

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

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The dress of young sisters

An engrossing concern with young girls naturally is their appearance and dress; and excess in mere outward adornment is among their besetting sins. The young sister is at liberty to adorn herself; but she must be careful to have her ornaments chosen and adjusted according to the fashion book inscribed by the Spirit. This requires that she be richly adorned with good works, and modestly attired as regards dress. If she be rich in good works, she will of necessity [control her] fleshly desire to be richly-appareled outwardly — which desire, if indulged, would cripple her ability to adorn herself spiritually.

If she be moderate in her expenditure upon herself, she will doubtless be able to have something to expend in the service of Christ. He asks of her the first place in her affections. If she loves him, and at all appreciates the high destiny to which he has called her, she will make it a rule to let his claim have her first consideration in all matters. To begin early in life thus to train herself, will make many things easier of accomplishment in years to come, than if she should live the best part of her life, and then begin to try to crucify the natural desires.

Jane Roberts, *The Virtuous Woman*

Editorial

Coals of Fire

*"If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat;
if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head,
and the LORD will reward you" (Proverbs 25:21,22).*

The simple meaning of this proverb is: Show kindness to your enemies. Kindness to one's enemy is encouraged many times in Scripture, both in Old Testament (e.g., Prov 20:22; 24:17,29; Exod 23:4,5; Lev 19:17,18; Deut 22:1-3; Jer 29:7; Job 31:29) and New Testament (e.g., Matt 5:43,44; Luke 6:27,28; Rom 12:17-21; 1Th 5:15).

The easy part

A good example of showing kindness to one's enemies, with beneficial results, is in the story of Elisha and the king of Aram, or Syria, who sent his army to capture the prophet:

"As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, 'Strike these people with blindness.' So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked. Elisha told them, 'This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for.' And he led them to Samaria. After they entered the city, Elisha said, 'LORD, open the eyes of these men so they can see.' Then the LORD opened their eyes and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria. When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, 'Shall I kill them, my father? Shall I kill them?' 'Do not kill them,' he answered. 'Would you kill men you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master.' So he prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory" (2Ki 6:18-23).

One preacher, surveying this scene, wrote, 'What a noble revenge, to provide a feast for his persecutors — to provide a table for those who would provide a grave for him! No revenge but this "revenge" is heroic, and fit for Christian imitation.'

The way to turn an enemy into a friend is to act toward him in a friendly manner. It was said of a kindly old minister, obviously tongue in cheek, that one should be very careful never to do him a disservice or to hurt him in any way, unless one wanted to make him a friend for life!

A Chinese proverb makes the same point quite succinctly: "Meet good with good so that good can be *maintained*; meet evil with good so that good may be *created*."

We who live after the advent of the Messiah have an example unavailable to Solomon or Elisha: an example of self-sacrificing love and forgiveness for one's enemies. Our Lord Jesus Christ sought forgiveness for the soldiers who crucified him (Luke 23:34), and Stephen followed his Lord's example by praying for those who were about to stone him to death (Acts 7:60). But our Lord did a greater kindness even than this: he *died* for all of us when we were his avowed enemies (Rom 5:6-10) — he made it personal, for every one of us!

...and the hard part

That was the easy part of the proverb, at least in understanding it; putting it into practice when we just don't want to is another matter altogether.

But now we must consider the hard part of the proverb, that second verse:

"In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head" (Prov 25:22).

It helps, of course, that the apostle Paul cites these verses when writing to the Romans:

"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay [a further citation, of Deut 32:35]', says the Lord" (Rom 12:17-19).

Then in verse 20, Paul quotes Proverbs 25:21,22, and concludes:

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21).

Whatever precise meaning this verse may have had for those who first read or heard it, and tempting though it might be to look for an excuse to take vengeance upon one's enemies, it simply cannot justify doing so. Paul's inspired application of these words ("Overcome evil with good") rules this out altogether. Only God Almighty can avenge His wronged children.

But what does it mean?

So, without seeing it as a vengeful act, how can we understand the heaping of burning coals upon another's head? In *Strange Scriptures that Perplex the Western Mind*, Barbara Bowen suggests that heaping such coals on someone else's head describes the way a man might carry a brazier (a pan for holding burning coals) when going to a neighbor's house to borrow a fire. She says that the expression alludes to the old custom of carrying burning coals in a container. When one's home fire has gone out, he would need to go to a neighbor — even to his enemy — and request hot coals to carry back on his head. These coals were the evidence of the neighbor's love. Likewise, the person who receives undeserved kindness feels uncomfortable because of his neighbor's love. This guilt may gently convict the wrongdoer of his or her sins.

This illustration seems like a bit of a stretch, but in one form or another it is often suggested by expositors.

Perhaps, however, there is a more directly Scriptural interpretation. Let us ask the question, 'Where, in the Bible, are burning coals being heaped upon the "head" (Hebrew "rosh": chief or topmost part) of anyone or anything?'

Paying special attention to the Bible links, there are at least two possibilities:

In a number of passages, burning coals of fire symbolize the judgments of God. We know that God will rain these “coals” of judgment down upon His enemies (Psa 11:6; 120:4; 140:10; 2Sa 22:13). There are historical examples of Him doing just such a thing: to Sodom and Gomorrah in Lot’s day (Gen 19:24; Luke 17:29) and to Egypt in the time of Moses (Exod 9:23,24). In other words, it is *God’s* prerogative to do so, but not ours. We have already established that, and ruled it out as a legitimate enterprise for true believers in this age — even if they had the power to heap coals of fire upon their enemies in such a way.

Another possibility

However, a second possibility holds promise of helping us. We must now ask the question more specifically, ‘Where in the Bible are burning coals heaped upon the head, not of someone, but of *something*?’

To this there is an immediate answer. Burning coals belong in one place in the divine worship: the altars of God! In tabernacle and temple, such coals were always found on the altar of burnt offering, and periodically they were taken from that altar, and then heaped upon the other altar, the small altar of incense in the holy place. The purpose of these burning coals was to ignite the incense there (Exod 30:1-9,34-38). The burning incense in turn represented the prayers of the saints:

“May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice” (Psa 141:2).

This pattern is described in the Apocalypse:

“Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel’s hand” (Rev 8:3,4).

An extension of this worship was carried out each year on the Day of Atonement, when the high priest would carry a small censer, with burning coals and incense, from the holy place into the most holy place. This would bring the prayers of the whole nation into the actual presence of the Almighty (Lev 16:11-13). This seems to be what the priest Zechariah (soon to be the father of John the Baptist) was doing when the angel of the LORD appeared to him:

“[Zechariah] was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshippers were praying outside” (Luke 1:9,10).

This pattern is also described in the Apocalypse, where we see the four living creatures and the 24 elders standing in the presence of the Lamb and before the throne of God:

“They were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” (Rev 5:8).

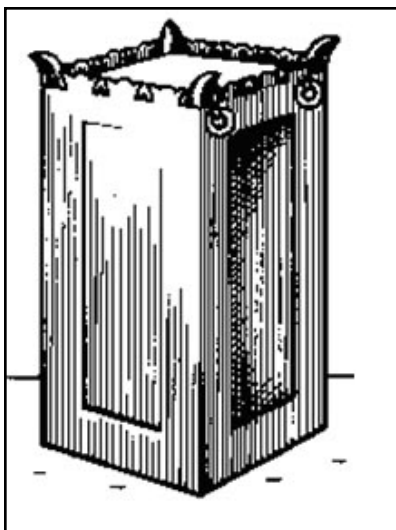
This leads to a quite satisfying conclusion. The burning coals are placed on the altar, or in the censer. And the altar and the censer alike are now seen to symbolize the individual believer. Now we may see this from the viewpoint of the offender, the one who has made himself the enemy of another. When he receives undeserved and unexpected kindnesses from the one whom he has treated as his enemy, he may be drawn to approach God and seek forgiveness for his own hurtful actions and thoughts. His “enemy”, by returning to him good for evil, has put coals and incense upon his head. His initial emotion, of burning shame, can now lead him to turn his heart to God. Now he may become a little individual altar or censer, using the ignited incense placed upon his head to fuel his prayer to his Heavenly Father: ‘Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!’

The right perspectives

We need the right perspective. We need to ask ourselves: ‘Can I see my “enemy” as the incense altar or the censer? Can I return good for evil, in the hopes that my good deeds may, like fiery coals, ignite the incense of prayer in my enemy, so that he may seek forgiveness from God?’

Then I need one final perspective: ‘*Lord, is it I?* Must I still learn not to hold grudges, and not to remember old wounds? Must I pray for forgiveness, for those who have hurt me, but also for myself, confessing how I’ve hurt others?’

George Booker



The altar of incense



Priest carrying a censer

Turning an enemy into a friend

Abraham Lincoln was a man who knew how to “overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21; cp Prov 25:21,22). In 1855, when he was a relatively unknown Illinois backwoods lawyer, he was hired to join a team of lawyers to defend Cyrus McCormick, the inventor of the harvester, in a high-profile patent infringement case. His colleagues were led by Edwin Stanton, an eastern attorney — famous, wealthy, and well connected politically. Lincoln prepared his part of the case meticulously, and then met Stanton and the others at the hotel where they would all stay while the case was being organized and argued in court.

On meeting Lincoln for the first time, Stanton took one look at the tall, gangling figure in ill-fitting clothes, and whispered to another attorney, “I won’t have this long-armed ape on my team; he clearly doesn’t know anything and can do us no good.” So it was made known to Lincoln that he ought to withdraw from the case, which he did. He delivered his legal research to Stanton, and resigned, but remained at the hotel and in the courtroom to observe the case. Stanton never took one look at the work Lincoln had done. Though Lincoln had a room and ate all his meals at the same hotel as Stanton and the others, he was never invited to eat with them, never spoken to, and never acknowledged in any way.

In 1861, after an improbable and meteoric rise, Abraham Lincoln was president of the United States. With the country on the brink of civil war, Lincoln set about to include in his cabinet, and among his closest advisers, the men who had been his greatest rivals for the presidency. They were men who, by all accounts, and certainly in their own estimation, were each and every one better qualified to be president. They were in fact what the historian **Doris Kearns Goodwin** calls “a team of rivals”. In her book of that title, she writes, “The powerful competitors who had originally disdained Lincoln became colleagues who helped him steer the country through its darkest days... Lincoln’s genius revealed itself through an extraordinary array of personal qualities that enabled him to form friendships with men who had previously opposed him; and to repair injured feelings that, left unattended, might have escalated into permanent hostility.”

Returning to Edwin Stanton, **Goodwin** writes, “Unimaginable as it might seem... in their next encounter six years later [1861], Lincoln would offer Stanton the most powerful civilian post in his administration. Lincoln’s choice of Stanton would reveal... a singular ability to transcend personal vendetta, humiliation, or bitterness... As for Stanton, despite his initial contempt for the ‘ape’, he would not only accept the offer but come to respect and love Lincoln more than any person outside of his immediate family.”

During the next years, their two families would share a summer residence and spend leisure time together, while Stanton became Lincoln’s greatest help and support. Four years later, as the fatally wounded president lay dying, Edwin Stanton sat beside him, holding his hand and weeping.

Exhortation

Rules for Holy Living (Colossians 3)

We live in a society of rules. These rules give us guidelines on how to act. They let us know what we should be doing and what we shouldn't be doing. They let us know what is right and wrong. Consider, for example, if we didn't have rules of the road. How would people know which side of the road to drive on or how fast they should drive? Because we have rules of the road, such as speed limits, driving is much safer. Speed limits let drivers know the correct speed to drive for a specific road. Stop signs allow cars and trucks to get through intersections without crashing into one another. When we are old enough to get our driver's license, we need to study the rules and learn how we should behave behind the wheel. It is the same thing with our Bible. It gives us rules on how we should behave in different situations.

Colossians 3 gives practical information we can use in our walk to the Kingdom. I have always liked the parts of the Bible I can apply to my daily life, and Colossians 3 gives a black-and-white image of proper conduct and behavior.

A little bit of background and history: Colosse is located in the lower middle portion of what is now Turkey. It was on a major trade route from Ephesus to the Euphrates River. At the time the letter was written, Colosse was a city in decline. Over time its neighbors, Laodicea and Hierapolis, surpassed the city in power and trading importance. It is believed the ecclesia was formed with the help of a man named Epaphras, whom Paul called "a dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ" (Col 1:7). The ecclesia fell into wrong practices that are not specifically explained by Paul, and while he was in jail in Rome he writes to them to help correct and encourage their meeting.

Set your hearts on things above

Colossians 3 starts us off with what I call Rule #1 of the Rules for Holy Living:

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (vv 1,2).

This verse tells us what we should be constantly thinking about. Because we have been raised with Christ, our focus should always be on things above, not on earthly things. This is often easier said than done. Unfortunately, putting our focus on earthly things is very easy in this world because we are constantly bombarded with slick and exciting images that grab us and make us think we want and need them. These images make us envious; they cause strife and greed and remove our focus from where it should be. If we focus on earthly things and make them more important than God, we are making a serious mistake.

When we were baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection, we made a contract that guarantees the reward of the Kingdom for those who keep their focus. But if we break that contract, we are risking disqualification. What is it worth to us? Where should our thoughts be? Jesus tells us:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt 6:19-21).

Do you think God cares what type of car we drive? Or how much money we have? Or what position we attain at work? Earthly things don't last forever — godly things do. Jesus tells us not to put our treasures in earthly things. Remember Colossians 3:1,2: We should set our hearts on things above, where Christ is. Jesus is the best treasure we can have.

Delete all the rest

Then follow what I call the "Don't do it!" Rule. Rule #1 says to set our focus above on heavenly things. Rule #2 says to delete the things that belong to earthly nature. These things will surely get us into trouble:

"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry" (v 5).

These things we may have done in the past. When we did these things, we weren't putting God first. We have all seen people in the news who have done such deeds and paid a high price. Paul says that as followers of Christ we should put such behaviors to death. Don't do them; turn away from these temptations! These things are of an earthly nature. Our focus should not be there. Our focus should be on God and Jesus. We are not aiming to live in Sodom and Gomorrah, but to live eternally in God's Kingdom.

When faced with an evil desire or greed or any of the other items in this verse, we have to ask for help. God always gives us a choice. The easy choice is to succumb to the earthly desire, but you know that it isn't the right choice. The right way is not the easy way. The things you truly want aren't going to be easy. When tempted, pray to the Father for strength and help. Elsewhere, Paul gives us examples as a warning and consequence of focusing on earthly matters:

"For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: 'The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.' We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did and in one day 23 thousand of them died.

We should not test the Lord as some of them did and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did and were killed by the destroying angel” (1Co 10:1-10, NIV).

The Israelites were saved from the Egyptians by God and saw many miraculous signs. God saved them by parting the Red Sea and guiding them in the wilderness. But they complained and focused on earthly things instead of on God; they wanted to be back in Egyptian bondage. They got into trouble for it and God smote a large number of Israelites. We have their example for a reason: they are a warning to us (v 11).

We are also told that these temptations can be faithfully borne because God is faithful and will not tempt us with more than we can handle (v 13). In every temptation God gives us a way out. It is important to remember this when we are dealing with trials. God gives us a way out. It is our choice to take it. It just depends where we are looking: up or down.

Paul continues with a statement and a warning:

“Because of these, the wrath of God is coming” (Col 3:6).

This is a strong warning indeed: if we continue down paths of sin, God will punish us. God is opposed to sin. I’m not sure we think about that enough. If we did, we probably would make different choices when we meet temptations.

Elsewhere again Paul writes of those who “exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the creator — who is forever praised” (Rom 1:25) Do you ever see yourself in that statement? Do we do what we want rather than what God wants? Then he wrote that those who were stubborn and unrepentant “are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed” (Rom 2:5). But God “will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger” (Rom 2:6-8). Brothers and sisters, those who continue to live in a life of sin will receive God’s wrath. While I don’t know exactly what God’s wrath looks like, it has to be a terrible thing. We are warned. God will punish those who are sinful and do not seek to change. But the same warning holds for those who did change, at baptism, but later allow themselves to relapse into the old fleshly desires and the old worldly ways.

More “delete” rules

Paul continues with more rules of how not to act, or rather more aspects of Rule #2, the “Don’t Do It” Rule:

“But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off the old self” (Col 3:8,9).

These Rules of Holy Living control powerful emotions. It can be difficult, but what we have to remember is that we made the change and we do not need to look back at the old self, but rather forward to what we really want. We achieve

this by taking off “the old self” (v 9) and putting on “the new self” (v 10). Paul is telling us that the difference between the old self and new self is black and white; there is no gray. You cannot do the things of the earthly nature and put on Christ at the same time. You can only walk on one side of the fence. You must not hop back and forth.

Lest I sound too harsh, remember: These “Don’t Rules” have value. As a parent, we use “Don’t Rules” to keep our children safe. We tell our children, ‘Don’t run into a parking lot, or you’ll get flattened like a pancake’... ‘Don’t touch the stove, or you’ll get burned.’ The rules Paul gives us in this chapter, just like the rules parents give their children, tell us what not to do, and warn us that bad things can happen if we forget.

What *should* we do?

We have seen how we shouldn’t behave. Now let us look at how we should behave. Rule #3 is:

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience” (v 12).

“Clothe” is a wonderfully descriptive word. I imagine a big thick parka completely sealing out the elements and storm, keeping me warm and safe. Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience will help keep rage and malice and the other behaviors of verse 8 away from us. It is not a passive kind of behavior, but rather an active, powerful way to behave as Jesus would have us. His parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) describes a man who did not just walk by an injured man but instead had compassion on him, and stopped to help him. In contrast to the priest and the Levite, who should have known better, the lowly Samaritan’s kindness, gentleness, and patience underlie the whole story. Each of us can look to people we know who have acted in positive ways. We know people who show compassion for aged or disabled people. We know people who show kindness to others when they are in need. We see people act in humility when they serve others. We also see people work with gentleness when difficult situations come. To do as Paul commands, always act with compassion, gentleness, and patience.

The choice is clear

Paul refers to “God’s chosen people” as “holy and dearly loved” (Col 3:12). He is using another black-and-white example. There is a big difference between being God’s dearly beloved — and suffering God’s wrath. When you act with kindness, humility, and patience you are dearly beloved. When you act with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, you will suffer God’s wrath. Again, the choice is ours to be on either side of the fence. Always strive to be on God’s side.

The hardest rule

Then comes Rule #4:

“Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (v 13).

This can be the hardest rule to obey. We have all been injured by someone at some time. We all have some scars, whether physical or emotional, and by nature, we do not want to visit the trauma and think about what happened or the person who hurt us. Yet we are commanded to forgive. Just think about how every Sunday we seek God's forgiveness for our wrong doings. We take the cup to remember that Jesus died for us as a sin offering. We clothed ourselves with the life of Jesus at baptism. We try to emulate him in our behavior. But we still fail. The wonder is: God forgives us! If we ask God to forgive us for our sins, shouldn't we forgive those who trespass against us?

The most important rule

Rule #5 is:

"Over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity" (v 14).

Love is the strongest weapon of God we have. We all know 1 Corinthians 13: 1-7. Love binds everything together in unity. Paul says that without love we are nothing. Love is the most important Rule for Holy Living because God *is* love. God wants us to be with Him in the Kingdom because he loves us so much He gave His only Son as an offering for our forgiveness.

The final rule

Rule #6 in our final rule:

"Be thankful" (v 15).

This thought continues on to the last two verses of this section. We should be thankful at all times to our Father, for He has given us much. He has given us many blessings, such as His Son and the opportunity for everlasting life with him. What He wants us to do is to show His glory in how we act. If we follow the Rules for Holy Living, we will shine like a bright light showing others we are true followers of God.

*Andy Merg
(San Francisco Peninsula, CA)*

"Be thankful"

We prevent God from giving us the great spiritual gifts He has in store for us, because we do not give thanks for daily gifts. We think we dare not be satisfied with the small measure of spiritual knowledge, experience, and love that has been given to us, and that we must constantly be looking forward eagerly for the highest good. Then we deplore the fact that we lack the deep certainty, the strong faith, and the rich experience that God has given to others, and we consider this lament to be pious. We pray for the big things and forget to give thanks for the ordinary, small (and yet really not small) gifts. How can God entrust great things to one who will not thankfully receive from Him the little things?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (12) Humility

*“The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom,
and before honor is humility” (Proverbs 15:33, NKJV).*

The Roman philosopher Cato is reputed to have said, “After I’m dead I’d rather have people ask why I have no monument than why I have one.”¹ This pithy saying describes very nicely the kind of life a truly modest man should lead, but relatively speaking Cato was just a newcomer to observing the human condition. Almost a millennium before he lived, the Wisdom of Solomon put it even more succinctly: “...before honor is humility” (Prov 18:12).

The Scriptures do not treat the attribute of humility² lightly. In fact we can be certain that it is a first principle. Consider the following:

“By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches and honor and life” (Prov 22:4, NKJV)

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5, NKJV, cited from Psa 37:11; see also Prov 15:33; 18:12; Acts 20:19; and 1Pe 5:5, among many others).

If humility, or equally its synonyms humbleness and meekness, are a matter of “life”, Solomon must have been alluding to eternal life. In the passage cited from the Beatitudes, it is obvious that the Lord Jesus Christ is referring to a first principle; in other words, meekness can lead to an eternal inheritance. Given the clarity of Scriptures regarding humility as an absolutely essential Christian characteristic, it is no wonder so many try to cultivate it to the point they become proud of their humility! In fact “too much humility is pride”, to quote an old German proverb. The complete antithesis of humility is pride. In the worldly sense, pride wins hands down over humility every single day in every single way. In this world those with the best education, drive, energy, hard work, connections, dedication, and often ruthlessness seem to prevail. In short, ambition gets one ahead, while meekness often leads to one being abused. On the other hand, what qualifies a person for leadership in the kingdom of God? One quality alone stands out: humility. It cannot be a false act put on as a cloak to fool our brothers and sisters, for that will fail miserably before our Lord and Master on judgment day. In the words of our Lord Jesus:

“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Matt 23:12).

Given this unmistakable necessity, that one must have humility to be saved, why then is it so rare? And why does humility apparently often desert us in the working out of our ecclesial life? Let’s take a journey through a case study in Scripture and see if we can find the answer that can lead us to true humility.

Our attention will focus on a dispute among the disciples, and its aftermath, as recorded in Mark 9.

A case study

Jesus and the twelve had taken the Roman road leading to the city of Capernaum. When they arrived they apparently went straight to the home of Peter and Andrew.³ Jesus was naturally aware of some intense arguing which had been going on among the disciples as they walked along the road to town. However, it does not appear that Jesus was physically in the middle of this disagreement. Perhaps he was leading the way and was some distance ahead of the trailing group of disciples and did not hear their discourse. Then again, our Lord may have been intent on ministering to the people along the way, and had no time to involve himself in the discussion at that juncture. Nevertheless, Jesus fully realized what they had been quarrelling about (Mark 9:35), but wanted to see what they would say. He was no doubt testing them.

Once they were settled in the house, and were assured some measure of privacy, however, Jesus asks them quite innocently, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?” (Mark 9:33). This didn’t elicit any response at all from the disciples: “They kept silent” (Mark 9:34). The sure mark of someone doing something they know is completely wrong is for them to be absolutely speechless when caught, as it were, “red-handed”.⁴ The disciples instantly must have realized their discourse was unseemly and were ashamed that they had been having so crass an argument. Meanwhile it is obvious that Jesus knew their thoughts even as he assuredly must know ours. Sadly we seem to know this intellectually too, but often fail to act that way in life. It is even possible on occasion that brethren and sisters strive to have primacy in their ecclesia, or even beyond, in the larger Christadelphian community. Undoubtedly such deeds are done under the guise that they truly believe their knowledge and wisdom to be superior to all others. Indeed, that may be true — or it may not!

The proof is not in the outcome, because some will take the attitude that the end justifies the means. This is patently not true; the end can never justify an immoral path followed to accomplish that end. If it were so, then assuredly David should have slain Saul while he lay asleep in the cave in the wilderness of Engedi (1Sa 24:2-7), and the apostle Paul would not have castigated the concept that it was acceptable to “do evil that good may come” (Rom 3:8). Beyond any shadow of doubt, it is absolutely necessary that we not only do the right thing, but also that we must do it in the right way. Brethren and sisters have perpetrated some truly terribly immoral behavior, at times, under the pretext of “protecting” the Truth from error. In my experience, almost anything imaginable has been tried — everything from lying, to fabricating reports or minutes of meetings, to spreading unfounded gossip about brothers or sisters so as to assassinate their character. Such behavior will probably continue until the Lord returns. Nevertheless, it is not now, nor will it ever be, consistent with true humility.

The first clue to true humility in people is their willingness to serve others above themselves. Putting others’ needs before our own is the path to humility:

“If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35).

What parents wouldn't do this for their own children? What persons wouldn't do this for their spouses? I hope the answer to these questions is: 'Yes, I would.' Indeed, I would give up my own life for my wife, or children, or grandchildren; and I am sure such self-sacrifice for loved ones would motivate all who read this to do likewise. It becomes more difficult to put others first as we move further away in terms of family relationships, and even more difficult when we move further away from our social and philosophical comfort zone. Yet I don't see any clear line of exclusion made in the Lord's statement to his disciples and, by extension, to us.

Humility leads to love

A person possessing true humility cultivates love for the brethren. How are we taught to love one another? There can be no greater manual on how to love than the exhortation delivered by Paul to the Corinthians:

“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1Co 13:4-7).

It is impossible for me to improve on these words; hence I will let them stand alone, unabridged, for all of us to contemplate once again, and to ponder how we may earnestly apply them in our lives.

A person of true humility is self-sacrificing even when it is to his or her own disadvantage. Consider the conflict between Abram and Lot over arable grazing land:

“And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land. So Abram said to Lot, 'Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left'” (Gen 13:7-9).

Abram was the elder and he certainly could have asserted his rights over Lot's. Given this, Lot almost certainly would have yielded to his uncle, though probably with some bitterness. This is exactly what a humble Abram wanted to avoid. He was not interested in his own rights; he was only interested in retaining the love and affection of his nephew. In this action we have a direct reflection of what the apostle Paul meant when he said the gospel was preached beforehand to Abraham (Gal 3:8). We see this clearly in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:

“And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two” (Matt 5:38-42, NKJV; see the full context).

Abraham was willing to walk the extra mile to preserve a loving relationship with Lot. This was certainly an act meant also to help his nephew realize the character God desires in those who seek an eternal inheritance.

Brothers or sisters with truly humble spirits are not hypocritical in their actions. Even the apostle Peter was not immune to acting hypocritically to protect his own self-image. Thus we find that he was reprimanded for this behavior by Paul:

“Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy” (Gal 2:11-13, NKJV).

The other Jews (meaning the Jewish Christians within the ecclesia) joined Peter’s hypocrisy, showing how easy it is for a leader to drag others down with him. Obviously, Peter was afraid that his leadership position in the church would be jeopardized if he didn’t appease the circumcision party.

Nonetheless, humility is not about appeasement! Consider:

“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17, NKJV).

We should never confuse humility with lack of courage. It has been said: “Evil triumphs when good men do nothing.”⁵ To be quiet when there is wrong in the ecclesia is to fail in our duty; silence in this case has nothing to do with humility.

Naturally, there is a right way and a wrong way to correct perceived sins among us. I use the word “perceived” here advisedly, because all too often the failures of others are clear to us, while our own shortcomings disappear in a dense fog (cp Matt 7:3-5). In humbly dealing with others, we can never go wide of the mark by being too courteous. Our motives must be pure and our speech honorable. Above all, we need to exercise patience and tact. All these things are far easier to write than to actually do, as I know from long struggles with others and within myself. However, that is no excuse for giving up and not getting done what needs to be done. We find, for example, that the apostle Paul could exercise the utmost humility when he lamented his past behavior:

“For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1Co 15:9).

Yet when occasion called for him to speak out boldly, he did not hesitate to do so — whether it was to preach the gospel to the Jews in the synagogue in Ephesus (Acts 19:8), or to write to the Roman Ecclesia, reminding them of their need to admonish one another, especially with respect to dealing with the Judaizers (Rom 15:14,15).

Examples in the life of Christ

No discussion on refining any aspect of human nature would be complete without examining how humility worked in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. The ac-

tions of our Lord sometimes confuse those who have only a smattering of Bible knowledge, while those with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures can say unequivocally that Jesus always showed true humility. Detractors often ask: was he being humble when he violently drove the moneychangers from the temple? Or when he called the Pharisees and Sadducees by such names as “generation of vipers”? Let’s take a closer look at these stories.

The episode of driving the moneychangers from the Temple is recorded twice. Both times it happened at Passover time, in the first year (John 2:15) and in the third year (Mark 11:15; Matt 21:12) of our Lord’s ministry. (I suspect it also happened in the second year, but it is not recorded.)

It is (and was) the custom of Jews to cleanse the house in preparation for Passover. In my old neighborhood in Brooklyn, Jewish families would literally clean every nook and cranny of their homes, including emptying every cupboard and washing them out. The last thing to be done was to hide one piece of leavened bread for the children to search out and find. Once that was detected and purged, the home would be considered cleansed of all the leaven of sin; now it was fit for the Passover meal. (In orthodox homes, entirely separate plates, glassware, silverware, and pots were also reserved only for use at Passover times.) Hence, Jesus was driving the moneychangers (who shouldn’t have been within the Temple precincts in the first place, but were probably giving the priests and Levites a cut of the action) from his Father’s House. Thereby he was cleansing the house in preparation for the Passover. The apostle Paul explains very clearly why such behavior was perfectly within the realm of humility:

“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ” (Gal 1:10).

In other words, Jesus’ humility in fulfilling his duty to his Father transcended any necessary humility in his service to men.

The same applies to our Lord Jesus’ rather harsh words for the religious leaders of Israel. They had been privy to his miracles, witnessed directly and indirectly the power of his healings, and heard on many occasions the wisdom of his teachings. Thus they were without excuse.

We are not in the same position as Jesus, or the apostle Paul. We are certainly not endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit, or any semblance of infallibility in our thoughts and actions. This doesn’t mean that we let wrong prevail rather than raise our voice, but it does place a challenge upon us to do so in a most humble way. In fact, fulfilling our duties, humbly, may be one of the biggest challenges of our life in Christ. But it can be done; the apostle’s advice to his beloved Timothy gives useful guidance to us who are required to uphold Truth in humility:

“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will” (2Ti 2:24-26).

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Notes:

1. Attributed to Marcus Porcius Cato, 234-149 BC.
2. The word “humility” appears seven times in the KJV and invariably means modesty, meekness, humbleness, or gentleness. See Strong’s numbers 6038 (Hebrew) and 5012 (Greek).
3. See Mark 1:21-29 for the identification of the “house” mentioned in Mark 9:33.
4. The expression “red-handed” comes from the notion of one having blood on one’s hands from murder or execution. Hence, a “red-handed” person is one caught doing a blatantly evil action (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings>).
5. Attributed to Thomas Jefferson.

Adorned in Fine White Linen

“I haven’t a thing to wear” is the lament heard from many a woman as the seasons change. This is usually another way of saying, “I am tired of what I have and would like something new!” Some may feel they need clothes to give them confidence; for others it can be a source of pride to wear the latest fashion or the most expensive ‘classics.’ Then there is the deliberate flaunting of the female form to catch the eye of the opposite sex. How easy it is to be influenced by these subtle expectations that serve to line the pockets of designers and the clothing industry.

Sisters in the Truth are not immune to these things. If the love of clothes and the interest in the latest fashion has taken over the love of God in one’s heart, there is something seriously wrong. On the other hand, a well remembered spiritually-minded young sister, determined to demonstrate her disinterest in clothes, paradoxically drew attention by her unkempt appearance! As with many things, it is a question of balance and emphasis.

The LORD created the beautiful female form to be attractive to the male who is seeking a wife. The bride wishes to look beautiful and pleasing to her husband on her wedding day, and she takes great delight in the preparation and selection of her dress and trousseau [*a bride’s clothes and linen, collected during her engagement*]. This is natural and right in God’s sight, as shown in John’s analogy describing the New Jerusalem “coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:2).

Inner beauty

One such bride in Scripture is a lovely young princess, joyfully preparing herself to be presented to her bridegroom:

“The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king’s palace”
(Psa 45:13-15).

Some think this was a bride of Solomon, and that she may have been the daughter of Pharaoh. Others suggest this was Hephzibah, the beautiful bride of faithful king Hezekiah. Whatever the primary application, there is the deeply moving spiritual picture of the Bride presented to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is interesting

that, irrespective of the rich and exquisitely-made clothing, the true beauty of this bride “comes from within” (v 13).

One wonders whether the apostle Peter had this Scripture in mind when speaking to the sisters of his day:

“Your beauty should come not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight” (1Pe 3:3,4).

Sixteenth-century Puritans interpreted Peter’s comments so literally that their obsessively plain style of dress became a cult. Rather than condemning a pretty outfit, braided hair, or a delicate gold necklace, Peter is counseling the godly woman to focus her attention upon developing a Christ-like character.

Certainly the virtuous woman of Proverbs demonstrated these characteristics. She industriously made herself garments of “linen and purple”. She rejoiced as the symbolic bride of Christ and, inwardly, her clothing was “strength and honour” (Prov 31:22,25).

Interestingly, both figurative brides were dressed in fine linen, a fabric which is brought to the discerning reader’s attention many times throughout Scripture.

The history and processing of linen

Linen is made from the flax plant and has been popular for five millennia. Very versatile, it can be woven as strong coarse yarn, suitable for sails, or as delicate cambric for wedding gowns. Ancient cultures — Egyptian, Greek and Roman — greatly valued the material. The spinning and weaving of linen is depicted on the wall paintings of Egypt. The Egyptians were so skilled in the processing that white cloth was produced (five hundred threads to the inch), far finer than anything made today!

Growing flax is easy, given the right conditions: moist fertile soil and plenty of sunshine. From seed to harvest, it takes a hundred days. One variety from which the highest quality of linen is made has lovely blue flowers. Although the stalks are straight and slender, they are covered with a tough woody casing that must be removed to reveal the workable fibers. This process is called retting, whereby the stalks are immersed in water and then laid in the sun to allow bacterial action to render them pliable. (Rahab hid the spies beneath drying flax stalks on the roof of her house: Josh 2:6.) Stripping the bark is a labor-intensive work; great skill and patience is needed to remove the tough outer part without damaging the delicate inner fibers. What a lovely spiritual lesson: believers in Christ must be immersed in water and undergo a lifetime of exposure to the word of God in order to strip away the hard layers of human nature. The “divine weaver” can then work with the pliable inner core.

Priestly garments

Exodus 28 outlines the details and instructions regarding the priestly attire. Aaron’s garments were made of fine linen embroidered with gold, blue and purple, whereas

his sons wore simple fine white linen. These holy garments were “for glory and for beauty”; they were to be fashioned by men specially endowed with skill and wisdom by the Spirit of God. During the consecration ritual the priests *and their garments* were sanctified:

“And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons’ garments with him” (Exod 29:21).

From head to toe, men and clothing were sanctified, ritualistically cleansed before being allowed to approach the holy things of God. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest put aside his splendid priestly clothing and entered the presence of God in the Holy of Holies clad in simple garments of fine white linen (Lev 16:4).

The prophet Ezekiel reveals the reason why the cool quality of linen was an appropriate material for the priests:

“They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen trousers on their bodies; they shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes sweat”
Ezek 44:18, RSV).

Sweat glands secrete waste products, giving rise to an unpleasant odor. All waste products from the human body that is tainted with sin are abhorrent to the holy person of God.

Garments of salvation

When the LORD God chose Zion He stated:

“I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall ever sing for joy” (Psa 132:16, NIV).

Aaron’s garments were but a shadow of those worn by the immortal kings and priests in Revelation:

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints” (Rev 19:7,8).

“The bride has made herself ready” (note the past tense). Here is the antitype of the virtuous woman of Proverbs and the bride of Psalm 45, preparing themselves with garments of linen, preparatory to meeting the bridegroom.

“The righteousness (of the saints)” is plural. Bro. John Thomas suggested the phrase would be better rendered “right *actions* of the saints”, and most modern versions give “right *acts*”. We know that faith not works is required; however, faith leading to the right action of baptism imputes righteousness. At baptism we “put on (Greek ‘*enduo*’, meaning ‘to clothe oneself’) Christ” (Gal 3:27). These are the garments described by Isaiah:

“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD. My soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness...” (Isa 61:10, NKJ).

Could this be the wedding garment of the parable?

Having washed her robes in the blood of the lamb (Rev 7:14) and striven to keep them undefiled from sin, the bride of Revelation 19 is dressed in fine linen, clean and white. “Clean” is the Greek word “katharos”, from which we get the word catharsis, meaning to purge. “White” is “lampros”, from which “lamp” is derived, meaning bright. The symbology is lovely; the bride is morally clean and radiant, having been clothed upon with the immortal glory of the Lord God (2Co 5:4).

The antidote for an obsessive interest in clothes is to consider these spiritual concepts and be exhorted by them. When we next swell with pride after compliments about a new outfit, or crave a dress in a shop window which is well beyond our budget, then an examination of attitude and priorities may be in order. The appropriate dress for those in Christ is the armor of God:

“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:14-17).

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Even Christadelphianism Can Kill Us!

This title should grab our attention. If we are hanging our eternal hope on the false belief that “Christadelphianism” will save us, then we need to ask ourselves some serious, searching questions. There are many other competing “isms” that are rewriting our world view and dramatically impacting our lives. I recognize there is, of course, a quiet and compelling comfort in having one tradition to undergird our lives. But a tradition, alone, can be deceptive. It can even be deadly!

There are many competing voices today. Many other “isms” are contending aggressively for our attention and time; some may be winning. Let’s review a few.

Materialism

No other society or culture has ever existed in human history that has so democratized materialism, i.e., the notion that material things are all that matters. Of course, I am speaking especially of “Western” societies and cultures. Ours are the ones with the means to implement materialism. We have more options, more comforts and, overall, more “stuff” than any of our ancestors.

The main shift has been in the middle class. A burgeoning bourgeois since the late 1940s has fueled consumerism to staggering heights. Consumerism is the business end of materialism. Bigger homes, more fixings and furnishings, more and more cheaply produced by poorly paid, poorly treated labor in China and elsewhere — stuff, lots of stuff. Automobiles, clothes, toys, the list is long. Under this heading we could also mention “tourism”, another “ism” that may bewitch us. But, for the sake of brevity, I will avoid that journey.

These “isms” are compelling and cater to our basic covetousness, especially the lust of the eye and the pride of life. They are beguiling because possessions and lifestyles are often the result of hard work, and hard work seems, on the face of it, to be completely Biblical. But consumerism can really be opposed to living a life in Christ. One little example: by one recent count, I had 52 shirts. Is this necessary? Would Jesus have had 52 shirts? Probably not. He didn’t have a closet to put them in; he was homeless.

Our preoccupation with things is contrary to sound Christian teaching.

“I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Phil 4:12).

Remember also Paul’s admonition to Timothy:

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it” (1Ti 6:6).

Hedonism

This is the creed that proclaims pleasure or happiness to be the sole or chief good in life. One useful definition is found in Webster’s: *“Noun: 1. Pursuit of or devotion to pleasure, especially to the pleasures of the senses. 2. The ethical doctrine holding that only what is pleasant or has pleasant consequences is intrinsically good.”* This notion has now, more or less, been enshrined in law — especially within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Our preoccupation with self and pleasure is also contrary to sound Christian teaching.

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature... because of these the wrath of God is coming” (Col 3:5,6).

“There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...” (2Ti 3:1,4).

Hedonism’s helper is, of course, liberalism. Liberalism has always been “cool”. It is a world view that has never gone out of fashion. Paul encountered it on Mars Hill, with the Epicureans. It is founded on the notion that whatever we think is right for us is, in fact, right. Liberalism is the business end of hedonism. It is deadly.

New Age spiritualism

This “ism” is just a repackaging of old pagan beliefs, where all things are an integral part of the great goddess “Mother Earth”. She was the foundation of most pagan and indigenous cultures. Being “spiritual” is really being part of Mother Earth. It encompasses the notion that our ashes live on in the trees and grasses; that dear departed Aunt Hattie’s spirit is blowing in the wind and reflected in the summer flowers; and that we are not individual, God-created and God-loved creatures, but instead simply parts of the impersonal, organic whole. This notion is linked to environmentalism. It is fashionable, and it is a delusion. We need John’s message more than ever.

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.”

Our spirit, as John goes on to say, is about Jesus, and the reality of him coming in the flesh (1Jo 4:1-4).

Spiritualism's close friend is Buddhism. Both offer a form of godliness but deny its power and miracles. The reality is that there is no other name or spirit under heaven by which we will be saved, except Jesus Christ.

Gnosticism

The greatest threat today is probably gnosticism, with its partner "dualism". Gnosticism is a rather complex mix of ideas which gained traction in the late first century. It was a growing problem in the New Testament era. It is a New Age re-cooking of the old pagan ideals today. To simplify the concept, we need to think of the predominant cultural ideals of the Western mind nowadays: self-interest, the deifying of the mind of man, and dualism.

Dualism is the conflict between good and evil, where good becomes evil and evil becomes good — they are both relative terms. So, there is no real evil any more than there is any real good. Situation and self-interest determine good and evil. Then, associated with this pernicious notion, is the concept that we are all dual in makeup: that is, we are body and spirit — and conflict exists between the two domains. This allows for a free movement of thought and action between the two realms. In other words, we can live in both worlds. We can, at one and the same time, be spiritual and worldly.

The notion that we can live in both worlds simultaneously is quite dangerous. It allows us to be good on Sunday, and more or less evil on Monday. Well, not exactly evil — only according to someone else's evaluation, etc. So, we can be quite bad (well, not exactly) in the body — but, at the same time be quite good and spiritual (but not exactly) in the mind and spirit.

In short, we can (supposedly) have the best of both worlds.

This sad commentary upon ancient Israel is pretty much an expression of gnosticism.

"They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods — according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away" (2Ki 17:33).

Paul states emphatically that we are all one — body, mind, and soul. He states also that the body is the temple of the living God, and that salvation is all about this body (*with its mind*) possessing the mind of Jesus Christ.

The new atheism

The new atheism is "hip." It is contemptuous of all who believe in God. It is evangelical. It is actually just a more aggressive form of the old. People choose to believe there is no God because they choose to establish their own morality. They may argue that we know more now. They may rationalize that we have more scientific information. Now, they may explain away the concept of any Intelligent Design, and the work of a Creator God who has set the boundaries of morality. But, most of all, they just refuse to be told.

This notion is intoxicating because it caters to the basic human predisposition to be like God — or to be “God”. We need to be continually aware of this deceit and rally around the simplicity and truth of Paul’s instruction to the Corinthians when he writes, “...but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to Gentiles”, while to us, “Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1Co 1:23,24). We also have increasing scientific evidence that we can find comfort and hope in the simple, direct, spirit-filled truth of King David: “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’ ” (Psa 14:1).

What then?

Not just the ones above, but all deceptive “isms” are false hopes. Even “Christadelphianism” can be a false hope. Even “Christadelphianism” can kill us!

How can we say such a thing? Because salvation is not merely bound up in a collection of doctrines or a statement of faith, however correct. Nor is it merely the property of any tradition, even the most Scriptural or helpful or venerable. There is no hope in any world view or practice — whether institutionalized or free-thinking, whether theirs or ours.

“Christadelphianism” alone — as a system — *cannot* save. *On the other hand, however, Jesus can and does save!* An expectant, spirit-filled, sacrificial life in Christ is the answer. There is no “ism” of salvation; there is only the Son of God. Our cognitive bias, our world view, has to reflect this. Otherwise, we have no hope. “Christ in us” *is* the hope of glory. That is the hook upon which we must hang our lives.

We need to be constantly called to action in the continual re-examination of our lives and belief systems. We need, like never before, to be asking the questions, continually and endlessly re-examining everything we think and do in the light of a Holy and Just God and within the radiance of Jesus Christ, “...that you may distinguish between the unclean and the clean” (Lev 10:10).

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1Pe 3:15).

Clyde Snobelen (Victoria, BC)

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:5). *“True godliness has a power in it, and those who embrace it yield their wills to the moral and spiritual influence of the Divine Word. But mere outward form, like the outside of the cup or the whited sepulcher, is no guide to what is within. It is with a sense of shock that we realize that these things [materialism, pride, abusive behavior, slander, and all the other forms of wickedness described in 2Ti 3:1-5] are not necessarily **outside** the ecclesia... Insofar as we recognize the characteristics of our own day we must be prepared to identify and resist the trends which will cause them to develop in our midst” (Alfred Nicholls).*

History

Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff: Sowing Beside All Waters



The dashing young man in the photo at left, decked out in a cowboy hat and carrying a pistol in his belt, would become one of the first home-grown Christadelphians of Ventura County, California. Young Henry Brinkerhoff was a rancher and a gold miner in the Santa Clara River Valley at about the time Scottish brother Robert Strathearn emigrated to nearby Santa Barbara in 1874. Henry's attempts to find gold would cause his path to cross that of Bro. Strathearn about five years later. Somewhere near the Piru Creek gold field,¹ Henry's life, and that of several generations of Brinkerhoffs since, was changed forever due to the accidental death of a miner with whom Henry had been working. The miner's death was the subject of a discussion that several men, including Henry Brinkerhoff and Robert Strathearn (who lived near Piru at this time) were having while standing over

the lifeless man. The talk turned to what would happen to the man now that he had died. Several miners agreed the dead man's soul was surely in heaven, but Bro. Strathearn said that he didn't see it that way. When Henry asked what he meant, Robert invited him to his house where he explained his belief in the resurrection.² And so began the path that would lead to Henry's baptism as a Christadelphian.

Even before his encounter with Robert Strathearn, Henry's life had taken a number of unexpected turns. Henry Rouse Brinkerhoff was born on June 23, 1852, in Plymouth, Ohio, the last of Peter and Persis Brinkerhoff's five children.³ Shortly after Henry was born, Peter left his wife and children on the farm in Ohio and sailed around Cape Horn to California. While in California, Peter Brinkerhoff received word that his wife had died. He returned to Ohio, picked up Henry and his sister, and headed back to California, ending up in Santa Barbara.⁴ Peter remarried in Santa Barbara in 1858, and fathered eight more children.

While Peter Brinkerhoff chose to live in Santa Barbara with his new family, Henry moved to Santa Paula, where he married Jessie Alvord in 1877.⁵ Two or three years later, around the same time their first child was born, Jessie and Henry were baptized. The two would become a wonderful preaching team, always ready to share the gospel with anyone they met.

The new brother and sister, and their family

While the exact year that Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff became Christadelphians is

unknown, he's first mentioned in *The Christadelphian* magazine in 1879, when he ordered some literature. According to information in *The Berean Christadelphian* magazine when Henry died, this would have been very close to the time of his baptism. The first time Henry and Jessie were referred to in print as brother and sister was in 1884 when Robert Strathearn reported the following in *The Christadelphian*: "On Sunday morning we met together for the breaking of bread, in memory of our absent Lord. Bro. and Sis. Brinkerhoff accompanied us, in whose fellowship we rejoiced greatly."

At the time Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff had only one child, a two-year-old boy named Alvin. Like many parents in those days, the couple faced tragedy involving their children a number of times in their lives. Young Alvin Brinkerhoff succumbed to diphtheria in an epidemic that hit the Santa Clara River area in 1890.⁶ The Brinkerhoffs lost another child in 1898, and a heart-wrenching notice was sent to *The Christadelphian* at the time by Sis. Elizabeth Reith: "Death has entered the home of our Bro. and Sis. Brinkerhoff, and taken their little son Sprague, a bright boy of eight years. This is the second son they have lost, and it was a severe trial to them, but they bear it with that strength they alone have who know and love the Lord." Two of their other children, who were baptized together as teenagers, would lose their lives while attempting to save the lives of others. Gertrude (Henry and Jessie's only daughter), died from contracting the flu while tending to patients as a nurse during the 1919 influenza pandemic.⁷ Their son Forrest was killed in the 1933 Long Beach earthquake when a building collapsed on him. The following was submitted to *The Christadelphian* at the time as a press notice that had appeared in a local paper under the heading "Dies for Others": "Forrest Brinkerhoff was young and life was good to live. His job was



The Brinkerhoff family in the early 1900s. Left to right: Forrest, Henry, Lawrence, Julius, Gertrude, Jessie, and Howard

that of switchboard operator at the Dominguez substation of the Pacific Electric Railway. When the first shock came he stood at his post to the switch that would save the lives of many at the cost of his own life. Early today searchers found his body crushed by huge pieces of masonry, but on his face, miraculously untouched by the jagged rocks, was a look of calm decision and peace.”⁸

All five of Henry and Jessie’s children who reached maturity became Christadelphians. Gertrude and Forrest were baptized in 1903, Howard was baptized in 1907, and Julius was baptized in 1916.⁹ Lawrence was baptized later in life, and like his brothers and sisters remained a Christadelphian until his death. Even today, there are 25 Christadelphians who are descendants of Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff.

Three of the Brinkerhoffs’ children, Sprague, Howard, and Lawrence, were born in Saticoy (or New Jerusalem, as it was called at the time), where Henry and Jessie had moved around 1890.¹⁰ Henry baptized a Sis. Adair there in 1895.¹¹ Bro. Cyrus Lewis, while on a trip to visit isolated Ventura County Christadelphians, including Helen Shiells, Robert Stratearn, and Robert and Marion Stocks, spent two weeks in the fall of 1895 at the Brinkerhoffs’ large bean farm in Saticoy. Bro. Lewis noted that the farm kept the Brinkerhoffs busy, but not too busy to preach to their neighbors.¹² The Brinkerhoffs were frequently mentioned in connection with their efforts to preach to others. No doubt they were moved to share the gift that had been imparted to them by Bro. Strathearn.

Henry Brinkerhoff was again mentioned in *The Christadelphian* in 1897, when he baptized Clement Seagoe in Moorpark, California. Robert Strathearn had died the year before, and Henry appears to have become the leading brother in Ventura County. Henry also baptized a Sis. Baker, who was taught the truth by Jessie Brinkerhoff, in Santa Paula in 1902. Sis. Marian Stocks reported the baptism in *The Christadelphian* that year: “The truth was first brought to Sis. Baker’s notice by Sis. Brinkerhoff, who together with Bro. Brinkerhoff are ready to ‘sow beside all waters.’ ”

A big house and a new ecclesia

Bro. and Sis. Brinkerhoff and family left Ventura County in 1904, moving to an area of Los Angeles that would later become Hollywood (1418 Tamarind Avenue).¹³ This was just a few years before the movie studios moved in and made the area famous. In those days this part of Los Angeles was known for its large homes surrounded by groves and orchards.

The Brinkerhoffs continued to farm as they had in Ventura County, working a large piece of rented land near their home. The property they farmed was known as the Arnaz Ranch.¹⁴ This ranch was used a few years later as a location for filming a number of the “Little Rascals” comedy series.¹⁵

When the Brinkerhoffs moved to Los Angeles in 1904, they became members of the newly formed Los Angeles Ecclesia, along with their son and daughter, Forrest and Gertrude. The ecclesia was meeting at 534 South Spring Street at the time, six miles from the Brinkerhoff’s home. Henry and Jessie were members 10 and

11 of the new ecclesia.¹⁶ The Brinkerhoffs lived in a large two-story house and often invited guests over, especially children from the ecclesia.¹⁷



**The Brinkerhoff home on 1418 Tamarind Avenue in Los Angeles.
The family lived in this home between 1904 and 1916.
Today this street is in the city of Hollywood.**



**The Los Angeles Christadelphian Ecclesia
soon after Bro. and Sis. Brinkerhoff joined in 1904.
Henry and Jessie are the couple at the far right of the picture.**

Gertrude Brinkerhoff would leave her parents' home in Los Angeles in 1911. On November 15 of that year Gertrude married Bro. Stephen Rutherford and moved to Santa Barbara. Stephen was a relative of Jessie Rutherford, the first convert to the Truth of Sis. Helen Shiells (another early Ventura County Christadelphian).

Gertrude and Stephen had two children, Paul and Lois, before Gertrude's untimely death in 1919.¹⁸ Gertrude Rutherford was a well loved sister, as the following notice in *The Christadelphian* attests: "It is with heartfelt sorrow we record the death of Sis. Gertrude Rutherford... Sis. Rutherford was a true daughter of Abraham. Her Christ-like character and many good deeds endeared her to us all."

Going north

In 1916, Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff moved north to Chowchilla, near Yosemite, where Henry bought 80 acres of land and set up a ranch. That same year, the Brinkerhoffs' youngest son, Julius, was baptized in the L.A. Ecclesia at age 15. Shortly after that, Julius joined his parents on their ranch in Chowchilla. Henry loved to farm his land using a team of horses and never converted to a tractor, even though most of his neighbors did.¹⁹



Stephen Rutherford and Gertrude Brinkerhoff were married in 1911



Henry Brinkerhoff, behind a team of horses, working the land on his Chowchilla ranch.

In 1918, Henry and Jessie's son, Howard, was drafted for service in World War One. Unable to secure conscientious objection, Howard Brinkerhoff was sent to Camp Lewis, near Seattle, Washington. Howard, who had been baptized when he was 13, refused to take part in any combatant service, and was eventually allowed to do farm work as alternative service. The following was noted in *The Christadelphian* for 1919, on his release from service: "We are all glad to welcome the return from Camp Lewis, Washington, of brethren Howard Brinkerhoff and John Hetherwick. Bro. Brinkerhoff was amongst the first to be called to camp by the selection draft, and had to endure much hardship and reproach before the status of conscientious objectors was settled."

A year after Howard returned home, Henry Brinkerhoff lost his companion of over 40 years. Jessie Brinkerhoff died on March 15, 1920, and was buried next

to Henry and Jessie's daughter, Gertrude, in Santa Barbara. Sis. Jessie was highly esteemed in Southern California and was "well known for the warmth of her affection for the brotherhood, and her devotion to the Truth", according to the notice about her death in *The Christadelphian* that year.

The final years

A few years after Jessie died, Henry Brinkerhoff lost the ranch in Chowchilla. By 1930, Henry had moved in with his son Lawrence, who was living in Los Angeles at the time. Henry died at age 83, on June 10, 1935, at Lawrence Brinkerhoff's ranch in Camarillo, the same year that his grandson Robert was baptized.²⁰ Henry's walk toward the Kingdom ended just a few miles from where it had begun in Ventura County.

In 1940, Henry and Jessie's grandson, Robert Brinkerhoff, married Robert and Marian Stocks' granddaughter, Margaret Cocke. Robert and Margaret Brinkerhoff's children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren are related to Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff, Robert and Marian Stocks, and Robert Strathearn (Robert Stocks' uncle), all early Ventura County Christadelphians.

Although Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff endured much heartache in their lives, they remained strong in the Truth and should be an inspiration to all of us. They were true pioneer Christadelphians of Ventura County, and now await the resurrection to life eternal — thanks to the effort that Bro. Robert Strathearn made to share his faith with a young gold miner. Henry may not have found the shiny nuggets he was seeking near Piru Creek, but what he found that day was worth much more to him than gold. It isn't hard to imagine him reading Psalm 19:9,10 as the years went by, and knowing exactly what David meant:

"The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous all together. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold."

Gordon Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

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Letters

Considering God's Providence

Dear Bro. George,

Bro. David Levin's article in the July issue on the subject of God's interactions in our lives today [*"Providence: How Can I Sense God's Presence?"*], while of necessity limited in scope, was very well balanced. The tendency of some to confidently assert that a specific phenomenon is the direct manifestation of the will and power of God seems to me to be a dangerous practice. While all that happens has clearly been allowed by God, as everything is in His control, that is not what is being referred to when someone asserts that God saved them in a crisis. Attributing direct cause/effect relationships might be more than we are here to do.

From another aspect, it was interesting to contemplate how much we "miss" the belief in the devil and demons in considering this subject. It would be so much simpler if we could attribute all the bad to the devil and all the good to God. Instead, we have to come to grips with the truth that it all rests with God.

The effect of this truth, however, is very helpful.

It causes us to consider all that happens to us, in the light of God's revealed desire for us; and thus to react to all that happens to us in ways that improve our character and glorify Him. At the end of the day, it is not what happens to us, but how we react to it that is important.

*With love in Christ,
Ken Sommerville (Simi Hills, CA)*

Who is the "mighty God"? (Isaiah 9:6)

Dear Bro. Booker,

Greetings.

We have just received the June edition of *The Tidings*, and we want you to know how excited we were to read the article you wrote on Isaiah 9:6 [page 241].

We are regularly attacked from all sides by Trinitarians, and the reference to the Soncino Commentary has helped us to reassess our thinking on this passage.

Could you please help us further with our thinking? Does the point hold for any person mentioned in the Scriptures?

[Editor: The point was this: that any Bible name which includes God's Name may possibly be describing the character of God, and not so much the character of the person upon whom the name was conferred.]

We were working our way through names and wondered about the name change

for Abraham. However, “father of a multitude” is still a reference to his acting out this name for Yahweh.

*Your brother and sister by grace,
Bill and Carol Rawson (Costa Blanca, Spain)*

Dear Bro. Bill and Sis. Carol,

*I wouldn't say the point **must** hold for any name. Rather, I would suggest that it **might** apply here and there when it seems suitable.*

As to Abram's (or Abraham's) names: It's usually assumed that Abram means “father of a high place”, with possible pagan associations. In other words, Abram's father was a worshiper of such a god or gods. But Abraham (meaning “father of a multitude”) plainly refers to the promise that he would become a great nation. Of course, as you suggest, Yahweh Himself was acting through Abraham to create that great nation, or seed.

Another point. We know that, quite often, the name of any righteous person in the Bible says something about his or her character or conduct or destiny. Perhaps, when that happens, we can go one step further. Perhaps we can assume that the name doesn't just apply to the person, but also to the God whom that person worships. And the reason would be obvious: we do very little of our own accord, but rather it is God who is working in and through us to make it so. “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil 2:12,13).

One example will suffice: Jesus, or Joshua. Does the name mean “He [i.e., Jesus] shall save”, or does it mean “Yahweh saves”? Surely it means both, for if Jesus is the One who shall save, it is only because Yahweh Himself actually saves, being the God Who is “in [Jesus]... reconciling the world unto himself” (2Co 5:18).

*Yours in Christ,
George*

More about the article, and an additional perspective on Isaiah 9:6,7:

...and the “Everlasting Father”

My dear brother George,

Your note on “Who is the ‘mighty God?’” [June, p. 241] set me thinking. Might there not be another angle from which to view this passage?

Take, for example, the title which follows in Isaiah 9: “Everlasting Father”. Most people immediately think of begetting as the context, even paternity on as high a plane as God's of His only-begotten Son Jesus, and the multitude of God's children who come into being through him. But the word “father” is also used in a very different way in Scripture. For instance, Joseph told his brothers that “God made me *father* to Pharaoh” (Gen 45:8; all quotations from the NIV) and Naaman's subordinates coaxed him from his rage with the words: “My *father*, if the prophet...” (2Ki 5:13).

In the case of Joseph, Pharaoh had made him supreme, relieving Pharaoh of day-to-day responsibilities and, in his name, issuing orders to the nation. Naaman was a military officer with full responsibility for and authority over the army of Syria. This long tradition in politico-military idiom still exists — the troops are ‘*infantry*’; I believe French army officers still address the troops as ‘*mes enfants*’ [‘*my children*’]: the father and children idiom again. This was the pattern at Israel’s birth as a nation under Moses. The early chapters of Numbers (1 and 2 will demonstrate the point) describe the census of all men “who are able to serve in the army”, and go on to describe the encampment orders under which all soldiers would billet under “his standard with the banners of his family”. The word “family” here is the Hebrew *av*, “father”. That’s how it began, fathers with their sons (fathers as commanders) defending home territory (or enlarging it!) and this grew as families became clans and clans became nations. Anyone who has watched the Trooping of the Colour in London, in the presence of the Queen, will know the importance of the family ensign, the “colour”, even now.

The “Everlasting Father”, then, might well be a reference to the Messiah as the Supreme Commander of the armies of heaven, which is precisely what he is seen to be in Revelation 19:11-14, riding at the head of the armies of heaven.

How does this relate to the title “Mighty God”? It seems to me that, on his conquest of sin and ascension to God’s right hand, Jesus took all the names and titles of his Father — as a son would. We find him from then onwards being referred to as “God” without any Trinitarian, or similar, implications whatsoever. A couple of examples:

- (a) Hebrews 1:8: “But about the Son he says” (from Psalm 45) “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever.” There is no doubt here as to who is being addressed nor about the relationship between this “God” and his “God” for the Spirit continues: “therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions.” It is plain that “God” (the Son) is within the power, and under the authority, of God (the Father), Who can set him at His pleasure above his companions. But the Son bears his Father’s title (“God”) nonetheless.
- (b) John 20:28: Thomas, confronted by the risen Lord, exclaimed: “My Lord and my God!” Jesus did not correct him and tell him that he had got it all wrong. He simply accepted that his doubting disciple had now seen and believed.

Such Scriptures indicate to me that we can be quite relaxed about attributing the title “Mighty God” to the risen, glorified Messiah, commander of the forces of heaven. It challenges none of our doctrines, and at the same time harmonizes with the Isaiah prophecy and highlights the awesome glory of the Christ.

*Sincerely, in Jesus,
Paul Launchbury (West Kingdown, Kent, UK)*

Dear Bro. Paul,

Thanks for the very interesting suggestions.

There are other passages that use “father” to mean “counselor”, “leader”, “teacher” (Gen 4:20,21; 2Ki 2:12; 13:14; Isa 22:21). And there are probably even more; pos-

sibly some of the “father of” passages in the Chronicles genealogies may be speaking of chieftains or clan leaders without implying that all those in the clan or “family” were direct literal descendants.

Some of the teachings of Proverbs may use the father-son terminology to signify a teacher-student relationship. Elsewhere, “father” may have meant the head of a trade guild, union, or fraternity. The “sons” of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun, for example, or the “sons of Korah”, may have been literal descendants of those chief musicians, but some “sons” may have simply been Jewish members of the musicians’ guilds or associations that bore those honored names. Likewise, the “sons of the prophets” (1Ki 20:35) may not all have literally had fathers who were prophets, but rather they themselves belonged to the association of the prophets.

In the New Testament, the father-son pairing often indicates spiritual mentor and disciple (1Ti 1:2,18; 1Co 4:14-17; Phil 2:19-22; 2Ti 1:2; 2:1; Tit 1:4). It is in just that way that Jesus could speak — in the most negative sense — of those who were the seed, or children, of their “father the devil” (John 8:44; cf Matt 3:7; 13:38; Acts 13:10; 1Jo 13:10).

Finally, of course, the very foundation of our faith is that in Christ we become the “children” of our spiritual father Abraham (Rom 4:11,12,16-18; Gal 3:7,27-29; Eph 3:6), not by sharing the same gene pool but by sharing the same faith.

I imagine you had many such passages in your mind already.

Yours in Christ,
George

The Ecclesial Guide

Greetings,

This is just a thought: It has been discovered that many brethren who own *The Ecclesial Guide*, written by Bro. Robert Roberts back in 1883 and reprinted many times over, has not been read through by at least 50 to 60% of our community. Therefore there are so many brethren who are totally unaware of some of the guidelines for our community.

As a good way to become acquainted with *The Ecclesial Guide*, one might use the following formula: Read one proposition per day, as you would your daily Bible readings. You might read the item with the number corresponding to that day of the month, and then the extra 16 or so into the next month, until you have read all 46 propositions. After a break, you might repeat the process again and again, until you have all the ideas firmly embedded in your mind.

At a meeting where 400 brethren were present, the question was asked, “How many of you have read *The Ecclesial Guide*?” Only three raised their hands — that’s not a good ratio! It’s little wonder that so many brethren have no idea of these very useful guidelines.

Reuben Washington (Echo Lake, NJ)

Bathsheba's guilt or innocence?

Dear Bro. Booker,

Many thanks for your thoughts in the special issue of *The Tidings* for August. I'm a little worried that poor Bathsheba is getting a bum rap. 2 Samuel 13 starts out, "Some time passed." So I know it's not immediately the next thing in David's life chronologically, but it has always seemed significant that the very next thing in the record is the rape of a beautiful young woman. Tamar protested but was not helped. Was Bathsheba truly as innocent as the little lamb in Nathan's parable?

David was angry when he heard what happened to Tamar, but seemingly he didn't do anything (2Sa 13:21). Was that because he had done the same thing and thus it was very hard for him to condemn Amnon? Bathsheba is never reprimanded the way David was by God, but she did lose her son. On the other hand, the innocent do often suffer at the hands of sinners. I'm not sure what to conclude, but my heart leans strongly toward Bathsheba's innocence. I would love to hear your thoughts on the matter.

With love in Christ,
Sis. Diane Sabean (Meriden, CT)

Dear Sis. Diane,

You have indeed quickly summarized some of the same points regarding Bathsheba's innocence which occur to me. But, as my article mentioned, there are some aspects that point toward a measure of guilt also. Somewhere in the mix is the balance that is the absolute truth of the matter. Each of us may have our opinions, and perhaps our leanings or predispositions, and it is to be expected that we will. At the same time we should be thankful, of course, that we are not required to make final judgments about such things. There is one Judge who will make such judgments, and we can rest assured that his judgments — like those of the LORD God Himself — will be "true and righteous altogether" (Psa 19:9).

Yours in Christ,
George

A baptismal prayer

*May this solemn dedication
Never once forgotten be;
Let it know no revocation,
Published and confirmed by thee.*

*Thine I am, O Lord, for ever
To thy service set apart;
Suffer me to leave thee never:
Seal thine image on my heart.*

(John Curwen, slightly modified)

Youth

Baptismal Confession

To the serving brethren of the San Francisco Peninsula Ecclesia,

As you all know, I have been born and raised in a Christadelphian family. I have studied the Bible, learned the principles that are taught there, and attended meeting regularly for the great majority of my life. The constant exposure and familiarity with the Word of God can be a blessing, but it can also cause one to become complacent and take this wonderful blessing for granted. In my case, I have struggled with the decision to be baptized for a long time. I am a scientist both by profession and at the core of my being. Logic and reason have always been the basis for everything I believe and do. I have never been a person who could just accept something because I was told, or blindly believe someone in a position of “authority”. Although I believe this is a blessing in itself, which will make my faith stronger in the long run, it also tends to make me very skeptical.

For a long time, I questioned whether I only believed what the Bible says because it had been “programmed” into me, and because I was so entrenched in this way of thinking that I had “blinded” myself to other possibilities. I saw people of other religions who were so devoted to what they believe that they wouldn’t hesitate to sacrifice their lives in the hope of reward from their god. I saw intelligent and reasonable people in the world who didn’t believe in a God at all and, at least on the surface, seemed to have logical and scientifically-based reasons to believe that everything in the universe came from nothing. So, in order to truly accept that the Bible contained the truth and was the inspired word of God, I needed something that could ground it in reality. I’ve always been impressed by the complexity and intricacy of the Bible, and how so many themes repeat themselves, and so many of the stories are interconnected on a deeper level. However, in order for me to accept the Bible as the Truth, it needed to be grounded in reality (i.e., in something outside of itself). If the Bible’s version of events did not match the facts of history and science, it would lose any value to me as a source of the Truth and be relegated to no more than one of the great literary works of human civilization.

The three major categories of evidence that have grounded the Bible in reality, and have led me to conclude that it does indeed contain the Truth, are:

- (1) the scientific evidence for creation (and evidence against evolution),
- (2) the historical accuracy of the Bible, and
- (3) prophecies that have been fulfilled in recorded history and are being fulfilled through the events of the world today (mostly through God’s witness on this earth, the nation of Israel).

I won’t go into the details of all these pieces of evidence at this time, as that is not the purpose of this letter; we’ll save that for the “interview”! I mention this because, to me, this is the foundation of the logical progression that led me to desire to

be baptized. If the Bible does indeed contain the Truth, then I believe one must accept it as such in its entirety, not picking and choosing which parts one likes. If we have a sincere belief in the Bible, we must also accept the responsibility of what God has called us to do: be baptized, and attempt to follow the example of His Son in our daily lives.

This is the point where I have been stuck for the last few years. I had come to accept that the Bible was true based on the reasons I mentioned previously, but I was afraid of the responsibility. I also still held an irrational doubt, that somehow I was blinding myself, in that I was so entrenched in the Christadelphian belief system that I couldn't really see beyond it. I call this an irrational doubt because the evidence was right in front of me the whole time. I think that at some level I just didn't want to accept it. Part of me wanted to just forget the whole thing and live my life in ignorance, like most of the people around me at school, work, and elsewhere. I lacked the strength and will to take that first step and commit my life to God, although I knew in my heart I wanted to do so. I always saw baptism as something I would do eventually, but "not right now."

I have come to realize over the last few months that I would never have the strength on my own, and that I really needed God to help me overcome my weakness and doubt. I prayed sporadically over the last few months for God to give me the strength and help me take the first step of baptism, but it wasn't until Menucha Bible School this year that I really felt my prayer had been answered. I prayed every night during the week for God to give me strength and for the school to be the "spark" that would finally push me to make the commitment I had delayed for so many years.

Menucha had always been a place that helped me spiritually, but I always would return to my normal routine afterward, and the spiritual "high" would quickly fade amid the distractions of the world and my daily life. This year was the first time I felt that a prayer had truly been answered. The answer mostly came from an encouraging conversation with my friend Austen, but I also felt that the classes, the two baptisms, and the week in general were pretty much exactly what I needed.

At this point, I feel that I can no longer ignore what I believe in my heart and fall back into the meaningless daily routine of this worldly life. I know that I am still weak and very far from anything resembling perfection, but I believe that I am now ready, and it is my honest desire to take the first step in my walk on the straight and narrow path by entering the waters of baptism.

With this letter, I would like to formally request the opportunity to confess my faith in front of God and a few of His servants, and, I hope, to be baptized thereafter.

*Sincerely, in the Hope of our Lord,
Jonathan Sleeper*

(Jonathan was baptized September 2, 2007.)

Reflections

Our Electronic Witness

The Christadelphian community has heartily embraced the internet and social networking sites. There is a Christadelphian presence on all of the more popular social networking sites. Personally, I have accounts at the MySpace and Facebook social networking sites, which I use on a regular basis. Social networking sites are designed to be widely viewed by as many people as possible. We know from Scripture and past experience that everything we do is a witness to our values, interests, and beliefs. Some of our witness on social networking sites is extremely positive, and some is not what it should be. We are commanded in 2 Timothy 4:2 to be “instant in season and out of season” in our witness. Our social networking presence should reflect that.

Social networking sites have been used to strengthen fraternal bonds and inform the Christadelphian community of fraternal news. Bible schools, gatherings, and local CYCs have all used social networking sites to announce their plans. One example of positive social networking is the Facebook group “Grant Anderson Needs Your Prayers.” Bro. Grant was in a terrible car accident, and his family set up a Facebook group to keep Grant’s ecclesial family around the world informed of his condition and the progress he has made in his recovery. Many non-believers have seen the love and faith of our community expressed in this public forum.

Social networking sites are based on users identifying other users on the site as their friends. Many users take great pride in the number of friends they have. The desire to appear well-liked and well-connected leads many users to indiscriminately accept friend requests from anyone. Believers cannot forget the definition of a friend in John 15:14: “You are my friends if you do what I command you.” Social networking sites also feature groups which their members can join. Most colleges and universities have alumni groups, and there are groups for hobbies, sports teams, and special interests. People will judge us by the groups we join and the friends we select. A believer needs to remember that friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4).

Social networking sites often enable users to load content to their pages. MySpace enables its users to upload photographs, videos, and music to their pages. As believers, the content we load should reflect our service to our Master instead of our interests in fleshly pursuits. Our photographs should depict godly behavior and dress, as opposed to the photographs commonly found on MySpace. MySpace users are all asked what people they would like to meet, and their answers are displayed on their MySpace home pages. This choice reflects our interests and where our heart lies. Would we rather have people think that we want to meet Bible characters, or that we want to meet worldly entertainers?

Social networking sites are neither good nor evil. Social networking is a communication tool like email or the telephone. How we use this electronic tool will

tell the surrounding community and our Lord a great deal about our priorities and how we want to live our lives.

Jeff Livermore (Milford Road, MI)

Unjust Extremes

It is easy for men to deceive themselves into thinking that unrighteous and unjust extremes are simply the evidence of their zeal for truth. Even a readiness to listen to the accused is regarded as weakness. Such extremists cry shame on the very effort to be fair, and in their determination to have no compromise with error they sometimes exaggerate faults, and so grossly misrepresent the objects of their attack that they become guilty of offences worse than all the error against which they are trying to fight.

We must not fall into the mistake of taking an extreme view even of the extremist. God has been merciful to such men in the past, and we must be merciful now even in our thoughts. We may state most emphatically, however, that it is wrong to exaggerate the faults of anyone, or to find ugly and misleading names with which to label those who do not quite see eye to eye with us. It is quite possible to be valiant for the Truth and zealous for the Lord without being unfair even to those who are mistaken, and it is always wrong to be unfair. In faithfulness we must point out the danger that, in great zeal for the jots and tittles of the law, men may lose sight of the foundation principles. All their faith and works may become valueless through lack of charity.

The need for a clear perception of the Scriptural principles governing controversy is shown by the tendency toward unrighteous exaggeration even on the part of those from whom better things would be expected. A few days ago we read some words written by a critic who has usually shown a sense of responsibility in the use of words. Yet there are exaggerations which tend to foster strife without the slightest suggestion as to the restitution of the offenders. It declares that the belittling of the commandments among us had become an open sin.

This is a very definite and severe judgment, which presumably includes the present writer in its sweeping condemnation. What does it mean? Is there any effort or desire to restore us “in the spirit of meekness”, or are we too evil for that? If we “belittle the commandments of Christ” to the point of “open sin”, what hope can we have of forgiveness unless we can be restored? I have just recently been through the four Gospel records in an attempt to classify all the commandments of the Lord Jesus and apply them to present experience. It is easy to find commands which are very imperfectly observed. The repeated command to love one another even as he has loved us (John 13:34) has been repeatedly broken. The commands not to lay up treasure on earth and not to seek the riches of the Gentiles are so foreign to the spirit of our age that we only grasp them with great difficulty, and so far no one has been found to rend the ecclesias on this issue. It is quite certain that our critic does not mean these matters. He probably refers to the vexed question of a

decision as to where to draw the line between reproving, rebuking or withdrawing from an offender. Is there anything in the commands of Christ to suggest that one who takes too lenient a view of his brother's offences is to be condemned and repudiated? I know of no such command. There are plenty of warnings that those who take too severe a view of a brother's offences will themselves be dealt with severely. There are warnings against judging and against the natural tendency to see the defects in the eye of a brother while remaining unconscious of greater defects in ourselves. If some among us err in their unwillingness to take the most severe of all measures against offenders, if they carry too far the commands to be patient and to restore offenders in the spirit of meekness, it cannot in fairness be described as "belittling the commandments of Christ."

The use of this expression is to be explained in the same way as the many far worse attempts at argument which we sometimes hear. It is a natural emanation from strife and debate.

It is not fair, it is not true; but it has the doubtful merit of being severe, and therefore it is made to serve. It is so easy to be led into the use of such expressions, and we must not make any man an offender for a word, but we do well to sound a warning. Be pitiful, be courteous, be gentle, be meek, be honest. Cultivate charity and love, and remember that for every idle word that you speak you shall give account in the day of judgment.

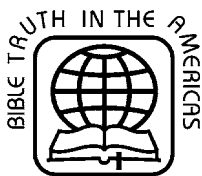
(Islip Collyer, The Scriptural Principles Governing Controversy)

My Neighbor's Bible

*I am my neighbor's Bible;
He reads me when we meet;
Today he reads me in my home,
Tomorrow on the street.
He may be a relative or a friend,
Or a slight acquaintance be;
He may not even know my name,
Yet he is reading me.*

*Dear friends in Christ and brothers,
If we could only know
How faithfully the world records
Just what we say and do.
Oh, we would make our record plain,
And labor hard to see
Our worldly neighbors won to Christ
While reading you and me.*

Dorothy Keeling



Bible Mission News

Baptism in Brazil

We are very happy to report that on Saturday, August 23, a new brother was baptized in Brazil. He is Emerson Acosta. Emerson has been studying with us for several years and in addition has been visited by different brethren on several occasions. In the past he was a member and leader of different Evangelical churches but was never able to accept the doctrine of the Trinity, so he was very happy to discover a community that shared his conviction. He has become a very good Bible student, and he gave an excellent confession of his faith over the course of several days. Bro. Rubén Barboza took the short flight over from Córdoba, Argentina, to participate in the interview and carry out the baptism.

This is the first baptism in Brazil that the CBMA has been directly involved with from the beginning of the instruction period. Bro. Emerson will be in isolation, although communication will be maintained with him through various means.

*Jim Hunter, Brazil linkman
CBMA Latin American Committee*



The baptism: Rubén on the left and Emerson on the right.



**In Brazil:
Rubén Barboza
on the right.
Emerson in the
center, with his
wife Viviane,
son Kevim and
daughter Ellem.**

Singing Hymns in Panama

During the month of August, we were privileged once again to visit the two ecclesias in Panama (Colón and Panama City), and enjoyed the fellowship and labors of Bro. Clive and Sis. Christine Drepaul from the South Ozone Park Ecclesia in Brooklyn, NY. The Drepauls, along with a few other Christadelphians from North America, attended a wedding in Panama in July, 2007, and they offered to return in 2008 to assist with ecclesial activities. Although the language spoken by the majority of the members in Panama is Spanish, quite a number speak English as well. This being the case, during the 16 days the Drepauls spent in Panama, Bro. Clive was able to give a number of exhortations and studies (such as Malachi, Haggai, and Jonah) and a lecture on “One God, One Gospel, One Way to Go”. The members of both ecclesias were very grateful for Clive and Christine’s fellowship and ministrations. Bro. Don Luff also scheduled a linkman’s visit to Panama during the same time, so as to work with Clive in a few dual language activities for the benefit of the ecclesias and regular visitors.

There were two highlights from the various activities. On Thursday, August 21, starting at about 5 pm, ten brothers and sisters listened to a study on “The Comfort of the Truth” at the home of Bro. Luis and Sis. Vanessa Sobers’ home. This was followed by a delicious fish (corvina) supper. After the meal, we gathered as many English and Spanish hymn books as we could find in the house and sang hymns in both languages, and with no accompaniment, until about 10 pm, when we ran out of breath! It was a very pleasant evening indeed. The amazing thing was that 24-year-old Bro. Jahir Jiménez, who was baptized about two years ago, could sing most of the Spanish hymns by heart! The other occasion was in Sunday, August 24, when we held another joint Sunday service in Panama City — the Breaking of Bread, a meal, and an afternoon Bible class. Twenty brothers and sisters, six children and four regular visitors were well-fed by God’s Word, as well as an excellent meal provided by the sisters.

We thank our Heavenly Father for the fellowship we enjoyed, based on His Word of Truth. We look forward to the day when we will serve together in the Kingdom.

Don Luff, CBMA linkmen for Panamá



**Bro. Clive Drepaal
(right front)
and Sis. Christine Drepaul
(center front)
(from Brooklyn, NY)
with members of
The Colon Ecclesia.**

**Sisters
preparing meal at
Panama City
Ecclesial Hall.**



Bring the Power of Internet Preaching to Your Ecclesia!

Since January 2006, ThisisyourBible.com (TIYB) has been bringing the Gospel message to thousands. We've been blessed with a dozen baptisms of students from the TIYB site. These new brothers and sisters come from almost every continent — and from the Los Angeles metropolitan area to the tiny island of Malta. Additionally, tens of thousands have downloaded and read Christadelphian teachings on basic first principle topics. More than 8,000 have registered on the site. Yet we believe this is just scratching the surface!

It is now clear to us that the best formula for TIYB is a strong partnership among the TIYB site, our tutors, and local ecclesias. Each plays a critical role in leading men and women to the Truth. We continue to view the brothers and sisters who

faithfully serve as tutors as our greatest asset. It's this "in the trenches" work that develops important relationships with students and encourages them to go beyond mere completion of the correspondence course and to seek fellowship with those who uphold the true Gospel. We currently have more than 350 tutors. We thank the Lord for providing these dedicated servants.

We've witnessed some very creative and effective outreach techniques used in several communities to leverage the power of TIYB. For instance, in the Bahamas and Barbados, newspaper ads for TIYB and the correspondence course netted more than 1,000 new students. In these communities, the ecclesial members now have a rich slate of new contacts who are actively involved in ongoing correspondence courses with tutors. These new students are prime candidates for local Bible talks or seminar offerings. We feel that this is *the* model for TIYB partnership. It provides local ownership, along with the resources of our global tutor base.

So we have re-designed TIYB to give ecclesias more ownership and control over outreach in their community. In fact, we are pleased to introduce the "Ecclesial Manager" feature on TIYB, with the objective of giving each ecclesia the option of using TIYB as an effective tool for their localized outreach work.

For ecclesias looking for a new way to develop local contacts and invite them to outreach activities, TIYB now offers each ecclesia the ability to designate an "Ecclesial Manager" for its area. This means that your ecclesia can now have control over all students in your geographic area. You can designate specific tutors in your ecclesia for incoming students, or you can continue to use the existing global tutors. As the Ecclesial Manager, you will be able to access information on contacts in your area, create email lists for communication purposes — even set up a brief webpage about your ecclesia! What we ask is for the Ecclesial Managers to advertise and promote TIYB in their area, with the object of building contacts.

The process for getting started is not difficult. If you think that your ecclesia has a long-term interest in developing and cultivating students in your area, you can begin by emailing:

1. Bro. Mike LeDuke at mduke@gto.net in North America.
2. Bro. Peter Forbes at peterlforbes@tiscali.co.uk for Europe, Africa and the Middle East.
3. Bro. Keith Pearson at pearsonk@primus.com.au for Australia, New Zealand, Asia and the Pacific region.

We will be glad to provide you with all the details necessary to begin this exciting work in your ecclesial area.

The Lord has greatly blessed us with this opportunity to bring the Word of Truth to many more men and women. There's no magic bullet here — it involves connecting students with tutors and meeting them at a local level with a committed ecclesia. Today, your ecclesia can harness this important tool to be an important part of your outreach activities. Let us know when you'd like to get started!

Dave Jennings
Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

(For tax ID numbers please contact the Editor)

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Domestic Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make US dollar online donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Charles Brinkerhoff, 15925 La Ronda Cir., Hacienda Heights, CA 91745-4244

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Christadelphian Heritage College

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

Christadelphian Save the Children

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

Christadelphian Indian Children's

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

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

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable

Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L4V7, Canada

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund

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

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

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

News & Notices

BRANTFORD, ON

As of July 2008, we transfer and commend Bro. Ben Bowen to the love and fellowship of the Mississauga West Ecclesia. Bro. Ben is relocating for work and we will miss him, having enjoyed his support in many areas since his return from mission work in Bangladesh.

We are happy to extend a warm welcome to Bro. Brent and Sis. Jennifer Penny and family, by way of transfer from the Hamilton Ewen Road Ecclesia as of September 2008. We look forward to continued fellowship with them as we labor together in the truth. We are also very happy to welcome back our Sis. Hadassah Mindorff, who has agreed to teach at CHC for another year rather than returning to Virginia.

We enjoyed fellowship with our Bro. Ron and Sis. Babs Kidd (London, ON), and thank them for visiting us. We thank our Bro. Ron for leading the Bible studies during our recent Camp Kumah young peoples' weekend. We look forward to the visit of Bro. Carl Parry (Aust.) who will be leading us in studies of "The Prophecy of Isaiah", from October 3-8, 2008, God willing.

Daniel Billington

EDMONTON, AB

We thank the brothers and sisters who have visited us in recent months and in particular Bro. Jon Fletcher (Kamloops, BC), Bro. Don Hampson (Calgary, AB), and Bro. Bill Hlina (Vernon, BC), who have ministered to our spiritual needs.

Twenty-four years ago our ecclesia was blessed by the transfer of Bro. David and Sis. Mary Green from Brantford, ON. We enjoyed their fellowship throughout those years, watching as their little family grew. Now we commend them in love to the Sussex, NB, Ecclesia where they can watch their grandchildren grow in the love of the truth.

We look forward to our Calgary / Edmonton Thanksgiving Fraternal to be held in Calgary on October 11-12, 2008, and the fellowship it will offer. We thank our Bro. Dana Kohlman (Rolling Hills, AB) for leading our Thanksgiving fraternal last year in Edmonton.

Jerome Toronchuk

TROY, IL

We are pleased to announce the baptism of CALEB FOLKERTS on July 12, 2008.

We have enjoyed the fellowship of the following brothers and sisters who have visited recently: Ron and Barb Bryan, Tim and Christy Bryan, Jim and Jorie Asbury, and Patty Bobis (Kouts, IN); and Jim and Patty Robinson (Kitchener, ON). If anyone is traveling through the St. Louis area, please contact Bro. Jerry Asbury (618-288-5023). We welcome the company and fellowship.

Tom Tottleben

VERDUGO HILLS, CA

This year has brought a few changes to our membership. In February 2008, Sis. Dorothy Banta passed away at the age of 96. She was baptized in 1932 at the age of 21

in the Pomona Ecclesia. She had been a member of our ecclesia since 1953, but due to failing health had not been able to attend memorial service for a number of years. We look forward to reuniting with her in our Father's kingdom.

By way of transfer, we welcomed Bro. Ed Newton and Sis. Winona Morrison from the Orange County Ecclesia, and Sis. Mimi Sternad who transferred from the Simi Hills Ecclesia.

We have been blessed with two baptisms this year: DANNY COLLISTER on July 4, 2008, and SANDRA COLLISTER on August 24, 2008. Both are Sunday school students we have watched grow into young adults over the years.

Very exciting were the births of five future Sunday school students within the past few months. They were welcomed by parents, grandparents and great-grandparents who almost all attend our ecclesia. Aaliyah Bethel Paggi was born on May 12 to Bro. Jeff and Sis. Nissa Paggi. Jeremy James Larsen was born on May 25 to Bro. Grant and Sis. Renee Larsen. Ryder Robert Blanchard was born on July 29 to Bro. Nathan and Sis. Janee Blanchard. Finally, within about twenty minutes of each other on August 23 Hailey Katherine Ohins was born to Bro. Brian and Sis. Heather Ohins and Abigail Shamssa Shankour was born to Bro. Nassib and Sis. Norma Shankour. We give thanks to the Lord for so many healthy babies.

We have been blessed with visitors too numerous to mention, almost every Sunday. We especially thank those who have provided words of encouragement through their exhortations.

Dennis Paggi

WICHITA FALLS, TX

Since last reporting our ecclesial news we have welcomed around the table of our absent Lord the following: Sis. Jeanna McLaughlin, Bro. Antonio and Sis. Marcia Howell, and Sis. Michelle Massip (Dallas, TX); Bro. Garth and Sis. Kerri Maier (East Texas); Bro. Tyler Cherry, Bro. Aron Cherry, and Bro. Mark and Sis. Jackie Wade (West Houston, TX); Bro. David Ishman, Bro. Fred and Sis. Laura Bearden, Sis. Inga von Gadenstedt, Bro. Cliff and Sis. Maritta Terrell, Bro. Gene and Sis. Seba Faye Farley, and Bro. Adam Booker (Austin Leander, TX); Bro. Ralph and Sis. Elizabeth Hollenbeck (North Houston, TX); Bro. Todd Wolfe, Bro. Jeremy and Sis. Leah Wolfe, and Sis. Seba Wolfe (Abilene, TX); Sis. Cheryl Kitch and Sis. Sandra Maggert (Albuquerque, NM); Sis. Judy Muniz (Livonia, MI); and Sis. Hannah Tunnell (San Diego County, CA). We thank Bro. G. Maier for his special Sunday school presentation and Bre. A. Cherry, T. Wolfe, and A. Booker for encouraging words of exhortation.

In June we were happy to welcome home Bro. Ben Beutel after a short stay in Abilene, TX. We certainly appreciate his efforts on behalf of our ecclesia.

In August, we rejoiced as we witnessed the baptisms of Sunday school scholars DANIEL BEUTEL and CALEB CLUBB. Our prayer is that our heavenly Father will bless these two young brothers as they join us in anticipation of Christ's return and the establishment of God's kingdom on this earth.

John A. Clubb

New England Bible Study Weekend

Lord willing, the New England Bible Study weekend is planned for November 7-9, 2008 at Barton Center, N. Oxford, MA, USA. The adult speaker for the weekend will

be Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA) on the subject, "Learning to be Holy: The Law of Moses for Today". There will be separate classes for the young people led by Bro. Steve Harper (Meriden, CT). His subject is "Be Ye Separate — A Nazarite Unto God".

The Barton Center is a beautiful location with a new conference center in which the adult classes are held. There are two different types of accommodation. Dorm accommodation is in log cabins containing approximately 18 beds (no bunks) with some privacy. Cabins typically have two or more bathrooms which include showers. There are private rooms in the main lodge which are set aside for husband and wife couples on a first come/first served basis. These rooms require a tuition surcharge as we do not use these to their fullest capacity. There are wash basins in each room and very good bathroom facilities at the end of the hall. Meals are prepared and served by volunteers attending the weekend. This affords an opportunity to help in loving service to each other. Cost for the weekend is \$106 per person double occupancy in the conference center building. Cabin costs are \$86 per person for adults and \$76 per person for young people ages 12-19.

We look forward to another spiritually rewarding weekend around the Word of God and in fellowship with our brothers, sisters and young people.

For further information please contact Bro. Craig Nevers at craigneve@cox.net or Sis. Judith Nevers at jnevers@verizon.net.

Judith Nevers

Uganda Pen-pal

A young man in Uganda who is a primary school teacher, and receiving the CBM Bible Course, is asking for a Christadelphian pen-pal by email. Further details from Art Bull, quantum-space@shaw.ca.

Art Bull

The rough parts of the road

Don't be dismayed when you come to a pothole, a detour, or a stretch of rough and rocky road. Don't be surprised. Slow down a little. Be patient. It's not the whole journey. It's not the way it'll always be. But it is part of your journey, too, part of the journey of your heart and soul. Even when we're living with joy and freedom, we continue to learn, grow, feel, and experience. And the road can still get rough.

Happiness doesn't mean feeling gleeful all the time. Happiness doesn't mean that the road we're traveling is always smooth. Happiness means feeling all we need to feel. And it means accepting, in faith, each part of the journey, even the changes of course and direction.

Melody Beattie

Minute Meditation

Life is a Trust

Paul tells the Corinthians, “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” This requirement extends beyond the superficial level of completing tasks or returning borrowed items. We each carry a responsibility for faithful service to God because we ourselves and everything we own has been entrusted to us by our heavenly Father. The Psalmist tells us, “The earth is the LORD’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” Nothing that we have is really ours; God has only loaned it to us to use for the short time we have to live.

When God created Adam and Eve, He entrusted the care of His creation to them and appointed them trustees over His property. The Garden of Eden did not belong to them, but they were put in charge of tending and keeping it. “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

What are we doing with the things the LORD has entrusted to our care? Do we act like they are our own, or do we treat them as we would treat a valuable possession someone has loaned to us? Certainly if we borrow another person’s car we do not want to put a dent in it. When Elijah went with the prophets to build a larger meeting room, we read, “As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axhead fell into the water. ‘Oh, my lord,’ he cried out, ‘it was borrowed!’ ” He felt a greater sense of responsibility for property he was using that belonged to someone else.

We need to develop this attitude towards all the things with which the LORD has blessed us. There should be no such thing as pride of ownership for anything that we possess. God allows us to use our home, our car, and even our money to see what we will do with them to serve Him. Paul told the Corinthians, “For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?”

We must not be puffed up by the worldly possessions God has given us to test us. Recall that even good King Hezekiah succumbed when God left him to test him, and he showed off all his riches to others. We later read that “Hezekiah repented of the pride of his heart,” and the LORD forgave him.

We need to be watchful so that, if we have become proud of our possessions, we also have a change of heart and repent as did Hezekiah. The more we have, the more the Lord expects from us. Jesus tells us, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” For this reason Jesus warns us, saying, “So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?”

The Lord tests us just as He tested Hezekiah. How are we doing? In Jesus' parables about pounds and talents, the master who went away returned to determine what his servants had done with what he left in their care when he went away. Our Lord will soon be returning to call us to his judgment seat. Each of us will have to give an account of what we did with what the Lord has given us. We must not hoard what we have but use all the gifts God has given us to serve Him.

Is our car being used for the LORD's work or our own? What about our home? Whom do we invite to eat with us? Jesus specifically mentions details of daily living in his instructions in the gospels: "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

The day will soon be here when we must give an account of what we have done with the worldly things God has loaned to us. We cannot take them with us, so we are expected to use all of them now in our service to our King. Remember, Jesus said that we will be held accountable, and if faithful will be rewarded when he returns. "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to his works."

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

OCTOBER

4 Cranston, RI Study day, at ecclesial hall. Bro. Jim Styles (Livonia, MI): "Law versus Grace", three classes. Contact Bro. Craig Nevers craignev@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@hfhs.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 craignev@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 North Houston, TX** Study weekend. Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): "The Lord in the Psalms". Starting 2 pm Saturday; dinner at 5 pm; class and exhortation on Sunday. Contact Bro. Shannon Strickland shannon.d.strickland@exxonmobil.com 281-794-9932 or Sis. Jeanne Strickland jeanne.strickland@exxonmobil.com 281-797-7579
- 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 (Saarnich 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 chrstad@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

- 7-9 New England Bible Study Weekend.** Barton Center, No. Oxford, MA. For adults: Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA): "Learning to Be Holy: the Law of Moses for Today". For young people: Bro. Steve Harper (Meriden, CT): "Be Ye Separate — A Nazarite unto God". Contact Bo. Craig Nevers caignev@cox.net or Sis. Judith Nevers jnevers@verizon.net
- 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): "Daniel's Prophecy of the Kingdom of Men"; Bro. Don Pearce (Rugby, UK): "Gog's Roadmap: Russian Bear on the March"; Bro. Paul Billington (Brantford, ON): "In the Hebrew Tongue: Armageddon". 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. HEB Camp in Leakey, TX. Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI): "Little Words" and "The Bible and Science". Contact Sis. Maritta Terrell, mt-ct@swbell.net, 512-331-5575

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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@ gmailcom. Information at www.texasyouthconference.com

28 - January 1 Bozeman, MT CYC Winter Conference. Bro. Graeme Osborn (Vernon-Okanagan, BC): "The Call to be a Faithful and Wise Servant: Matthew 25 — 'The Ten Virgins'." Contact Sis. Briana Bittinger 406-388-7735 briana1614@hotmail.com

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

22-27 Palm Springs Bible School Palm Springs, CA. Bro. Tec Morgan (Birmingham Washwood Heath, UK) and Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA). To register contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or visit website www.californiabibleschool.org