recorded in one of his Psalms:

"All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you..." (Psa 22:27).

One man

No geographic area or nationality is to be excluded from the Kingdom of God. Jesus has ransomed people for God from every tribe, language, people, and nation (Rev 5:9). Let's not forget that all these nationalities came from just *one* man. From one man the Almighty made every nation of men (Acts 17:26).

Have you ever wondered why God initially created one man? He could have certainly populated the entire planet in an instant. This of course is a spiritual lesson developed in Scripture; it is God's intention *"to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ"* (Eph 1:10; cp Gen 1:26-28; Psa 8:6).

One life

The theme of these words is unity, oneness. Having considered this on a global scale, let's go beyond. Unity can be our objective in the ecclesia, in our family, in our relationships, and fundamentally in our individual lives. Is our life divided? Are we fractured into many different parts? Who are we when we meet with our family in the Lord, compared to when we are at home, school, or work, or when we are alone?

As humans we have a habit of compartmentalizing our lives. I used to sort mail in a large facility in Glasgow, Scotland. Like most major cities, Glasgow is neatly

divided into numerous smaller areas and post codes for the convenience of the postmen. It can be dangerous if our lives are just as conveniently divided. In the process, we might mistakenly elevate “ecclesial life” and duties above everything else, when our focus of love and service to God and each other should extend to *all* parts of our life.

What about the Lord Jesus? Was he any less a servant of God when he was resting or eating? We are one person before God. We fracture and divide our lives at our own risk. Consider the words of Christ:

“Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls...” (Luke 11:17).

Notice how the area of the Lord’s focus is reduced in size. First he mentions a kingdom, and then a divided household. The next step, which he leaves for us, is the individual. If we find that our lives are fragmented or divided, Jesus is saying that we risk a fall or being laid waste. Similarly, James in his letter describes the double-minded man, the man who is divided and thus unstable in all his ways (James 1:8).

One God

God wants us to live an open honest life, with nothing hidden. For the Almighty can surely see us in our entirety, regardless of how much we may try to cloak and conceal. We must break the man-made distinctions and barriers so as to create a life of complete dedication. When asked which commandment was the most important, Jesus said:

“The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:28-31).

This passage is sometimes quoted incompletely. It may be used as an argument against the trinity. It may be used to encourage us to serve God and each other in love. Both elements are true, but when put together, we have a strong message of unity. Our God is *one*, so we should be *one*! Our love should involve all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. What is left? So, let’s live for God.

“Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, *all* for Thee.”

It may seem like a huge task, to bring our *whole* life before God. The first steps involve self-examination: opening ourselves up to let light shine into every dark corner. Only then can we see what needs to be changed. God has given us a wonderful way to come before Him with openness and sincerity, and that is through prayer.

We have to pray and share *everything* with God, especially every fault and weakness. Can you identify any problems or temptations that you haven’t prayed to God about? It is often the things we are reluctant to sacrifice that we are reluctant to bring to our Lord in prayer.

It is only by putting our whole life before God in prayer that we can begin to dedicate it to Him. How can we love with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, if we're holding something back? Parents often ask their children, "What did you learn at school today?" which usually merits a minimal response. Are *we* as shy when sharing with our Heavenly Father? Parents aren't just interested in some parts of their child's life; they are interested in every single aspect. So it is with our Father in heaven.

Remembering the one Lord

We have been asked to remember our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our perfect example. Jesus was not divided; he was the same to beggars, children, rich people, and kings. He shared *everything* with God: his triumphs, his lows, his faith, and his sorrows. In Psalm 22 we have an insight into Christ's prayer on the cross. As we read it we are torn with angst for the anguish of our Lord:

"For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet — I can count all my bones — they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots" (Psa 22:16-18).

The Lord Jesus does not hold anything back from the Almighty (see verses 1 and 2 of this psalm), and neither should we. Have you ever wondered why there is a focus on the clothing of Jesus at the crucifixion? There are surely other details omitted, and we know that every word is precious and insightful in God's Word.

If we look to the gospels we find more detail which delivers a powerful message about Jesus. The soldiers were distributing his clothes among themselves (John 19:23,24), thus befitting their description in Psalm 22 as dogs and evildoers. What a terrible, humiliating experience. The contrast is startling. The soldiers had their minds fixed on material things, whilst above them Jesus overcame sin for our salvation.

One "garment"

We can picture the soldiers arguing over the four parts of clothing, bickering and snatching. What was left could not be divided. What did the soldiers gamble over? It was a *seamless* tunic, woven in *one* piece from top to bottom. This is frequently mentioned as suggesting the garment worn by the high priest (Exod 28:32). As a symbol of holiness, it was not to be torn (Lev 21:10). So with Christ, our great high priest: his garment of holiness remained intact. In complete contrast, what happened during the Lord's trial? The high priest, acting as judge, tore his own garment (Mark 14:63).

For us today, the seamless robe is a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ; a dedication of life. It was complete. He couldn't be diminished or reduced. He couldn't be torn into parts. He was whole. There were no fractions or divisions. Jesus loved the Father *and* us with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength.

One sacrifice

The sacrifice of Jesus seen in its entirety, life and death and resurrection, has saved us and brought us together. He will unite the world. We pray and seek strength

to honestly examine ourselves, to break down walls and barriers in our lives, and to live in unity. We are encouraged to dedicate our lives, in their entirety, to our Father and the service of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jonathan Fry
(Melbourne Dandenong, Australia)

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (18) Defeating the Wiles of the Devil, Clad in God's Armor

We come now to consider the final part of this wonderful letter, and we can only marvel at the extraordinary insight and elevation of its thought. The verses with which we shall initially wrestle run thus:

"Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might, put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph 6:10,11).

Here then is the controlling concept: a battle in which the believer is necessarily engaged. In order to face the conflict, he is instructed to put on the armor which the LORD God has made available. This has provided the theme of the hymn "Onward, Christian Soldiers"; Paul encouraged Timothy to suffer hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus (2Ti 2:3,4).

Principalities and powers in the heavenly places

Putting aside the subject of the armor for the moment, we take note that the contest is against the wiles of the devil. This thought is emphasized in verse 12:

"For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

The NIV reads:

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

First, we note that this is not a literal battle, for the whole context is metaphorical: the believer is not going to put on any literal armor, nor will he wield any literal sword (v 11).

In our endeavor to understand the apostle's thought, we must consider the expression "in the heavenly places" (RV), or "in the heavenly realms" (NIV). Here, surely, we must allow Paul to be our guide, for we have already encountered the expression two times in the letter, and at an earlier stage we can note the Lord Jesus himself used the precise expression: "Our Father which art in heaven (literally, 'in the heavnlies')" (Matt 6:9). It is the dwelling place of the Almighty God;

there His will is sovereign: it is inconceivable there could be any power in heaven to challenge His authority.

With regard to Ephesians, the expression is first found in 1:10, where the apostle speaks of what we may term “God’s cosmic purpose” in Christ: to achieve unity in all parts of God’s dominion. In the case of 1:20,21 the interpretation seems quite straightforward: after raising His Son from the dead, He elevated him to His right hand in heaven and conferred on him supreme authority in His dominion. In 2:6, we the believers have been elevated, with Christ, to sit in the heavenlies (cf Col 3:1-4). If then our new life is secure in the Lord, what demonic force have we to fear in the heavenly places?

Paul himself provides a previous clue, which can all too easily be overlooked. In Ephesians 4:14, Paul warns his readers against becoming a prey to every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error. Now the very word used in 4:14 for “wiles” is precisely that in 6:11. We need therefore look no further to identify the devil. He is none other than those propounding false and subversive doctrine, a theme with which we have been so much concerned in these studies and which is especially prominent in Colossians 2.

If we turn to the Gospels and the Book of Acts, we can better understand this matter. In Matthew 10, the Lord is warning his apostles of the consequences of their allegiance to him: “Be on your guard against men” (v 17). There is no mention of the devil. Throughout the ministry, the Lord made enemies, especially among the Jewish leaders, who at a relatively early stage were plotting his death (see John 5:18). The folk in his own village of Nazareth tried to kill him because he called their attention to God’s goodness to Gentiles (Luke 4:16-29). Particularly with “the wiles of the devil” in mind, we do well to take note of the following passages:

- (a) The Lord issues a special warning, declaring his followers will be brought before rulers and authorities, obviously all human (Luke 21:12).
- (b) Then in Titus 3:1: “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates...” (AV). The Greek is here identical with that in Ephesians 6:12.

All this makes it clear what was the origin of the wiles.

Considering now “the wiles of the devil”, in Matthew 22:15 we learn of the attempt of the Pharisees to “ensnare him”, or “to trap him” (NIV). In the course of the altercation, the Lord said: “Why tempt ye me, you hypocrites?” With what they thought was an unanswerable question, the Sadducees tried to best the Lord (vv 23-28). Undeterred, the Pharisees returned to the attack, with a lawyer “tempting him” (vv 34,35). In all this we can see the devilish mind of men at work.

There is an interesting passage in Acts 4, which echoes the Lord’s words in Luke 21:12 quoted above. Peter and John were arraigned before the highest powers in Jewry (Acts 4:5-7). When they were finally released and they reported to the church, Psalm 2 was spontaneously quoted: “The kings of the earth set themselves in array, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed” (v 26).

All this gives us insight into the twisted minds of the Jewish principalities and powers who were attempting to frustrate God's purpose in the Lord Jesus. That the Jewish orthodox world felt itself threatened, and in a sense dispossessed, is illustrated in Colossians 2. There the context is clear: there were Judaizers in the Lycus valley requiring the practice of the Mosaic law and the worship of angels. Colossians 2:14,15 is not without its difficulties for the expositor.¹ However, the subject is manifestly the Lord's triumph on the cross (note especially v 14). The principalities and powers here were obviously the leaders in the Jewish world and, as we have seen, they fought by all means to frustrate the divine purpose of making eternal salvation accessible to all men who have faith.

Their efforts, however, were in vain, and the great irony lay in the fact that those responsible for the Lord's crucifixion were unwittingly furthering the divine will. On the occasion of the Lord's death, the veil of the Temple was rent (Matt 27:51) and the Levitical priesthood was rendered redundant, being superseded by the priesthood of the Lord Jesus (cf Psa 110:4). Subsequently, the Temple was destroyed in AD 70.

To summarize: The wiles against which Paul was warning his readers were particularly the wiles of the Judaizers in the Lycus valley. As for the Colossians and others who knew the Letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians, the battle each had to fight was in his own mind and soul. The chapter, 2 Corinthians 10, is relevant to this view, in that the demonic forces threatening the Colossians were human:

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but mighty before God to the casting down of strong holds" (vv 3,4).

The armor of God

We return now to Ephesians 6, where disciples are told to put on the armor God has provided (v 11). Thus prepared, the disciple can stand his ground and not retreat. The exhortation to stand firm is repeated in verse 14; there we find an indication of the items of armor to be worn by the believer. These include the loins girt with truth (a token of readiness) and the breastplate of righteousness. Unquestionably Paul was thoroughly familiar with the accessories of a Roman soldier, but it does appear he is here drawing on the Old Testament. Apparently, Polybius (vi. 25) gives a full description of Roman armor but, as already suggested, Paul is thinking more in Old Testament terms.

In Isaiah 59 the atmosphere is gloomy: "We look for light, but behold darkness" (v 9). It is in this situation that the LORD provides a warrior, "who puts on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head" (v 17). Paul's readers can thus share the armor of their leader, who is the authentic Arm of the LORD.

In verse 15, the disciple's footwear is indicated: "the preparation of the gospel of peace". Here, once more, we must go to Isaiah who describes the beauty of the feet of the one who publishes the news of salvation (Isa 52:7).

The same disciple takes into his hand the shield of faith (v 16), affording his whole person protection against all the fiery darts of the wicked. In the present context, we have discovered abundant evidence of the activities of the wicked, who would subvert truth and would seek to seduce the believer. The figure is prominent in the Psalms; we now take note of Psalm 57:4:

“My soul is among lions; I lie among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.”

The Lord Jesus is prophetically portrayed as the supreme bowman in Psalm 45: *“Thine arrows are sharp; the peoples fall under thee; they are in the heart of the king’s enemies”* (v 5).

The helmet of salvation (v 17) protects the head, and the sword of the spirit is defined as the word of God. None wielded this sword more effectively, to the chagrin of his enemies, than the Lord Jesus. We have only to think of the exchanges the Lord had with his adversaries during his ministry, especially when they sought to embarrass him, as we have already seen.

The word of God is accessible to each disciple, and it can be an effective weapon in theological discussions. However, any superiority in Bible knowledge should not be a matter of vanity. It is to be used prayerfully, as Paul indicates: “praying always with all prayer and supplication for all saints” (v 18). Prayer is indeed a very important aspect of fellowship, and the prayer life of the apostle, which appears in his letters, is worthy of study in itself. He calls on the recipients of his letter to pray on his behalf, so that he may be a worthy ambassador.

There was much in the apostle’s circumstances to bring discouragement. In any case, he knew prayer could bind disciples together.

Tychichus

In verse 21, Paul mentions his trusted emissary Tychicus who, coming from Rome, would be able to tell others of the latest developments in Paul’s life. Tychicus was one of a band of brothers, whose loving devotion and service to the Lord Jesus was held in the highest esteem by the apostle. He traveled to Jerusalem with Paul and the proceeds of the “Great Collection” (Acts 20:4; cf Tit 3:12; 2Ti 4:12). In connection with Titus, and the tribute given to other fellow-workers, Paul expresses his heartfelt sentiments in these words: “They are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ” (2Co 8:23).

Peace, faith, and grace

The closing words of this fine letter are typical of the apostle: “Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith [cf Gal 5:6], from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (v 23). “Peace” (shalom) was the Hebrew salutation. To this Paul adds faith, for it is in total acceptance of the gospel of salvation that God’s purpose of salvation becomes meaningful to a disciple.

Then the final words: “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in uncorruptness” (v 24). Thus the entire letter to the Ephesians is bracketed by grace (cp 1:2), God’s goodness and love towards men and women. As we often remind

ourselves, Paul never ceased to marvel at the grace of the Lord Jesus (cf 1Ti 1:12-16). Christ's love for Paul compelled him throughout his life (2Co 5:14).

We have seen in Ephesians 3:18,19 how the apostle tries to convey the wonder of Christ's love. "Uncorruptness" is a word associated with God's gift of immortality, freedom from the corruption to which our present bodies are subject. It is, therefore, something we seek (cf Rom 2:7), and it is to be bestowed on the faithful by the Lord at his Second Coming (1Co 15:53,54). Strikingly, Paul associates the reward of the righteous with our present love for the Lord Jesus. Then we recall that elsewhere the apostle declares, "If anyone does *not* love the Lord — a curse be on him" (1Co 16:22, NIV). Our love for our Lord must be free from any corruption or taint.

Thus this precious document of the apostolic age reminds us, here and now, that all depends upon our response to God's grace in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

Note:

1. My own attempt to understand the difficult passage in Colossians 2 can be found in "The Letter to the Colossians", *The Christadelphian*, 1984, page 123ff.

(Series concluded)

Ecclesial Study

Why Has Christadelphia Survived? Lessons for Today

Introduction: the Lord is working with us

In considering the survival of the early church in the first century, we call to mind the declaration at the end of the Gospel of Mark:

"The Lord was working with them" (Mark 16:20),

and take into account the words of Gamaliel in Acts 5:38,39:

"Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God" (NIV).

We believe that through the centuries the Lord has maintained a true witness. The question in the title is not the same as 'Has truth survived?' but the two items are related. It has been over 150 years since our brotherhood was established. Theologians, sociologists, and other academics have reviewed Christadelphia, and expressed surprise that our community has persisted as a "sect", because "it has maintained communion, cohesion, and commitment, despite being geographically diffuse." The general expectation seems to be that, after the deaths of the founders, either the community would have disintegrated like many similar groups, or it would have developed into a denomination. Sociologists today generally refer to us as an "established sect".

What do these academics perceive as weaknesses in our community? “There is no hierarchical structure; no accessories of a formal organization; and it is minus clear lines of authority.” The high value placed on the autonomy of individual ecclesias, say these commentators, means “there are no fixed norms of orthodoxy, or universally accepted prescribed standards.” We believe that the Lord is working with us, but let us consider other factors that may have influenced our survival, and learn lessons for today.

Organizational and communal features: ecclesial autonomy

Ironically, what our critics perceive to be a weakness, that is, the absence of a centralized structure exercising strict control over the community, has been a very significant factor in our development and survival. The brotherhood does not have a centralized hierarchical structure. In the development of the community, Birmingham Central Ecclesia (UK) played an important role in providing advice and guidelines for individual ecclesias on doctrinal and practical issues, but not in an authoritarian manner. This was often in tandem with *The Christadelphian Magazine*, particularly in more recent years. (Birmingham Central Ecclesia has now closed.) The *Ecclesial Guide*, published by Bro. Robert Roberts, has been widely adopted by ecclesias as a basis for their conduct. One of the most distinctive and noteworthy features of this document is the insistence on the autonomy of each ecclesia. This particular characteristic is highly valued by members, and its function has been a significant factor in the development and maintenance of a strong community.

The structure and organization of each ecclesia is conducted for the most part on democratic lines, insofar as its arranging (or managing) brothers are elected by members. However, the way in which these roles are performed may vary considerably, especially with regard to that of the recording brother. Some brothers adopt a strong leadership approach, whilst others act in a mainly secretarial capacity, and there are other alternatives. The arranging brothers are responsible for the spiritual, physical, and material wellbeing of the ecclesia, and this demands serious dedication in terms of the time and energy devoted to pastoral care and preaching activities.

Different types of ecclesias

There is no model ecclesia in the New Testament on which to base the development of an ecclesia, and so a tremendous responsibility rests with local brethren to follow Scriptural guidelines. Across all the fellowships that possess the title “Christadelphian”, the emergence of different types of ecclesias has been significant, particularly since the 1930s. These include what might be called traditional/mainstream, and others ranging from ultra-conservative to modern and liberal. Bro. Dev Ramcharan wrote about “Conservatism and Liberalism” in a guest editorial (*Tidings*, September 2004), and drew attention to some essential differences between these diverse views. The article included an appeal for liberals and conservatives to “learn to respect and tolerate each other and not rend the body of Christ”. In areas where ecclesias are situated reasonably close together, it is possible, and likely, that transfers will ensure most of the members share a

similar outlook. It is possible that some ecclesias, especially larger ones, may have labels affixed to them due to the activities of a vociferous but powerful minority, which is at variance with those of the majority.

Extra-ecclesial activities

The absence of a centralized authority structure leaves the field open for the emergence of what has now become a substantial range of *ad hoc* organizations and groups. These have been established by individuals, groups, or ecclesias. They include magazines, various preaching and missionary organizations, aged care, conferences/summer schools, choirs, etc. (It is also important and significant that our Sunday schools have continued to develop, and this bodes well for the future, in contrast to their demise in other areas.)

Recently there has been the continued development of seminar programs, Bible education centers, and websites. In a considerable number of cases these *ad hoc* associations are not directly accountable to an ecclesia, and the committees organizing such functions are often self-perpetuating. Nevertheless, these improvised activities have contributed enormously to the vibrant life of the brotherhood, and such enrichment must not be undervalued. These activities involve considerable dedication in terms of thought, time, and vigor.

Movements towards “reunion” have brought about considerable interaction among different fellowships, especially in the United Kingdom, Australasia, and North America. The major reunion in the United Kingdom and Australasia, in 1956-1958, was a considerable achievement in terms of a further development of members trusting one another in love. It enabled many more brothers and sisters to join freely in fellowship with others of like faith. It also reduced the degree of in-house dissent about what the Scriptures teach.

Frequency of interaction

During periods of conscription to the armed services, many young brothers were drafted to alternative occupations in areas away from home, and they encountered life in new ecclesias. This experience is acknowledged by many to have been an important transitional phase in spiritual growth, resulting in a greater degree of commitment. Since the middle of the twentieth century in particular, the rapid development of modern means of communication and an increase in social and geographical mobility has resulted in improved and enlarged opportunities for interaction and fellowship across the globe. An important feature is the intimacy of our relationships. Interested friends who have observed animated conversations among brothers and sisters are often astounded when they learn that fifteen minutes or so earlier these believers were complete “strangers” to one another. This is even more remarkable when the brothers and sisters come from different continents!

The use of air travel, the internet and e-mail, and mobile phones have contributed to the frequency of interaction which binds members of our community closer together. The expansion of preaching activities into the developing world, Eastern Europe, and the area of the former USSR has resulted in many converts to the

truth. In a number of aspects, allowing for cultural differences, the characteristics of these believers and their ecclesias are similar to those of the ecclesias in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Britain, the USA, and in the former British dominions such as Australia.

Credentials of members

Acceptance into any Christadelphian Fellowship is by adult baptism, and is dependent on one's endorsement of Biblical teaching as expressed in the relevant statement of faith. The *quality* of this knowledge is a distinctive attribute in Christadelphia, in particular, our mutual belief that we are privileged to know the true message of the Holy Scriptures. Ecclesias take this responsibility extremely seriously in regard to the interview/examination of candidates for baptism, and in most cases the practice could be reasonably described as rigorous. Secular research, for example in the field of management studies, has shown that the level of strictness involved in joining a particular group is often related to the degree of commitment and the length of time one remains a member.

There is concern that the applicant should be well aware of the details of the doctrines and practices to which he/she is agreeing. At the same time the candidate may ask questions in order to quell any doubts or misunderstandings. The actual baptismal service may vary somewhat. In many cases the repentant may only utter the words 'I do' in response to the officiating brother's question: 'Do you believe the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ?' In other instances the candidate may give a personal testimony, which might vary considerably in structure and length. Candidates and members will normally become aware of beliefs and behavior that are not acceptable, and will repudiate potentially disruptive relationships with certain individuals and groups. The awareness of the risk of disfellowship reinforces commitment to membership and a life of self-denial.

Commitment of members

The spiritual and material maintenance of ecclesias involves substantial personal outlay of time and energy, and entails clearly defined roles of brothers and sisters. There is a willingness to maintain the community, because in the Lord's wisdom such a pledge satisfies the needs of the individual disciple. Commitment is important for the survival of the brotherhood; in fact, it is the very essence of fellowship. Group cohesiveness, the ability to stick together and withstand threats to existence, is an essential feature of the survival of any association.

The disciple who is "committed" is loyal and involved in the work of the community. There is an impressive sense of belonging, for the believer and the community are inextricably linked together, because the Lord claims the whole of the individual. It is a reciprocal relationship, involving the merging of self-identity with the communal identity, thus taking on the community's characteristics through spiritual association and growth.

Lessons for today

Our brotherhood has persisted because of the conviction that the Lord is working

with us. This assurance of the Lord's continuing presence may be understood in different ways, but it has been expressed well in an earlier editorial [*the intercession of Christ through the "Spirit": October 2007, pp. 420-422*].

At the same time, there has also been the conviction among members that we need to carry out our part. In particular, the importance of commitment cannot be overstated. We have examples of those who "*were always abounding in the work of the Lord*", both in the Scriptures (e.g., Josiah and Apollos), and in our own brotherhood. How does our dedication to our Lord compare with our devotion to our family, our employer, or to a special interest or hobby? Our loyalty to Christ demands the use of all our resources. Can we be more enthusiastic, more fervent, and more vigorous? Our early brothers and sisters responded to such exhortations as this:

"We desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb 6:11,12).

Test yourselves

There is no doubt that self-examination is an important feature of discipleship. Paul wrote: "*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves*" (2Co 13:5). We are to take stock of ourselves. This is an important principle in terms of an individual's spiritual growth. Is it not also applicable to the entire community? It is realistic to presume that the thorough scrutiny of teachings mentioned by Luke in Acts, such as took place in Berea (Acts 17:11), would be a communal experience. Although it referred to those "interested friends" who were questioning the apostles' teaching, can we not reasonably assume that such communal examination also developed among the ecclesias? When the Lord addressed the seven ecclesias in the Revelation, he was not only challenging individual members, but also whole ecclesias, to respond to his appeals in a communal mode.

We submit our lives to the Lord and he employs us according to his will. In Titus 2:11-14 we are reminded that we are not saved by our works, but rather by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we show our appreciation by doing good; that is, we are saved, not **by** works, but **for** works. Elsewhere Paul urges us:

"Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord"
(Rom 12:11, NIV).

Zeal and fervor are not necessarily showy and demonstrative. The most unobtrusive brother or sister may be full of righteous passion for the Lord. The quietest whisper may be uttered with great enthusiasm. Is it not sometimes the quiet portrayal of spiritual zeal that is the most telling and perhaps the most exemplary?

Conclusion

A communal exercise at Mittagong Bible Week was useful in assessing the various attributes and resources that have contributed to the survival of our community. It also focused our attention on the consequent question, "What sort of community will survive?" if our Lord remains away. Our beliefs about the nature of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, together with our understanding of the promises and the

future rule of Christ on earth, separate us from billions who claim the name of Christian. It is important that we recognize and rejoice in what we have in common within the brotherhood, and continue to learn also that there are topics on which we can agree to differ. We live in societies that are changing rapidly; ecclesias, individual members, and groups are learning to respond to these changes. In the maintenance of individual ecclesias, and the continued development of *ad hoc* activities, we trust that brothers and sisters across the world will adhere to the first principles of our faith. The safeguarding of this trust is vital in connection with the survival of our community.

(Quotations from NKJV unless stated otherwise)

Acknowledgments:

This article is based on two talks given at the Mittagong Bible Week (NSW) in October 2007. Significant contributions came from Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA, USA) and Bro. Martin Hughes (Watford, UK), who were the main speakers at the school; Bro. Rob Hyndman (Dandenong, Australia); and other members who participated in three one-hour discussion sessions. Thanks are also due to the organizing committee, led by Bro. Wayne Levick, for their unstinted support.

Ken Camplin (Mittagong, NSW, Australia)

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The Care Line and the Canadian Christadelphian Caring Network

Many of you will have heard of the Care Line and the Caring Network. Over the past year the Care Line has not been functioning. Your brothers and sisters who volunteer for the service were distressed that we had to place a temporary hold on our service, but we are now pleased to announce the Care Line is back up and running.

What is the Christadelphian Care Line?

The Christadelphian Care Line is a telephone support listening service for Christadelphians. This service is provided by a group of your peers, brothers and sisters who voluntarily serve on the Care Line.

Life appears to be getting more stressful and difficult during these last days. The Care Line desires to serve our community of faith during difficult times. Some of you may be struggling, feeling the need to reach out for peer support. Ideally support will be found within your own ecclesia but perhaps your ecclesia is simply too small. Perhaps you feel your circumstances are an impediment or that it would be too embarrassing to speak with someone close by. For whatever reason,

if you are looking for someone to listen to you, please do not hesitate to call the Care Line. We are prepared to listen empathically to your story.

Our mission is to provide a Christ-centered, confidential, peer-support listening service for the Christadelphian community in an empathic, non-judgmental, and understanding environment. Our toll-free number is **1-866-823-1039**.

Our mandate is simple... "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ."

What is the function of the Care Line?

The function of the Care Line is to assist each other in living more closely to the standards set by God's commandments and by the example of Jesus Christ. We often become overwhelmed with struggles, lose our direction, or face a problem that is too difficult for us to deal with. When this occurs the Care Line can provide peer support.

The best way to assist each other is within the ecclesial context. Ecclesias, when they are mutually supportive and caring, will provide the environment to assist. Sometimes a person seeking a listening ear will reach out to others in the community. The Care Line is a resource for that person. The Care Line is intended to supplement, not replace existing ecclesial resources and obligation.

Where did the Care Line originate?

The Care Line works together with a committee from the Caring Network. Our history began after community discussions in Southern Ontario in 1989. We consulted with the UK Care Group extensively in our formative years and later with the Christadelphian Care Groups of Australia. Our development has been slow but steady over time. Around the world, Christadelphians have developed a global network of caring services.

Over the past year we have grown and restructured. Our focus has been on improving our organization and service. During this growth phase we felt forced to temporarily shut down the Care Line service. A prayerful, careful approach was necessary in order for us to see how our service might be delivered more effectively. Many meetings have taken place, with participants from various ecclesias in Southern Ontario, during this time period. The results of group discussions have led us to improve our service in the following ways:

- We have completed the Constitution of the Christadelphian Caring Network of Canada.
- We are in process of being registered with the Canadian government as a recognized charitable organization.
- On the basis of our constitution, elections to the committee will take place at the annual general meeting (AGM) every year. This meeting date is published widely well in advance each year.
- We have examined obtaining insurance or possibly incorporating as a means to reduce risk to our members.
- We have put into place documented procedures and policies for those serving

on the Care Line.

- The Care Line will now endeavor to put you into contact with a peer support person immediately, which is a great improvement over the former answering machine.
- Mandatory documented training is scheduled and monitored on an ongoing basis.
- Generalized report-gathering information is now in place, which also protects confidentiality.
- We are also in process of revamping our dated web service.

What other things does the Caring Network do?

The Care Line is the most visible service provided under the umbrella of the Caring Network but it is not the only thing we do. Once or twice a year the Caring Network sponsors a seminar, usually in conjunction with the AGM on a subject related to Caring. Recently we have had seminars entitled “Stress Points in Marriage: Identify, Confront, Overcome” and “A Welcoming Ecclesia”. We thank the Toronto West Ecclesia for the generous use of their hall for our annual meetings for the past few years.

We also publish and distribute a number of bulletins each year. The Bulletin is intended to support the overall mandate of the Caring Network in providing spiritually helpful information and instruction to our brotherhood. This helps us to better understand how to support and encourage one another. Some topics covered recently include: Grief and Mourning, Care For Our Elderly, Substance Abuse, and the Love Principle.

We also manage and maintain a website. You can find us at www.caringnetwork.ca. On our site you will find resources on many issues. We have an electronic version of the manual entitled “Scriptural Wisdom & Practical Help for Surviving Troubled Times”. This manual covers a variety of topics including sexuality, parenting, substance abuse, financial issues, caring for the elderly, and many other life issues. We hope to have a major revision of our site coming soon.

The Care Line and the Caring Network hope to aid others as they walk toward the Kingdom of God. The apostle Paul tells us that the body of Christ consists of many elements. He uses the symbol of body parts to explain how much we need each other, various parts working together to make up a healthy body. Essential elements necessary for a healthy body include Bible reading, teaching, ecclesial care, worship, prayer, and others. These helps are available to assist in the goal of walking acceptably before God. Success in reaching that goal is dependent on God's blessing and guidance.

The Caring Network and Care Line wish to “encourage the exhausted, strengthen the feeble” and to “bear one another's burdens”. Call us if you need to speak with someone when the going gets difficult, or at any other time. **1-866-823-1039**.

On behalf of the Caring Network and Care Line
Bro. Bill Lawrence, Chair — Christadelphian Caring Network of Canada
Sis. Mary Styles — Care Line Co-ordinator

Music in Worship

*Articles, questions, and letters may be submitted to
Section editors Ken and Joan Curry
krcurry@sympatico.ca
Markham and Eglington
P.O. Box 90525
Toronto, ON M1J 3N7*

“Lord Dismiss us with Thy Blessing”

Hymn 436 in the green hymnbook, “Lord Dismiss us with Thy Blessing”, is a hymn generally used at the conclusion of a meeting. Two tunes are given for this hymn. These are named “Vesper” and “Eton College”.

The hymn tune Vesper was first written by Dmitrii S. Bortnianski (1751-1825) from the Ukraine (as a Russian air) and then arranged by John Stevenson. This tune is one of fifteen given in the current green hymnbook that can be sung to the words of Hymn 436, 1st tune. The same meter is used for all fifteen hymns.

The meter for hymns in the green hymnbook are given on the top left-hand page corner of each hymn tune, just under the hymn number. The meter for “Lord Dismiss us with Thy Blessing” (Hymn 436, 1st tune) is 87.87.87. Toward the end of the green hymnbook a chart is given entitled Metrical Index of Tunes. For the hymn meter 87.87.87 fifteen hymn tunes are listed that can be used for the words of Hymn 436, first tune. One is the hymn tune we most commonly sing for Hymn 436, on page 626 in the green hymnbook. Of the remaining fourteen hymn tunes, eleven can be used for Hymn 436 with no alteration to the words given for the first tune (which are slightly different than the words given for Hymn 436, second tune). These Hymn numbers are 81, 148, 191, 254, 300, 303, 312, 322, 341, 390, and 402.

The rest of the hymn tunes listed with the meter 87.87.87 need to be altered slightly to fit the words of Hymn 436, first tune. For example, Hymn 116 has four verses, whereas Hymn 436 has just two verses, so only two repetitions of the hymn tune are needed when using this hymn tune for Hymn 436. With Hymn 281 the words of the last line of each of the verses of Hymn 436 needs to be sung twice. For Hymn 301 the words of Hymn 436, verse 1 (“O refresh us”) and verse 2 (“May Thy blessing”) need to be repeated three times.

One other hymn tune is listed under Metrical Index of Tunes for Hymn 436, second tune. The meter used here is 87.87.47, and Hymn 150 has the same meter. For Hymn 436, second tune, to be successfully sung with this hymn tune, the words of verses 1 and 2, lines 3 and 4, need to be repeated. For example, verse 1 will be sung, “Lord dismiss us with Thy blessing, Fill our hearts with joy and peace: Let us each, the truth possessing, Bear its fruits and run the race. O, refresh us, O refresh us, Travelling through this wilderness, Travelling through this wilderness.”

The words of Hymn 436 were written by John Fawcett, who was born on January 6, 1740, near Bradford in Yorkshire, England. This hymn was originally written with three stanzas. The words of verse 1 are almost identical to the words in the green hymnbook. “Lord dismiss us with Thy blessing: Fill our hearts with joy and peace; Let us each Thy love possessing, Triumph in redeeming grace. O refresh us, O refresh us, Travelling through this wilderness.” The first two lines of verse 1 of this hymn ask the Lord to strengthen us and bless us with peace as we leave our place of worship. The words, “Lord dismiss us with Thy blessing, fill our hearts with joy and peace”, are a reminder of Aaron’s blessing to the Israelites:

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace” (Num 6:24-26).

We too are asking the Lord’s invocation to bless us and to bring joy and peace into our lives.

John Fawcett’s words for verse 2 are, “Thanks we give and adoration, For Thy Gospel’s joyful sound; May the fruits of Thy salvation, In our hearts and lives abound. Ever faithful, ever faithful, To the truth may we be found.” The first two lines written by John Fawcett and Hymn 436 in the green hymnbook are identical. These words express our thanks and adoration for the special blessing of the Gospel message.

The words of the last four lines of verse 2, by John Fawcett, are slightly different from those in the green hymnbook. But both express a desire that the gospel will positively impact hearts and lives today and that genuine gratefulness to God will be a motivation to lead faithful lives. Both sets of words convey the desire for faithful and fruitful service — “May the fruits of Thy salvation” and “May we gain Thy great salvation” — and present thoughts of striving that will lead to commendation by Christ at his return:

“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things” (Matt 15:21).

It is challenging and enjoyable to try various hymn tunes to a hymn we know. It helps us to focus on the words and tune a little more closely than with hymns that have become so familiar to us that we can sing them almost by rote. Perhaps you could try using some other hymn tunes with hymn words that are known and used in your ecclesia.

Joan and Ken Curry (Toronto East, ONT)

“Education is the knowledge of how to use the whole of oneself. Many men use but one or two faculties out of the score with which they are endowed. A man is educated who knows how to make a tool of every faculty — how to open it, how to keep it sharp, and how to apply it to all practical purposes”

(H.W. Beecher).

“Loud Organs, His Glory Forth Tell In Deep Tone”

The title for this article is taken from Hymn 75, verse 3, in the green hymnbook. It is based on the beautiful, inclusive sources of praise to God outlined in Psalm 150.

“O praise ye the Lord!
All things that give sound;
Each jubilant chord,
Re-echo around;
Loud organs, His glory
Forth tell in deep tone,
And, sweet harp, the story
Of what He hath done.”

The words of Hymn 75 mention the various means by which God is praised. He is praised by angels, by human voices, by everything that gives sound in His creation, by the instruments of organ and harp. By such varied means God has been praised throughout the ages and is still praised today.

The organ is discussed specifically in the following paragraphs.

The organ, as we know it, was unknown in Old Testament times. The word “organ” is used three times in the Bible in the King James Version.

“And his brother’s name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ” (Gen 4:21).

“They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ” (Job 21:12).

“My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep” (Job 30:31).

These same three quotations, taken from the NIV, read:

“His brother’s names was Jubal; he was the father of all who play the harp and flute” (Gen 4:21).

“They sing to the music of tambourine and harp; they make merry to the sound of the flute” (Job 21:12).

“My harp is tuned to mourning, and my flute to the sound of wailing” (Job 30:31).

The plural “organs” is used once in the Bible in the King James Version.

“Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs” (Psa 150:4).

The word organ is translated “flute” or “pipe” in modern versions (like the NIV quoted above). The word “organ” was derived from the Vulgate Latin “organum”, meaning the syrinx or pan pipes. This ancient instrument consisted of a series

of wooden whistles, graduated in size to give the pitches of the different notes. It was held in front of the mouth, and the player blew across the open ends.

However, the instrument used by the ancient Hebrews was more likely to have been an “aulos”, since this was the principal wind instrument of most ancient Middle Eastern peoples. This was a single or double-reed pipe played in pairs. The two pipes, which were made of cane, wood or metal, were held one in each hand and sounded simultaneously. The pipes were equal in length and had three or four finger holes. The aulos is depicted in carvings and paintings from ancient Greece and Rome.

The earliest true organ was the hydraulus or water organ. It was introduced by Ctesibius the Egyptian about 250 BC, and remained in wide use over a long period. In general appearance it resembled a small pipe organ of today. It had a keyboard with wide keys, each operating on a slider under the relevant pipe. Wind was supplied to the pipes by hydraulic means. According to old records the tone of such instruments was enormously powerful. It is even stated that the sound carried for 60 miles and that the players had to plug their ears! Such organs were used in the open, at gladiatorial shows and other events.

The Emperor Nero was a notable organist. We can readily imagine that, if Christians in the arena were hacked to pieces to the sound of organ music, they would not easily take to it for worship.

It was probably poverty as well as repugnance — due to its associations and its use by unsavory individuals — that deterred the Christian community for a long time from using the organ in worship.

In more recent times the use of the organ for worship occasioned much controversy. It was fully accepted by the Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches, but not by Calvinists and others. By the early 19th century congregational singing with instrumental accompaniment (bass, viols, flutes, fiddles, etc.) was widespread. The standards of competence of the musicians involved often left much to be desired, but attempts to introduce the use of the organ resulted in furious controversy. It was considered to be too much like Rome!

It is very interesting to see how acceptable means of worship with music and instruments has changed over the centuries. Today in our ecclesias the organ (or various types of keyboards) are generally used for accompaniment in worship and praise of God and His Son, and to encourage one another in our spiritual walk. Some ecclesias use both a piano and organ together to accompany hymns. Some ecclesias have also used the violin, flute, bass, and guitar to provide musical accompaniment.

As the times change, so do preferences and views on what are appropriate and acceptable musical instruments to use in worship. May our Heavenly Father be glorified in all ways and accept our various musical expressions of praise and thanksgiving.

*Bob Burr (Barnt Green, Birmingham, UK)
Revisions by Joan and Ken Curry*

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (11) *Bema*

*“For all the Athenians and strangers which were there
spent their time in nothing else,
but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21)*

There was a time when one could go out to the town square in almost any small town in America on a Sunday afternoon and find someone standing on a soapbox.¹ He would be haranguing whatever audience he could gather, pitching his views on everything from politics to religion and beyond. Many big cities had similar places for extemporaneous public speaking; in New York, one such location was Washington Square Park.² When I was in high school, I went there several times and preached the gospel unsuccessfully. I was not very good at handling hecklers! I recall once being told by several in the crowd to “get off my soapbox and go home”; when I mentioned there was no such thing as going to heaven, and that even King David had not ascended into the heavens.³ I wasn’t even standing on a soapbox, since that would have been too awkward and bulky to carry by subways from my home in Queens to Washington Square Park in Manhattan. The few times I spoke, I simply found an unoccupied park bench and stood on it while attempting to draw an audience.

Nevertheless, the term “soapbox” speaker has become so ubiquitous that it is used to describe anyone, regardless of the platform used, who addresses an audience to persuade them with respect to a particular crochets. National Public Radio has a regular feature called Sunday Soapbox, where one can hear views (usually political and/or social) not normally voiced on commercial stations. Today the Internet has created a whole new way of “soapboxing”, through such venues as Facebook, Youtube, and the personal so-called “blog”. This technology has become a powerful tool for preaching the gospel, but it has also raised the specter of irresponsible use: one can also find a plethora of websites with outsiders slamming our community and, worse yet, Christadelphians bashing each other!

The history of the *bema*

The informal address to a crowd gathered to hear views from all and sundry is hardly a modern phenomena. The ancient Greeks started doing this hundreds of years prior to the birth of Christ. The exact date this public communication media began is lost in antiquity, but one thing is certain — it wasn’t done on a soapbox; it was done on what the Greeks called a “*bema*”.

The primary meaning of the Greek word “*bema*” is a *step*.⁴ The word came to designate a raised platform for public speaking. The primary meaning probably came from the use of steps to a temple, or to a marketplace. This would give a speaker elevation, so that the prospective crowd could see and hear him. This was

precisely the means by which the apostle Paul addressed the crowd at the Roman barracks in Jerusalem, after being arrested under the false charge of bringing the Gentile Trophimus into the Temple precincts.

“So when he [the commander] had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people...” (Acts 21:40, NKJV).⁵

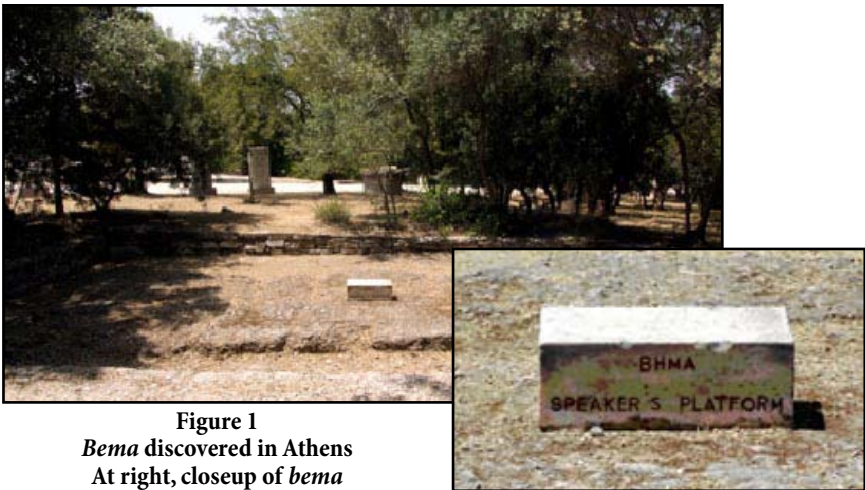


Figure 1
Bema discovered in Athens
At right, closeup of bema

Eventually, purpose-built platforms were constructed. By the fifth century BCE the practice was established, and almost every town and city in Greece had a *bema* for public speaking and debate. The *bema* was usually in a prominent position in the marketplace (known as the Agora in Greek) for the convenience of the townspeople. It was a means for sharing ideas, debating public issues, and on occasion making public announcements relating to court decisions. Figures 1 and 2 show the *bema* and Agora (marketplace) locations, respectively, that archeologists have discovered in Athens.



Figure 2
Agora
(marketplace)
discovered in
Athens

A similar platform was built in the town of Corinth for public speaking, and the remains of this structure are shown in Figure 3. In both Athens and Corinth, these speaker's platforms could hardly be missed by those coming and going in their daily shopping.



Figure 3
The remains of the *bema* in Corinth

In his 18 months in Corinth, the apostle Paul probably delivered numerous public gospel lectures there. It is also at this site that the proconsul Gallio held a public hearing to determine if charges should be brought against Paul for insurrection (Acts 18:13), as the Jews had requested:

*“The Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat (i.e., **bema**)” (Acts 18:12, NKJV).*

We can be certain that, in Athens, Paul stood on the *bema* in the marketplace to preach, exactly as described in Acts 17:17:

*“Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the **Gentile** worshippers, and **in the marketplace** (Greek **agora**) daily with those who happened to be there.”*

Rules for the *Bema*

There were certain rules for addressing a crowd from the *bema*. Generally, there was only one *bema* located in the Agora, and only one speaker at a time was allowed to address the crowd. Furthermore, the speaker had a limited time to complete his plea; when his time was expired he had to yield the platform, even if he was in mid-sentence. To insure that this was respected, a timekeeper controlled the activities. The amount of time might vary depending on a number of factors, including the importance of the occasion, the prestige of the speaker, and the number of people waiting to be heard. Figure 4 shows a water clock⁶

dug up in Athens, attributed to some time between the 4th and 5th century BCE. This limited each speaker's time so that all would have a fair chance to be heard. The upper basin was filled with water, the hole at the bottom being plugged. To activate this stopwatch, the plug was removed and water dripped into the lower basin. Time expired when the upper pot was completely emptied, and the speaker had to yield his place to the next in the queue.⁷ This particular water clock allowed for approximately a six-minute period. Clocks of this type were also used to limit speech in the Areopagus (i.e., the law court) of ancient Athens. Part of the inscription accompanying the exhibition of this clock in the Stoa museum in Athens reads as follows: *...An experienced speaker adjusted his speech to coincide with the last drop.*



Figure 4
A six-minute hydraulic clock

The apostle Paul was taken to the Areopagus (called Mars Hill in the KJV) and made his famous speech concerning the “unknown god”. I have heard it said that it is a pity we didn’t get the whole text. However, we may indeed have the complete text in what is recorded in Acts 17:22-31. If indeed Paul was under a time limit, as seems to have been the practice, then we can be certain he saw to it that every single word would count. It is one of the most masterful public speeches ever given. Judging from the almost immediate reaction by Dionysius and Damaris (and some others), it has to rank as one of the most successful preaching campaigns ever. Sometimes we think we need to say a lot to get our message across to people, but it may simply be the lack of sufficient forethought and focus in our preaching. Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us in speaking of the heathen, “For they think that they will be heard for their many words” (Matt 6:7, NKJV). We can use the wisdom of Solomon to guide us: “He who has knowledge spares his words” (Prov 17:27, NKJV). It is often a question of not how much we say, but how well we say it.

I obviously cannot prove it, but I get the feeling that, due to the time constraint, we do have the whole speech the apostle made on Mars Hill (the exact site is pictured in Figure 5). That speech teaches us several very important lessons that we can apply to preaching the gospel:

1. Introduce your subject by winning the audience over: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious” (Acts 17:22, NKJV). This was a compliment that was guaranteed to elicit at least nodding agreement and a favorable ear from his audience.
2. Relate what you are saying to the experience of the group (or the individual): “...as also some of your own poets have said...” (v 28).

3. Finally, the most difficult part: Challenge those listening and clearly make them appreciate the importance of the gospel message — “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness...” (vv 30,31, NKJV).

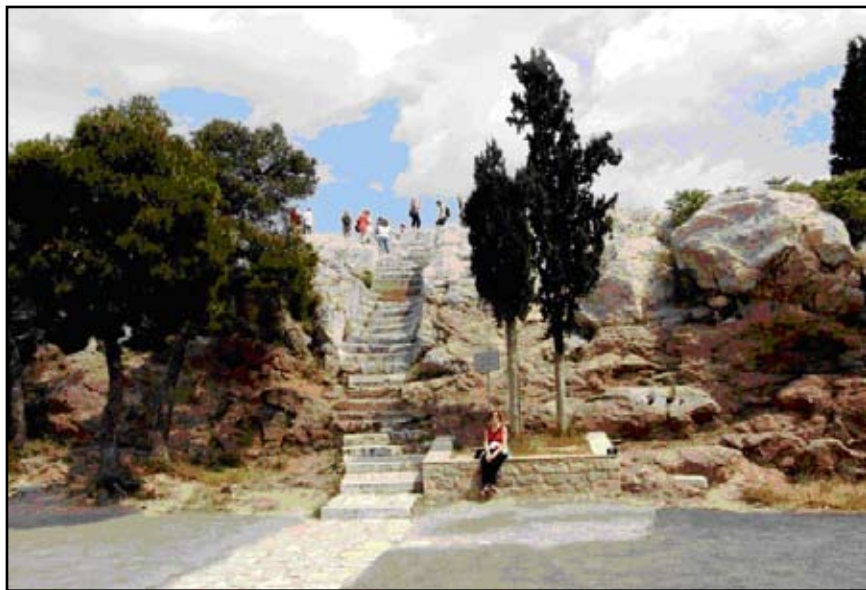


Figure 5
Mars Hill or the Areopagus in Athens

The evolution of the word *bema*

The Greek word *bema* is translated as “judgment seat” ten times in the KJV, while the NIV uses the concept of “court” in all but the last two citations (Rom 14:10 and 2Co 5:10), where it reverts to the King James usage. The Diaglott uses the word “tribunal” on six occasions and “judgment seat” on the other four (Acts 25:6,10,17; Rom 14:10). The original Greek city-state democracies never had “judgment seats” because their courts had juries chosen from the citizenry. The town *bema* might have been used, on occasion, as a place to announce a judgment, but it was not a court of law — that was held in another place called the Areopagus, as we have seen in Athens.⁸ Why then did the King James translators and subsequent scholarly Bible translations use the legal terms of judgment seat, court, or tribunal? The answer appears to lie in the evolution of the word *bema* as a result of the Roman conquest of Greece.

The Roman conquest of Greece in the middle of the second century BCE turned Greece into a Roman province, one subject to Roman law and justice.⁹ The concept of a “judgment seat” was introduced along with the Roman occupation. In the Roman legions a tribune was the officer who ruled over a cohort¹⁰ of infantry soldiers. When a legionnaire was accused of a crime, a panel of tribunes

was assembled to judge the matter, hence the origin of the tribunal. Prior to the establishment of the empire by Caesar Augustus, civil courts also had an elective office of tribune to try matters of offense against the law. Later, in the age of the empire, this system was naturally exported to the provinces under Roman control, with provincial governors acting as judicial agents. This is exactly the position that was held by the likes of Pilate (Matt 27, etc.) and Felix and Festus (Acts 24 and 25). These judicial hearings usually took place on a raised stage in a conspicuous place. Sometimes, if a public show of the trial was found necessary, a seat for the judge was set on this platform so that a large crowd could witness the proceedings.

In Matthew 27:17-22 we have a perfect example of Pilate doing precisely that. From the platform, he played to the crowd as charges were brought against our Lord Jesus Christ. One could hardly imagine such an uncivilized court proceedings taking place in any democratic nation in the world today (at least one would hope not!). Much as the words “soapbox orator” came to be associated with an extemporaneous speaker to an *ad hoc* audience, the term *bema* came to include public court proceedings. A magistrate or Roman official in charge of the trial would seat himself on the judicial platform, or *bema*, to preside.

Some Christians have taken the primary meaning of *bema* as a vehicle for public debate and announcements to imply that the “judgment seat” really has no judicial function, but is rather only a means of announcing degrees of reward.¹¹ However, this cannot be supported either by the generally broader meaning of the word prevailing in the time of the apostle Paul, nor by Scriptural context. The context of the passages in Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10, coupled with the admonition of the apostle Peter, make this abundantly clear:

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1Pe 4:17, NKJV).

Over the years much has been written in our Christadelphian community about the *bema* of our Lord Jesus Christ, but not all of it has been edifying. Some have insisted on details that cannot be supported in Scripture with respect to the exact location and procedure. We need to be careful not to lay undue burdens upon the consciences of our brothers and sisters by elevating mere speculative details to first-principle status. When it comes to an apt and succinct exposition on “The Judgment Seat” (or *bema*), it is hard to improve on Bro. Robert Roberts’ article entitled “True Principles and Uncertain Details”.¹² There he wrote the following in 1898, regarding the judgment seat:

“Uncertain detail: Where will he [Christ] set it up? Will it be in Palestine, or in Egypt, or in the Arabian Peninsula, in the solitudes of Sinai? We cannot be sure. All available evidence seems to point in the direction of the last-mentioned; but an uncertain detail must not be made a basis of fellowship. We must not insist upon a man believing the judgment seat will be set up at Sinai or any particular place so long as he believes that *Jesus Christ will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his Kingdom.*”

Given this simple but essential doctrine, it is important that our hearts be pricked with awareness that our mortal lives can be a prelude to greater things. To labor *for the meat that perishes* (or, to put it in a modern context, to labor for careers, houses, autos, and other material things that will all perish too), while ignoring, forgetting, or putting aside to some future date our service to the LORD God is to take Him for granted. None of us can guarantee how long we will live; tomorrow or the next moment could be the last breath we ever take. When I keep these thoughts before me I tremble, as did Felix when he heard of the judgment to come (Acts 24:25). However, I also rejoice in the grace provided by the Lord Jesus Christ, who through his conquest of sin provided a way for forgiveness of our sins. As long as we seek to do our best, we may have confidence that our sins will be forgiven (cp 1Pe 2:3). But if we turn our backs on the Lord's grace, we can be equally certain that we will be condemned (cp 1Co 15:19).

Are we prepared to stand before the *bema* of our Lord Jesus Christ?

John C. Bilello
(Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. Soap was a particularly dense product that needed a strong wooden crate for shipping. Presumably such a crate made a good platform, giving a speaker enough height to command an audience. Other types of shipping crates were also used, but soapboxes were so ubiquitous that they became the standard adjective to describe an outdoor orator. The term apparently came into use around 1907 (*Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, 2nd edition, Dorset & Baber, Pub.). The term "soapbox" does not appear in *The Oxford Universal Dictionary*. This appears to be strictly an "Americanism".
2. Public speaking in London, England, is famously done at Hyde Park Corner, usually on Sundays. Some sources say this started in 1872.
3. Acts 2:34.
4. Strong's number 968. *bhyma bema*, *bay'-ma*; from the base of 939; a step, i.e., foot-breadth; by implication, a rostrum, i.e., a tribunal; judgment-seat, set (foot) on, throne.
5. The NIV used the word "steps" in Acts 21:35 and 40. However, the Greek word here is not *bema* but Strong's number 304.
6. This type of hydraulic clock is called a *klepsydra* in Greek. The actual time allowed varied from place to place and even depended on the reputation of the speaker, i.e., a famous orator might be allowed more time to address his audience.
7. Such polite protocol was not always followed, particularly in times of civil or religious unrest.
8. The modern Greek usage of the word *bema* primarily refers to a speaker's platform. For example, the raised area at the front of Eastern Orthodox churches where the priest gives the sermon is known as the *bema*.
9. "In 146 [BC], Rome defeated the revolted Greek cities. Corinth was destroyed and Greece became a Roman province." From http://flagspot.net/flags/gr_chron.html#rom
10. By the time of the apostle Paul, a Roman legion was composed of 10 cohorts, each cohort commanded by a tribune. The cohort was further made up of six centuriae, each led by a centurion. Originally a centuria was composed of 100 men, but by the time of the apostle Paul most legions were understaffed, and typically a centurion commanded 80 men. From <http://www.unrv.com/military/legion.php>
11. 1 Corinthians 3:15 is usually cited to justify this interpretation.
12. The excerpt on "Uncertain Details" concerning the Judgment Seat is quoted in full from *The Christadelphian*, May 1898, pp. 182-189.

Reflection

The Nature of the Bread and Wine at the Table of the Lord:

Does it Matter?

The crotchet on this question is nothing new. It was buzzing about in the days of Dr. Thomas, who had no patience with it. The answer is this — “Where there is no law, there is no transgression” [Rom 4:15]. Those who say we ought to have unleavened bread and unfermented wine are “wise above that which is written.” The Lord has left no directions, and therefore we are free.

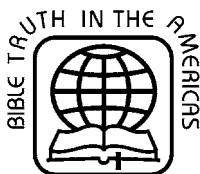
The object of breaking the bread and drinking the cup is to “bring to remembrance” [1Co 4:17] the things symbolized, and this does not depend upon the quality of the articles partaken of, but on mental discernment in connection with the memorial act... If much is made of the quality of the articles used, the object of using them is liable to be lost sight of. The finest bread and wine will fail to refresh the memory if the spiritual apprehensions are low; while, on the other hand, indifference of quality does not interfere with the spiritually quickened.

But it is contended we ought to get as near the original as possible. A good contention when not pushed too far. The “original” breaking of bread was partaken of at a *triclinos* [*a Greek word meaning a very low three-sided table around which a small number of individuals might eat while reclining*]. Must we provide a similar piece of furniture, and recline like the Orientals? The “original” was preceded by the Jewish Passover, of which, indeed, the breaking of bread and drinking wine is itself a feature. Must we, in this, imitate the original? The disciples were attired in flowing Eastern costume [*robes*]; must we be likewise? The bread and wine were served in vessels of Oriental construction. Must we refrain from bringing Christ to remembrance till we have found out the exact pattern and quality of these?

The answer is obvious. If Christ had commanded conformity in these particulars, we must needs have conformed [*i.e., we must conform*], at however great inconvenience or contempt; but there is no such command. Neither is there any direction as to the quality of the bread to be eaten or the wine to be drunk. We obey this command when we eat bread and drink wine, though the loaf we eat be differently shaped and compounded, and our wine differently tasted and made.

To contend otherwise is to make the observance of the Supper impossible; for if there is anything in the contention, the identity of the bread and wine must be exact and not approximate.

Robert Roberts,
The Christadelphian, vol. 29, pp. 133, 134.



Bible Mission News

Latin America: Seven Baptisms

God's hand is evident in many parts of the world in these last days, drawing men and women to His Truth! We are pleased to report that on Sunday, June 15, 2008, there were seven baptisms in different countries in Latin America.

San Salvador, El Salvador: Bro. Gregorio Mate and Sis. Martina Mate de Rivera (brother and sister in the flesh) were baptized on the same day. Their sister, Sis. Alejandra Guzmán (who died of cancer some months ago), had been preparing both for baptism. Gregorio was the initial contact of the Mate family back in 1975!

Quito, Ecuador: Sis. Fanny Espinoza, Bro. Galo Cueva, Sis. Jeanneth Cueva, and Bro. Rodrigo Flores were baptized after long-term instruction. It was also the last Sunday with the ecclesia for Bro. Kevin and Sis. Rebekah Hunter and their four children, prior to their returning to Canada.

Córdoba, Argentina: Sis. Elizabeth Gilardoni, 82, joined her husband, Bro. Francisco Gilardoni, and they will now walk together in the Lord after 57 years of marriage. Francisco was baptized about two years ago at the age of 87!

Details about some of these happy ecclesial events can be found in articles to follow.

*On behalf of the CBMA Latin American Committee,
Don Luff*

A new sister in Argentina: United in the Lord after 57 years of marriage!

Elizabeth Gilardoni was baptized into the Córdoba, Argentina, Ecclesia on Sunday, June 15, 2008. Present at the ceremony were the following brothers and sisters: Hugo Petrilli, Teresa Suárez, Julia Reynoso, Rubén Barboza, and Elizabeth's husband Francisco. In addition we were accompanied by our friends Teresita Alvarez, her friend Lucía, Diego Gómez, Walter Brandan, and Julio Maldonado with his wife Rosana. Also, Francisco and Elizabeth's son Dr. Raúl Antonio Gilardoni made a special trip from Buenos Aires to be present at the ceremony. The group was completed by Bro. Rubén's wife Roxana and their children Milena and Juanse.

Sis. Elizabeth (Eli), 82, has been married to Bro. Francisco (Pancho), 89, for 57 years. They have four children, 14 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Both are blessed with good health and mental acuity. They were members of the



Elizabeth and Francisco

Roman Catholic Church until just three years ago, when they came across an advertisement for the CBMA Bible correspondence course, which the ecclesia had published in a local newspaper. Shortly after beginning the course they attended some public lectures by visiting brethren, and since then they have become very good Bible students and assiduous participants in all ecclesial activities.

Our small ecclesia is growing little by little with the help of our Heavenly Father and the valuable guidance of the brothers and sisters of the CBMA: Jim and Jean Hunter of Los Angeles, California, Don and Miriam Luff of Ontario, Canada, and Robert and Christine Alderson of Auckland, New Zealand. These all visit us regularly to give us the benefit of their experience and Bible knowledge. We also receive frequent visits by other brothers and sisters from all over the world, so that our little group is no longer isolated but feels itself to be a vital part of the international Christadelphian community.



The Córdoba Ecclesia, with families and friends

Our ecclesia activities are enthusiastically supported by about 20 members and friends. In addition we are in personal contact with more than 50 of the 300 people in the area who receive the Bible correspondence course from California. These have discovered the Christadelphians either through newspaper advertising, as did Pancho and Eli, or through the labiblia.com website, which has brought so much benefit to us in Latin America.

Those who would like to send their best wishes to our new sister may write her at the following address:

Elizabeth Gilardoni
Apartado Postal 2,
5109 Uniquillo, Pcia.,
Córdoba, Argentina

*Rubén Barboza,
Ecclesial Representative in Cordoba*

The Bahamas: Turning from Tradition to Truth

The fever for God is certainly strong in the Bahamas; the unfortunate thing is, it's based on false foundations. Recently, I was blessed to be able to go to the Bahamas on a week-long mission trip with my husband Jason Grant, and my in-laws, Patricia and Reid Ferguson. Following God is a way of life for the majority of the Bahamians, and I was surprised to see such a large number of churches for a relatively small population.

On a CBM-sponsored event, we were there to present a number of seminars on *Learning to Read the Bible Effectively* in both Nassau and Freeport. And they were an absolute success! We had a great turnout, and it was wonderful to hear a jubilant "Amen!" when people felt connected to what was being said, and as they reaffirmed their relationship to their Lord. We can certainly learn quite a lot about enthusiasm for our Lord from our island neighbors!

There are so many moments that stand out from our trip to the Bahamas, but the memory of the glorious beaches and the amazing weather does not compare to the memory of the unforgettable people we met at the seminar. There are only two brothers and five sisters throughout all of the islands of the Bahamas, and they certainly have their work cut out for them.

One highlight of the trip occurred in a seminar as we were discussing what the word "satan" actually means. We were completing an interactive exercise, using a concordance and looking at a number of examples, when an attendee had one of those "light bulb" moments. Once he found out that "satan" means nothing more than "adversary", he said (paraphrasing), 'So the only reason why we believe in Satan (as a horned creature with a forked tail and a pitchfork), is because of tradition?' He couldn't believe it. The impact was slowly hitting him as he was speaking, and the expression on his face was awesome.

And he was not the only attendee to have that epiphany. There were more stories similar to his throughout all the seminars.

The sisters and brothers in the Bahamas can use all the visitors and positive reinforcement that we as a community can manage. The guidance and edification that we provide will in turn be used by them as they guide and teach others.

There is no doubt that the Truth about God, His Son, and our promise of salvation could spread quickly throughout the Islands. The Bahamians are eager to learn, and they have a sincere thirst for knowledge. May we all continue to preach His Truth whether at home or away, as we await the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

*Much love in Christ's name,
Sylvia Grant
Ted Hodge, CBMC Linkman for The Bahamas*

Ecuador

Our five-year stay in Ecuador ended with a bang last Sunday, June 15, as four long-term students and family members of other brothers and sisters were baptized.

Fanny Espinoza is the wife of our Bro. Augusto Echeverria, and over their many years (she is in her 70s, he in his 80s) she has patiently borne with his wandering from church to church, ranging from their roots in Catholicism to the Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses and Evangelicals. Augusto himself was sure of what he'd found within a few weeks of first attending our meeting in Quito, and Fanny told me in her interview that this was the first time in their sojourning that she's felt the desire to join him.

Galo Cueva, also baptized on June 15, is the husband of Sis. Ana Valladares, and has been attending with her since the first week we arrived here back in August of 2002. At the time they were both active members of an evangelical church, but



The Cueva-Valladares

over time their confidence in their previous beliefs was eroded with a combination of personal classes, the postal course, and other literature. Sis. Ana was baptized first a couple of years ago, and Galo has now joined her.

To add to Sis. Ana's joy, and as a powerful testimony of the witness she has been

in her home, her daughter and son-in-law were also baptized on the same day: Jeanneth Cueva and Rodrigo Flores. Jeanneth and Rodrigo have been attending since 2005, though Jeanneth had actually completed all our postal courses a couple of years earlier. They too were active members of an evangelical church, and when we returned to Quito last summer after a year away in Canada, they had actually gone back to their original church because of the many friends they had. But that was actually for the better: it confirmed to them the fundamental differences between their previous beliefs and the true teachings of the Bible. When they realized they no longer could cope with the teachings of that group, they started attending the Quito Ecclesia again in January with a much stronger conviction that they were on the right path, and an intention to follow it through.



The four new members: Fanny Espinoza, Galo Cueva, Rodrigo Flores, and Jeanneth Cueva

Rodrigo and Jeanneth have two daughters (10 and 13) who were also instrumental in their coming back. When the family returned to their previous church for a while the children clashed continually on fundamental doctrines (the trinity and devil, mainly) with their peers and Sunday school teachers. Finally they begged their parents to let them come back to Sis. Clemencia's Sunday school class.

So this last Sunday was for this ecclesia one that would be truly memorable in *any* ecclesia: not only four new members, but the completion of two couples, and the addition of a third! When you work with new ecclesias where most of your members come in one at a time, and many don't enjoy support at home for their beliefs, it's impossible to underestimate the value and strength to the ecclesia of married couples, joined in the faith. It's also significant that all our new members have family or marriage ties to other members, which further strengthens the ecclesia. And finally, in Rodrigo and Jeanneth, we have our first younger couple with children, which is a good indicator for the long-term future of the ecclesia.

After the baptisms we also had a farewell lunch with everyone. God willing, we return home to Canada on June 18. We have been here for about ten months this time, after taking a one-year break back in Canada. Before this, we were here four years.

The ecclesia here is doing well, with our own work matched by strong contributions from many of the members. Bro. Cesar continues to support unflaggingly

every aspect of the ecclesia's work along with his wife, Sis. Mariana. Sis. Nelly has become ever more solid in faith and knowledge, even as she battles a difficult illness. Though she has no family of her own, she is a true spiritual mother in the ecclesia.

Bro. Carlos Revelo, nearly blind after a series of operations failed to re-attach his retina in the eye in which he had better vision, is moving from exhorting into lecturing, in addition to normal presiding duties and teaching senior Sunday school. Bro. Wilson's public lectures have become increasingly solid, and he continues to attend consistently and involve himself in every way he can, even as a Quito bus-route shuffle lengthens his commute to two hours each way.

Sis. Clemencia is taking a much-needed break from teaching the middle Sunday school class for the last three years, and thoroughly enjoying being back in the public lectures. Sis. Grace took over playing the piano after our departure, and her talent is probably the most unique of all in Latin American ecclesias; Christadelphia in these areas doesn't seem to pull in many musicians. Sis. Lucia has taken on the youngest Sunday school class, and shown an amazing level of zest and creativity for the job. And so the list goes, as almost all of our members keep themselves active and contributing in whatever ways they can.

In the coming months the ecclesia is looking forward to an extended visit from Bro. Bill and Sis. Carol Rawson, followed by my (Kevin's) return in November for our first study weekend. We'll be holding it, God willing, November 1-3, and looking at the book of Hebrews. We have been trying to sort out the logistics for a gathering of this sort for a few years now, and this time all the pieces seem to have fallen into place. In ecclesias where the majority of the members have come in from the outside as new contacts, it can sometimes be a struggle to get everyone together other than Sunday mornings, and it therefore takes longer for strong relationships to form within the group. A three-day weekend away together will help us all to bond more, and create more intimacy and mutual reliance between our brethren and sisters.

Please remember the Quito ecclesia in your prayers. If you plan to visit, please contact us for ecclesial information and meeting times, at bible@christadelphia.org. Visitors are always appreciated!

And now, as we prepare to fly home and move into a new stage of life, we would like to end our stay in Ecuador with these verses which sum up our experience in the last few years:

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

Kevin Hunter

Guadalajara: My First Visit

Bro. Norm Duke and Bro. Martin Owen of the San Diego County Ecclesia traveled to Guadalajara May 2-4, 2008. Such visits are part of the partnership program between the two ecclesias, in which San Diego members stay for a “long weekend” to help with classes, worship, and preaching work, as well as to share fellowship. All this provides encouragement to the active and growing Guadalajara group of brethren and interested friends. Below is Bro. Norm Duke’s impressions following his first trip. Bro. Norm reports high hopes of visiting again.



Bible Class

Well, first of all I really enjoyed the experience of traveling from San Diego, California, down to Guadalajara with Bro. Martin Owen. Crossing the border was uneventful except to observe the dire poverty that many people endure in certain areas of Mexico. Guadalajara, Mexico, is a very large, busy city and quite different. I am happy to report that our brethren seemed to be doing fairly well. Martin taught a class and delivered the Sunday exhortation. I

delivered a class by reading it in Spanish. I can read fairly well, but can’t yet carry on a real conversation. Three of the brethren speak English.

All the brothers and sisters seemed very pleased to have us there and made us feel very welcome. Guadalajara has some quite beautiful historic areas in and around the city. One of the brothers took us to Lake Chapala, a nearby landmark site.



At Lake Chapala

The ecclesia is functioning well and established in a nice rental location, to which it moved last year. The meeting hall is not far from the city center; it is quite spacious and nicely furnished, with many Bible maps and charts on the walls. This young ecclesia really needs the support of other well-established meetings, and we were delighted to help out. (By the way, speaking Spanish is not a requirement for visiting; there are members who can translate.) God willing, the true gospel will continue to spread in Mexico. We are very encouraged

by what God has done here in Guadalajara. For more information contact Bro. Don Luff at luffs@sympatico.ca.

*In the Hope we share, Bro. Norm Duke
San Diego County Ecclesia/CBMA Partnership Program*

Guyana Bible School

Once again it was the privilege of Canadian brothers and sisters to enjoy the fellowship and hospitality of the ecclesias in Guyana. Bro. Matt Trowell and Bro. David and Sis. Mary Styles, along with two of their children Daniel and Joanna, attended the 37th Guyana Bible School. It was held this year over the Easter weekend in the Eccles ecclesial hall in Georgetown, Guyana. For Bro. Matt this was his first visit to Guyana (hopefully the first of many!), and for the Styles family it was a return visit much like coming home!

The Bible School was attended by about 80 brothers and sisters from around the country. I believe that every ecclesia in Guyana was represented. Under the general heading of “The Work of the Chief Shepherd: Then and Now”, Bro. Matt led classes on “The Empty Tomb”, and Bro. David on “The Ecclesia — the Pillar and Stay of the Truth”.

The brothers of Eccles Ecclesia capably organized the Bible school, and the sisters worked hard behind the scenes to produce culinary wonders in the kitchen, presenting us with a different ethnic menu each day. Enthusiasm for Bible study and discussion permeated the atmosphere, and hearty conversation around Biblical topics followed each session. Many Scriptural and personal topics were discussed in a respectful and informed manner. The presentations by the various ecclesial groups of young people were a delight to watch during the social evening.

Young brothers, ably fulfilling the presiding duties, encouraged us for the future of the brotherhood in Guyana. During the weekend there was also the opportunity to have a brothers’ class and a sisters’ class. Both groups demonstrated a high level of Scriptural knowledge and understanding.

For the visitors it was a united response: “It was good for us to have been there.” We need to support and encourage each other in the brotherhood in these last days. The brethren certainly gave us a boost, and we pray that our attendance at the Bible school was of benefit to the ecclesias in Guyana.

Our love is with our Guyanese brothers and sisters, and our prayer is that they may remain strong and united in the faith, and that together we will be granted a place in the glorious Kingdom soon to be set up on the earth.

*Your brothers and sister in Christ,
Matt Trowell and David and Mary Styles
Bro. Ted Sleeper, CBMC Linkman
tsleeper@astound.net*

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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

BEDFORD, NS

Visitors have been: Bro. Brad and Sis. Deb, Joseph, Hannah and Megan Goodwin, Alyssa Baines and Bro. Ken and Sis. Wendy Dickson (Sussex, NB); Bro. Caleb Lloyd (Ottawa, ON); and Bro. Ken Easson (Dhaka, Bangladesh).

We invite you to our study day on Saturday, September 20, 2008, at 1:30 pm at Grand Lake/Oakfield Community Centre. Bro. Shawn Snobelen (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON) will speak on the topic "Jonah". Contact Bro. Michael Carr by phone at: 902-820-2532, or email at: buxtoncarr@hotmail.com.

Ronald A. A. Hill

BRANTFORD, ON

We are happy to extend a warm welcome to Sis. Marion Clayton by way of transfer from the Hamilton Greenaway Ecclesia as of June 15, 2008. We look forward to continued fellowship with her as we labor together in the truth.

Following the conclusion of the CHC school year, we wish God's blessing on Bro. Glen and Sis. Megan Abel and family, who are returning to Virginia. We have very much enjoyed the fellowship and labor of our brother and sister over the last year and will miss them greatly.

God willing, our young people's Camp Kumah weekend is to be held August 29-31, 2008, in Burford. Bro. Ron Kidd (London, ON) is to speak on the theme "As it was in the days of Noah." Please contact Bro. David and Sis. Alicia Billington to register at: 1-519-449-3955.

Daniel Billington

CALGARY, AB

John Fairhurst is now recording brother and may be contacted by mail at: 76 Royal Road NW, Calgary, AB T3G 5G9; by telephone at: 403-375-0955; or by email at: linjohn@telus.net. We thank Bro. Paul Aback for all his work on behalf of the ecclesia.

The Edmonton/Calgary Thanksgiving fraternal gathering will be held in Calgary on October 11-12, 2008. Our speaker will be Bro. Richard Morgan on the subject, "The Conversion of Saul". Accommodation is available with brothers and sisters, and children's classes are planned for children under 12 years old. Please contact Bro. Paul and Sis. Cindy Aback at pcaback@shaw.ca if you require accommodation.

John Fairhurst

ECHO LAKE, NJ

It has been quite a while since we last reported to the Tidings. In that time, we have had sad and happy occurrences.

It is with deep sadness we report that our Sis. Francenia Bennett fell asleep in Christ on December 22, 2007. She was a faithful sister for many years and we will miss her uplifting presence. Our sympathies are with her husband, Bro. Ollen Bennett, and their family.

We are very happy to announce the marriage of Bro. Michael Robinson and Sis. Sarah DiLiberto on December 22, 2007. We pray that their walk toward the kingdom will be blessed by our heavenly Father.

On March 22-23, 2008, our ecclesia hosted a study weekend given by Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA) entitled “Exploring the Psalms”. We thank our Bro. Vincent for his enlightening study on the Psalms and for the fellowship we enjoyed with his family.

Over the last several months, we have enjoyed fellowship with the following visitors: Bro. Ryan and Sis. Julia Mutter (Baltimore, MD); Bro. Nathan and Sis. Susan Lewis (Christchurch, NZ); Bro. John Staas and Sis. Margaret Cummins (Moorestown, NJ); Sis. Mabel Knapp (Union, NJ); Sis. Ruth Anne Jorgensen (Worcester, MA); Sis. Barbara Ryan (NY); Bro. Matthew Link, and Bro. Sandy and Sis. Janice Piskura (Washington, DC); Bro. Mark and Sis. Anita Vincent, and Bro. Paul and Sis. Dorothy Zawadzki (Boston, MA); Bro. Jeff and Sis. Kelly Gelineau, and Bro. Levi Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA); Sis. Beth Tregenza (Cumberland, S. Aust.); Bro. Tom and Sis. Yolanda Baldock, and Bro. Graham Baldock (Mississagua West, ON); Bro. Jamin and Sis. Kate Wigzell (Enfield, S. Aust.); Sis. Sarah Luxmore (Auckland, NZ); Bro. John Andrews (London West, ON); Sis. Mildred Leake (Torguay, UK); Bro. Matt Bittinger (Bozeman, MT); and Bro. Skip and Sis. Judy Conahan (Southern New Hampshire, NH). We also thank our brethren and sisters of Union, NJ, who fellowship with us on a regular basis.

We thank and appreciate words of exhortation given by Bre. Ryan Mutter, Mark Vincent, Matthew Link, Jeff Gelineau, Levi Gelineau and Jamin Wigzell.

God willing, we are planning a study weekend on October 11-12, 2008. The speaker is to be Bro. Carl Parry (Golden Grove, S. Aust.). The proposed study is on Zechariah and the theme is entitled, “The Priest Upon the Throne”. Contact Bro. David Link by email at: dlink44131@aol.com; or by phone at: 973-696-3316.

David Link

KINGSTON, JAMAICA

In December 2005 ten vicious attacks damaged our meeting hall and destroyed its contents. Over the past two years our sanctuary has been slowly and painstakingly restored and beautified by members of the ecclesia, with assistance from the Bible Mission and the Carolyn Andrews Memorial Fund. On January 20, 2008, eighty brothers and sisters and friends from five ecclesias in eastern Jamaica joined in rededicating it to the glory of God. We thank Bre. Jerome Linton (Atlanta Area, GA) and James Samuels (Spanish Town), two of our former spiritual leaders in Kingston, for their stirring exhortations. We all rejoice to see a fulfillment of 1 John 5:4: “This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.”

Davion Sinclair

LIMA, PERU

I am delighted to announce the baptisms of the first Christadelphians in the nation of Perú. CÉSAR AUGUSTO FRANKLIN and LUIS JULIÁN ENRÍQUEZ were immersed by Bre. Don Luff and Robert Alderson on May 11, 2008. Work had begun in Perú by means of the Bible correspondence course in 2001. From the beginning it gave reason for optimism, because more postal course requests have been received via the labiblia.com website from Lima than from any other city. Bro. Luis Julián first came to know us while he was visiting La Paz, Bolivia, in October of 2004 and a

friend persuaded him to attend some public lectures being given there by Bre. Don and Robert and Bro. Hugo Petrilli of Argentina.

For his part, having come across the website in mid-2005, Bro. César quickly became an excellent Bible student and has been our most assiduous and punctual visitor during mission visits to Lima. These began in October of 2005, when Bro. Robert made the long trip from Auckland. Since then many more speaking visits by numerous brothers and sisters have attracted sizeable audiences, and led to the formation of a core group of friends interested in baptism. With God's continued blessing we are very hopeful of being able to immerse the others in His good time.

Jim Hunter

LONDON, ON

After a satisfactory interview, we are pleased to welcome Bro. Rick Lange from the Woodstock Unamended Ecclesia. We are also pleased to gain by transfer Bro. Alan and Sis. Jean Prowse from the Toronto Church St. Ecclesia, and Bro. Kevin and Sis. Sarah Leadbetter from the Hamilton Ewen Rd. Ecclesia. We are sorry to lose, however, Sis. Jenny Scott who has transferred to the Detroit Livonia Ecclesia and also Sis. Joyce Lausch who has returned to the Manitoulin Island Ecclesia.

In May we held our annual CYC Gathering, and we thank Bro. Dev Ramcharan for his ministrations on our behalf.

Colin Meaker

PORT MARIA, JAMAICA

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the council of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners." We the brethren of Port Maria, Jamaica, were happy to add to our membership two converts. We welcome MILDRED BISHOP and SANDRA REID who were immersed on June 15, 2008. The Lord has been blessing us since the WCF has been assisting us with our preaching effort. The gospel news has been spreading and, if we follow where the Lord leads, we will see his glory shining all around us. All praise be to the Lord for his blessing on us. Let's keep working for the Lord.

Dave Clarke

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

The local Sunday school program was hosted by the San Francisco Marinwood Ecclesia this year on April 6, 2008. We had 80 or so from Mendocino, Sacramento, San Francisco Peninsula, and Marinwood gather for memorial service, lunch, and pageantry.

Our annual Sunday school picnic, held June 8, 2008, was a success as usual. Over 120 people came for the fun. The fellowship, food, and games ended with over 200 water balloons flying through the air. Memorial service was held at the beach June 29, 2008.

We have enjoyed as visiting speakers Bre. Jim Seagoe, Jason Fish, and John Popel (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). Our thanks go also to our Bre. Bryan Berry (Austin Leander, TX) and Kim Bromet (Sacramento, CA) for their exhortations while visiting. And our most gracious thanks to Bro. Will Henley (Sacramento, CA) for his class and exhortation during our annual Sunday school picnic.

Fall memorial service schedule commences September 21, 2008, with Sunday school at 10:00 am, and memorial service at 11:00 am.

Paul Campbell

ST. LUCIA

2008 has been a busy year for the ecclesia in St. Lucia. An eight-lecture campaign was held in the library of Castries, the capital of St. Lucia, in January and a three-lecture campaign in the small town of Anse La Raye in February. Ten thousand leaflets were handed out in Castries and one thousand in Anse La Raye. The response of the public was very good and many new contacts have been established and are being followed up. Weekly lectures on Wednesday evenings continue to be held with Bre. Andre George and Edward Anthony giving the presentations. The attendance of visitors is encouraging.

In April, the ecclesia supported Bre. Andre George and Edward Anthony on a visit to the neighboring island of St. Vincent. A five-lecture campaign was held with a good response. We greatly appreciate the support of the following brethren and sisters during those campaigns: Cornelius Kellett (Washington DC); Martin and Lois Webster, and Jack and Shirley Robinson (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON); Cliff and Julia Baines (Sussex, NB); and Peter and Margaret Stonell (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON).

We are delighted to report that LAURETTA VALCIN was baptized into the saving name of the Lord Jesus Christ on March 9, 2008. Sis. Laurretta was introduced to the truth by Sis. Sheryl Thackoorie in one of her visits to St. Lucia several years ago. We pray that our new sister will continue to grow in faith and good works in the Lord.

We are sorry to report the falling asleep of Sis. Wilhelmina George. Sis. Wilhelmina was the mother of Bro. Andre through whom she learned the truth and was baptized last year at age 90! We pray that the day will soon come when our sister will hear the voice of the Son of God and rise again. The funeral service was attended by almost all members of the ecclesia and 150 relatives and friends, including the Prime Minister of St. Lucia and other senior government ministers. Before his baptism Bro. Andre had been a respected member of the party that now governs St. Lucia. Bro. Andre addressed the crowd, giving a very powerful overview of the gospel of salvation. After the ceremony a number of those attending expressed an interest in learning more of "the truth of the gospel".

Other brothers and sisters who have visited us are Mark and Paula Buckler; John and Lucy Handley (UK); Pierre and Pam Simard (North Bay, ON); and Reggie and Daphne Debeauville (Barbados).

George Rock

SUSSEX, NB

We are very pleased to welcome Bro. David and Sis. Mary Green, who have been commended in love from the Edmonton, AB, Ecclesia. We look forward to their fellowship and help as we await the coming of the Lord.

We are very thankful for the efforts of Bro. Dale Crawford (Bedford, NS), who led our study weekend on the subject of "Portrait of the Perfect Man — Job, Jesus, and the Saints". He presented very interesting points. Sis. Carol, Bro. Nathan, and David Crawford accompanied Bro. Dale, as well as Sis. Sarah Bennett.

A heartfelt thank you is extended to all who sent cards, letters or email messages, and made telephone calls to us and our family, and for the many prayers that were offered over the past few months as a result of brother Cliff's brain aneurysm and subsequent surgery while in St. Lucia. He is doing remarkably well, and we know that our heavenly Father was indeed watching over us, and has answered those prayers with a full recovery. We have so many things to be thankful for, and have been reminded of the love, care, guidance, and awesome power of our Father. It has been a very humbling experience. Thank you to everyone with love from Bro. Cliff and Sis. Julia Baines.

Cliff Baines

THOUSAND OAKS, CA

During the past few months we have been pleased to welcome many brothers and sisters from our neighboring California ecclesias. In addition, we welcomed from afar: Bro. Jared and Sis. Kim Vetkos, Bro. Jimmy and Sis. Jennie Vetkos, and Bro. Tony and Sis. Pam Cipriotti (S. Yosemite).

Our thanks go out to Bre. Dennis Bevans and Nathan Lewis (Reseda) and David Jennings (Pomona) for their exhortations and afternoon classes.

We are very happy to report that, following a good confession of his faith, MATTHEW HATCHER, son of Bro. Mike and Sis. Rose Hatcher, was baptized into the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ on June 26, 2008. We look forward to our journey together to the kingdom of God with our new brother.

We are also pleased to report that Bro. Jimmy and Sis. Jennie Vetkos have transferred back to our ecclesia after having been away for five years with the S. Yosemite Ecclesia. We have missed them and are looking forward to working together with them again in these last days.

Tom Graham

WORCESTER, MA

We are pleased to announce the birth of Samuel Roger Wells on April 16, 2008, to Bro. John and Sis. Elisabeth Wells. Out of necessity, he was delivered prematurely so his mother could continue her treatment as she battles cancer. Baby Samuel has done remarkably well thanks to our heavenly Father and will be coming home now after more than two months in the hospital. We continue to pray for Samuel and for his mother's healing as they grow stronger and begin their new life together.

We are also pleased to announce the baptism of MATTHEW FULMER on June 1, 2008, into the saving body of Christ. Bro. Matthew has been a devoted Sunday school and CYC student. His excellent statement of faith speaks to his commitment to our heavenly Father as we look forward to our walk together with him to the kingdom. We wish him God's blessings.

Mark Fulmer

The Anderson Family

Dear brothers and sisters,

We want to express our appreciation to the community worldwide for your prayers, love, acts of kindness, and generosity to our family on Grant's behalf. Our time has been fully dedicated to the process of Grant's recovery, and to our family.

It is now almost a year since Grant's accident. He has been home since January. Grant has multiple therapies along with doctors' appointments five days a week. Every day we leave by 9:30 am and return home between 4:00 and 5:30 pm. We take turns being with him at these sessions. These are long days for him but we feel he is working hard, making progress, and getting stronger. He has left-side deficit but is walking up to 130 feet with assistance, using a side pyramid cane and leg brace. He is gaining a little movement in his left hand and is able, with a lot of effort, to raise a fork to his mouth.



Bro. Grant Anderson

Recently we were surprised to learn that Grant has been absorbing his own skull bone flap that was replaced in December. Apparently this is rare but can happen when patients are young and healthy. Lord willing, in late August or early September, he will have what is left of his bone flap removed and a synthetic one put in its place. Hopefully this will not be a big setback, though this is major surgery and Grant is very nervous about it.

At home we are using a neuromuscular stimulator on his left shoulder, getting him on the NuStep exercise machine, stretching and exercising him on the mat table, doing the readings, having a Bible class, singing and playing piano, playing games to help with his cognitive skills, and so forth. Grant enjoys cards with pictures so he can put names with faces. He also enjoys visitors, and is funny and very conversational. He does get discouraged on occasion when therapies are painful and progress is slow, but he continues to praise God and thank Him for sparing his life.

It's truly an overwhelming time for us, yet we feel blessed to have the support of the brotherhood. We are grateful for the miracle our heavenly Father has performed with Grant, and we pray for continued healing of Grant and strength for all our family as we continue this new journey. Thank you again for helping us on this road.

Updates are available on www.grantreport.blogspot.com or on the FaceBook group: "Grant needs your prayers."

"I will extol thee, O Lord, for Thou hast drawn me up... O Lord my God, I cried to Thee for help and Thou hast healed me... and restored me to life..."
(Psa 30:1-3).

With much love in the Hope we share,

Glen and Julie Anderson

A note from Bro. Andre George

Bro. Andre George of St. Lucia wishes to thank all brothers and sisters who wrote to him following the recent passing away of his mother, Sis. Wilhelmina George.

New England Fraternal Gathering

The Cranston, RI, Ecclesia is pleased to send this advance notice of the 77th Annual New England Fraternal Gathering. The 2008 gathering, to be hosted by the Cranston Ecclesia, will be held Lord willing, at the East Greenwich, RI, High School on Sunday,

October 5, 2008. The theme for this year's gathering is "Be Ye Doers of the Word", and the speaker will be Bro. Jim Styles (Livonia, MI).

In connection with the gathering, a study day will be held on Saturday, October 4, 2008, at the Cranston Ecclesial Hall. Bro. Jim Styles will be delivering three classes under the theme, "Law versus Grace".

Detailed information will be sent to New England ecclesias in the weeks ahead, including daily schedules and maps and directions to both the study day and gathering locations. Anyone outside of New England who wishes to receive this information by email should write to Bro. Craig Nevers at: craignev@cox.net and a complete packet will be sent when ready.

We look forward to joining in fellowship with as many brothers, sisters, and young people as can take part in this wonderful weekend of study and refreshment around God's word.

Craig Nevers

The more things change...

*W.M. Thomson, who traveled extensively in Bible lands well over 100 years ago and wrote his impressions in **The Land and the Book**, had the following to say about the country of Lebanon:*

"The various religions and sects live together, and practice their conflicting superstitions in close proximity, but the people do not coalesce into one homogeneous community, nor do they regard each other with fraternal feelings. The Sunnites excommunicate the Shiites — and both hate the Druse. The Maronites have no particular love for anybody, and, in turn, are disliked by all. The Greeks cannot endure the Greek Catholics — all despise the Jews... There is no common bond of union. They can never form one united people, never combine for any important religious or political purposes; and will therefore remain weak, incapable of self-government, and exposed to the invasions and oppressions of foreigners. Thus it has been, is now, and must long continue to be... That omnipotent Spirit that brooded over primeval chaos can alone bring order out of such confusion, and reduce these conflicting elements to peace and concord."

With minor changes his political assessment could have been written yesterday, as well as in 1860. The desire expressed in his last sentence will, we pray, be soon fulfilled.

Minute Meditation

Life is a Test

There is a story about a little boy who complained bitterly because his school-teacher always gave the class a surprise test every Friday. Now, if this surprise came every Friday, how was it a surprise? We likewise should not be surprised that our Heavenly Father gives us tests throughout our lifetime. It not only happens regularly, but we are told that it will happen: "The Lord corrects the ones he loves and disciplines those he calls his own." We have the comfort of knowing that He does it for our ultimate benefit.

Words like "trials", "temptations", "refining", and "testing" occur hundreds of times in the Bible. We read that God tested Abraham by asking him to offer up his son, Isaac. God tested Jacob when he had to work an additional seven years for Rachel. God tested Joseph very severely with Potiphar's wife and the resulting prison sentence, and he came through with flying colors.

Not everyone in the Scriptures passes every test. The Bible is full of examples of what people did, written for our admonition. Adam and Eve failed their test in the Garden of Eden; Cain also failed; David failed some of his tests; and Jonah failed, learned, and then succeeded. We have examples of many faithful passing their tests brilliantly, such as Ruth, Esther, and Daniel and other prophets.

Character is both developed and revealed by tests, and all of life is actually a test. We are always being tested. God watches our response to people, problems, success, conflict, illness, disappointment, and even the weather. Do not be surprised by the testing that God gives us because He does it for our good, to develop our righteousness. Thankfully, He has promised never to test us beyond our ability to bear it. If we are having a tough time, we can be confident that not only does God know about it, but that He knows that we are capable of handling the challenge with His help, because otherwise it would not be happening. We learn to trust our God, to cast all our cares upon Him because He cares for us.

God often helps us to get started on the right way with support from spiritual guides. King Saul had Samuel, King Joram had Jehoida the priest, and many people have godly parents or teachers. But then, God may want to know what kind of decisions we will make independently. Both kings failed without the guidance of their advisers. Even a godly king like Hezekiah, who had enjoyed a close fellowship with God, was left alone at a crucial point in his life to test his character, which revealed a weakness. We are told, "When envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart." Unfortunately, Hezekiah proudly showed off all his treasures.

When we understand that life is a test, then we come to realize that nothing in our life is insignificant. Every happening should be viewed with the understand-

ing that God is testing us. The aggressive driver, the rude teenager, the ordinary distractions of life all give us opportunities to choose to react in a godly or ungodly manner.

Making right choices does not guarantee a problem-free life. God wanted Nehemiah to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and Nehemiah was willing to dedicate himself to the task. Yet God allowed Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem to oppose the good that God wanted done. The unrelenting opposition tested the resolve of Nehemiah and all the others who had to struggle to do the work in a time of trouble.

God allows adversaries to challenge us to see how we react to the test. We must overcome, as Jesus tells us, and every test we face is an opportunity to overcome and jump over a hurdle in the way of life that we are taking to the Kingdom.

Imagine a high hurdler getting ready to run a race in the Olympics and discovering that the organizers had forgotten to put up the hurdles in his lane. The athlete would ask for the race to be delayed until the hurdles could be set up, because without the hurdles he could not win. We need to take a positive attitude towards the hurdles that God has placed on our path on the race for the Kingdom. They are there for us to overcome, and we cannot overcome without something there to overcome. God wants us to learn to depend on Him, to seek Him for help in overcoming, and we learn this lesson from trials, the hurdles in our life. Fortunately God will never try us beyond that which we are able to bear. We can jump over whatever hurdles we find in our path because otherwise the Father would not have allowed them to be there.

When we are tried, we should not be surprised but rejoice that God loves us and gives us these tests to fulfill His promise: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

Robert J. Lloyd

"Love is not easily provoked" (1Corinthians 13:5)

We are inclined to look upon bad temper as a very harmless weakness; and yet here, right in the heart of this analysis of love, it finds a place; and the Bible again and again returns to condemn it as one of the most destructive elements in human nature. What is it made of? Jealousy, anger, pride, cruelty, self-righteousness, touchiness, stubbornness, sullenness. It is a test for love, a symptom, a revelation of an unloving nature at bottom. It is the intermittent fever which suggests a steadily growing disease within; the occasional bubble escaping to the surface which betrays some rottenness underneath; a sample of the hidden fruit of the soul dropped involuntarily when off one's guard. In a word, it is the lightning form of a hundred un-Christian sins. For a lack of patience, a lack of kindness, a lack of generosity, and a lack of courtesy are all instantaneously symbolized in one flash of temper.

Henry Drummond

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

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, Ballinafad, 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 Bedford, NS Study day. Bro. Shawn Snobelen (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON): "Jonah". 1:30 pm at Grand Lake / Oakfield Community Centre. Contact Bro. Michael Carr 902-820-2532 buxtoncarr@hotmail.com

20 London, ON, Annual Fraternal Gathering Bre. Don Styles (Ann Arbor, MI) and Nathanael Abel (Orangeville, ON): "Josiah". Please note new location: new ecclesial hall at 101 Wistow Street, London. Contact Bro. Dave Birchall 519-668-7081 dalefinancial@rogers.com

20,21 Paris Avenue, OH Study weekend. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK): "Ephesians: Build Together in Him". 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 Cranston, RI Study Day, at ecclesial hall. Bro. Jim Styles (Livonia, MI): "Law versus Grace", three classes. Contact Bro. Craig Nevers caignev@cox.net

4 Milford Road, MI Study day. Bro. Ron Kidd (London, ON): "David, the Shepherd King". Contact Bro. Trevor Snow 734-421-4215 tsnow1@hfhfs.org

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

5 New England Fraternal Gathering East Greenwich, RI, High School. Bro. Jim Styles (Livonia, MI): "Be Ye Doers of the Word". Contact Bro. Craig Nevers caignev@cox.net

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

10-12 Vancouver, BC Fraternal gathering. Bro. Andrew E. Walker: "Life Before the Flood". Contact Bro. Dan Orsetti 604-515-4704 pamela721@shaw.ca

- 11,12 Atlanta Area, GA** Fraternal gathering. Bro. Dean Brown (Avon, IN): "Luke's Two-Volume Gospel". Contact Bro. Carlos M. Carter 770-891-8915 carlosmcarter@comcast.net
- 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 Echo Lake, NJ** Study weekend. Bro. Carl Parry (Golden Grove, SA, Australia): "The priest upon the throne", based on the Book of Zechariah. Contact Bro. David Link dlink44131@aol.com 973-696-3316
- 11,12 Edmonton/Calgary Thanksgiving Fraternal Gathering** Calgary, AB. Bro. Richard Morgan (Saanich Peninsula, BC): "The Conversion of Saul". Contact Bro. Paul and Sis. Cindy Aback pcaback@shaw.ca
- 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
- 12 San Francisco Peninsula, CA** Fraternal gathering, Belmont Senior Center, Belmont, CA. Bro. Dave Jennings (Pomona, CA). Contact Bro. John Warner 510-528-7225 or Email Sis. Dolores Sleeper desleeper@astound.net for more information and accommodations
- 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, 1950 Governor's Road, Copetown, ON. Doors open at 12 noon; first talk starting 1 pm. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK): "Dedicated Wholly to the Hope of Israel"; Bro. Don Pearce (Rugby, UK): "Road Map to the Kingdom"; Bro Paul Billington (Brantford, ON): "Our Nation, Our People, Our Hope". Classes for children ages 3 to 8 during the 2nd and 3rd talks. Contact Bro. Gary Smith 519-758-0362 hgarysmith@sympatico.ca
- 14-16 Austin (Leander), TX, Fall Fraternal Gathering** at HEB Camp in Leakey, TX. Bro. John Bilello. Contact: Sis. Maritta Terrell, mt-ct@swbell.net, 512-331-5575
- 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
- 30 Ann Arbor, MI** Thanksgiving gathering, Holiday Inn North Campus, Ann Arbor, MI. Bro. Malcolm Cross (Doncaster, UK): "Christ in you, the hope of glory". Memorial service 11 am; afternoon Bible talk 2 pm. Contact Bro. Peter Bilello webmaster@tidings.org 734-424-9254

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

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P.O. Box 530696 • Livonia, MI 48153-0696
Periodicals Postage Paid at San Dimas, California

JANUARY 2009

10 Thousand Oaks, CA Day with the Word. Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA):
“Exhortations from the House of the Lord”. Begins 9:15 am with continental breakfast.
Contact Bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com

FEBRUARY 2009

22-29 Palm Springs Bible School Palm Springs, CA. Bro. Tec Morgan (Birmingham Washwood Heath, UK) and Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA). Contact www.californiabibleschool.org

Texas Fall Fraternal Gathering

The annual Texas Fall Gathering will be held at the HEB Foundation Camp outside of Leakey, TX from November 14-16. The speaker will be Bro. John Billelo. He will be giving classes on the topics of “The Bible and Science” and “Little Words”. Please contact Sis. Maritta Terrell mt-ct@swbell.net, 512-331-5575, for more information.