

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

— of the Kingdom of God —

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No. 10

Editorial — America's Presidential Election, <i>Joe Hill</i>	471
Exhortation — Instruments of God's Help, <i>Michael Bull</i>	475
Bible Study:	
Little Words that Mean a Lot:	
(13) Patience, <i>John C. Bilello</i>	478
The Pastoral Letters of Paul, <i>Colin Edwards</i>	483
Ecclesial Study — The Jury Duty Summons, <i>Ken Sommerville</i>	489
History — The Historical Interactions Between the CGAF and the Christadelphians, <i>Peter Hemingray</i>	497
Archaeology — Seal of Zedekiah's Secretary Found in Jerusalem	503
Reflections:	
Bro. Julian Webster	504
"Then the land had rest from war", <i>George Booker</i>	505
Sis. Arlene Gordon, <i>Wesley Booker</i>	506
Bible Mission News — Guyana; Costa Rica; This is your Bible	508
News & Notices	513
Minute Meditation — Life is a Temporary Assignment, <i>Robert J. Lloyd</i> ..	517
Coming Events	519

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Editor: George Booker

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The Christadelphian and the State

Recently both Canada and the United States have seen national elections. Even though we don't participate in such elections, it would be just about impossible not to notice them. Furthermore, it may be just about impossible not to have opinions. Let us be sure that we don't give expression to them, either by voting or partisan statement.

Several articles in this issue deal with the Christadelphian and the state. In a guest editorial, Bro. Joe Hill (Chairman of The Tidings Publishing Committee) reminds us that God rules in the kingdom of men, and that, for now, we are strangers and pilgrims in this world. This is a good place to start.

Bro. Ken Sommerville (a member of the Tidings Publishing Committee) deals specifically with another feature of our relationship with the state: jury duty. He points out that, with different procedures now in many places, we might be called upon to appear in court and explain and defend our position regarding jury service. We should have our points well thought out. He also raises questions about our general consistency, questions for which there are not necessarily definitive answers, but which nonetheless ought to be asked.

Finally, Bro. Bob Lloyd (retired editor of The Christadelphian Tidings) vividly reminds us that our whole life in this world is temporary, but that our citizenship in God's Kingdom is, and ought to be, eternal.

George Booker

Editorial

America's Presidential Election

By the time you receive this magazine, the United States of America will have elected its next president. The citizens of the U.S.A. will have voted this new president into office; he will be their representative leader of the executive branch of government. Depending on how much support he received from the voters, he will have some measure of a mandate to carry out his policies. His duties will include:

- (1) to execute the laws of the land and to prosecute those who violate them;
- (2) to act as commander-in-chief of the armed forces;
- (3) to act as head of state, the figurehead for the nation in its interactions with other nations and their figureheads;
- (4) to make appointments of federal judges, including new members of the Supreme Court; and
- (5) to work with Congress to enact new laws.

It is interesting to note how many of these roles Jesus will fulfill as God's chosen King, to rule over His kingdom; of course, his mandate will be unequivocal. To some extent this parallel is fortuitous, because the so-called founding fathers patterned the U.S. government after the representative form of government found in the Bible. They also included checks and balances similar to those found in Scripture.

But perhaps more important is to note God's role in this election process.

Three times in Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar is instructed that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will:

"This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men... That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will... And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan 4:17,25,32).

So God's role in selecting the President of the United States is similar to God's role in selecting Saul to be king over His nation of Israel: in both cases, God picked

someone whom the people wanted. No matter who has won the U.S. election, God was the one who caused him to be chosen. We may not understand or appreciate His purpose in making the selection, but we can be sure that He was the one who made it happen.

Our citizenship in Christ

We Christadelphians do not vote, nor do we serve on juries or in the armed forces or in the police force. We abide by the laws of the land whenever there is no conflict with the laws of God. We pay our taxes. We are peaceful and helpful to those around us. We are in many respects “good citizens”. But we have a citizenship that takes priority over the one of the country in which we live.

Before we were baptized, we were aliens and strangers from the hope of Israel:

*“That at that time ye were without Christ, being **aliens** from the commonwealth of Israel, and **strangers** from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12).*

But now, through Christ, we are no longer strangers, but citizens in God’s Kingdom:

*“Now therefore ye are no more **strangers and foreigners**, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph 2:19).*

“Only let your conversation be [behave as citizens, RVm] as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil 1:27).

“For our conversation [citizenship, RV] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20).

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:12-14).

We wait for our Lord to return from heaven, which “must receive him until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21).

In the meantime, today we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, resident aliens in the countries in which we dwell. We long for our Savior’s return, so that God’s Kingdom may be manifest to all. We desire the coming of the Kingdom and pray that we might reign with Christ as kings and priests. In this, we are following the pattern of the faithful, including our father Abraham:

*“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and **confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth**. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country,*

that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb 11:13-16).

The yoke of the Kingdom

I remember our late Bro. Alfred Norris asking a class at Bible school, “Is the Kingdom of God already in the earth?” Of course, the question caused a bit of discomfort. Most answered “No.” But a few of us said “Yes.” Bro. Alfred indicated that both answers were right without the other being wrong. Of course, Christ has not returned, he is not reigning on David’s throne in Jerusalem, and the Kingdom of God has not been established in its ultimate glory. On the other hand, for us, as citizens of God’s Kingdom, there should be a very real way in which God already reigns in our lives. For us, if for no one else, the essential aspects of God’s Lordship should already be apparent in the way we live.

Indeed we pray, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:9,10), by which we acknowledge His rule over us. We also find comfort in the words of David’s psalm: “The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all” (Psa 103:19).

In this regard, the Jews have an ancient tradition that is worthy of emulation. Every morning and evening they recite the Shema, including, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut 6:4,5). By saying these words aloud, they acknowledge their acceptance of the yoke of God’s kingdom. This first of all commandments reminds them of their covenant relationship with God. It brings into their hearts and minds the greatest of all commandments, that we must love our God with all our heart and all our soul and all our might. We must acknowledge His authority over us, not out of fear, but out of love, love for our Father, our heavenly Father who has had pity on us, who provides all things for us, and who has promised to bless us with eternal life, if only we remain faithful to His covenant with us.

Following this example, we ought also to live under the yoke of our Father’s reign. That is what it really means to be citizens of His Kingdom. He is our King today: we don’t have to wait for anything to happen in order for this to be true. His Son is our Lord and Savior today: we don’t have to wait for him to return to the earth for this to be true. So we should live every moment of every day constrained by the love which they have shown us.

This idea of accepting God’s reign in our lives underlies the words of Hymn 163: “Take my heart; it is Thine own. It shall be Thy royal throne.” In singing these words of dedication, we commit ourselves to live according to God’s Kingship. We must have His law written in our hearts, in fulfillment of the new covenant (Jer 31:33). And we must make every effort to live by that law, following the example of God’s obedient Son. By doing so, we will fulfill the Lord’s prayer, if only in our own small way, but in the only way we can fulfill it today. In this way, we become the true brothers and sisters of our Lord.

Bro. Alfred's book, *I Believe*, was the basis for those Bible school classes. It is his personal confession of faith and commitment to action. In his book, Clause IX reads:

"I believe in the Kingdom of God. I believe that God Most High, Who rules in the kingdom of men, and did in times past choose Israel as His special people, will send back the Lord Jesus Christ His Son to be ruler over all the earth, reigning from His holy city Jerusalem, the city of the great King, until He shall have put all enemies under His feet.

"I know that none shall enjoy for ever the blessings of that Kingdom, save those who have already submitted themselves under the mighty hand of God; and therefore, as I pray, 'Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,' I pledge it as my duty to seek to do His will even now, behaving as a subject of that Kingdom ought to behave, seeking first of all His rule and righteousness."

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

The Kingdom of Men

"The kingdom of men"... occurs three times in Daniel 4 — see verses 17, 25, and 32. The "kingdom of men" consists of the aggregate of human governments. It is an appropriate designation for them all. They are all the embodiment of one principle — namely, the rule of man by himself. Whether it be the despot or free Parliament, the same is exemplified — self-government.

This has been the alpha and omega of all political faith, since man was first sent forth an exile from Eden to take care of himself. Its form has varied in different ages and countries, according to the views and inclinations of men, but men have agreed with marvelous unanimity as to the mainspring of the system. There has been no difference between the bitterest factions as to the source of the power they respectively claimed to exercise, namely, the will of man — whether royalist or republican, despotic or constitutional.

The will of man is the cornerstone of every political edifice that exists — the foundation of the vast system of nations that covers the face of the earth. No one ever questions the legitimacy of human authority as politically embodied. The fact is, the world knows of no other authority. If it believe in God, a false theology has excluded Him from any influence in the minds of men in things practical. They confine His jurisdiction to "spiritual things," to which an artificial significance has come to be attached; and even in these they only yield Him a constrained and occasional deference. In reality, they acknowledge Him not. They own no higher authority than themselves. They assert the right to be their own masters, to dispose of this world's wealth as they think fit, and to make such laws as they please.

Robert Roberts, *Christendom Astray*

Exhortation

Instruments of God's Help

It is fairly easy to admit we are imperfect, in the general sense. It is relatively easy to be known as a sinner among many other sinners. We find it easy to accept the concept that we need help from time to time. But when we move from the general to the particular, we may be less willing to share our imperfections and sins and ask for specific help. Although we admit the possibility, in practice we don't like to feel inadequate, weak, vulnerable or in need.

We smile at young children when they say, 'Don't help me! I can do it myself!' We may see that the little child with the bold face and focused eyes can't perform what he so confidently asserts. As adults, however, we sometimes fail to recognize that our own pride or foolishness can lead us down the same path: we either refuse help, or, more often, fail to ask for help. This leaves us proud and alone in our weakness — a deplorable state.

We're often not alone, but simply reluctant to reach out for help. Elijah was demoralized that Israel didn't return from Baal worship to the true God after the sacrifice on Mount Carmel. He lamented that he was alone, "the only one" who followed God. But the LORD, who is merciful, gently showed him that he was not alone, and that in fact there were thousands of others who did not worship Baal.

The Preacher reminds us that it is good to have at least one person willing to see our need and help out when we fall:

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.

For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help" (Eccl 4:9,10).

The lesson here is not simply to ask for help when it is needed, but to put ourselves in a position where those around us will see that we have failed. This is a humbling thought. Our natural instinct is to hide our failures and cover them over, to appear as good and competent and strong as we can. The difficulty can be compounded if we don't admit to ourselves that we need help.

We must ask for help

The Israelites in the time of the Judges may have often gone astray, but at least, sometimes, they knew when they were powerless to help themselves. They "cried to God for help" (Jdg 4:3; 6:6) and each time God provided them with an earthly savior — the judge, in these cases Deborah and Gideon, who provided hope for Israel and leadership out of their suffering.

A frame of mind where we elevate ourselves and justify or explain away our own needs and weaknesses will set us up for the ultimate failure. On the other hand, a mindset where we humble ourselves and reach out for practical help will reward us in the long run. In the New Testament, the man with the son who

suffered seizures, who spoke to Jesus after he was transfigured, knew he and his son needed help. His son desperately needed a cure, and the man himself needed faith. The seizure itself was heartrending for father and son — the father, because he was powerless to stop it, and the son, because of the physical danger each time. “Help us,” asked the anguished father, and “help my unbelief!” It is not enough to expect help without our asking, although inwardly this is what we might like. Even God, who knows and sees all, expects His loved ones to come to Him and spell out their needs.

We know how to ask for help from God, and that is by petition in prayer. That is not enough, however. We need to ask for help from others, from anyone who has the ability and the willingness to help us. There are many ways to ask for help. At times we may be direct, knowing exactly the kind of assistance we need. At other times we might want to talk things over in order to get advice on what help is needed, because we’re unsure ourselves.

Empathy as help

Help is more than action: it is empathy. In asking for help we are often asking for more than a task to be done or shared; we are asking to be understood. Helping others demands that we take the time to listen and understand and share in their needs and weaknesses, and not simply perform the required help in a detached way. Even of Jesus it is said,

“Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested” (Heb 2:18).

This verse tells us what is often true: those who have gone through what we are suffering may be better equipped to assist us. It is up to us to seek out such people in the context of the help we need.

Those looking for help in overcoming an alcohol problem may attend a group where others who share the same weakness are able to empathize. So it is with other aspects of our life where we need help. It may be humbling to seek out such support because it means we must admit our problem to one or several people. We wonder what our friends will think of us or whether our relationship with them will change. It is possible that our relationship with them *will* change — for the better. We may find that there are situations where one needs help in one area, and another needs help with something else, so that mutual supports are built up. Pillars are mutual supports for a reason: they work together to bear heavy loads that cannot be borne alone.

Persistence

The gospels remind us of another aspect of asking for help, and that is persistence. At first the unjust judge was unwilling to help the widow in her campaign to obtain justice against her adversary. Since she couldn’t help herself, she was persistent in her “continual coming” until she got the help she needed. This is true in our lives for more than prayer; it is also true when asking for practical help to overcome what is troubling us. If we don’t get adequate help the first time, it’s easy to give up because we feel discouraged. The Canaanite woman, from the district of Tyre

and Sidon, begged Jesus to heal her daughter. After he called her a dog, in effect, she may very well have turned her back on him, but she didn't. She was persistent in pleading with the Master on her daughter's behalf.

This woman illustrates another aspect of asking for help that is an exhortation for us. There are times when those close to us need help, and we are powerless because we are unable to meet the need. We may try our best, but our best is not enough. As with the Canaanite woman, when it is appropriate we ought to humble ourselves and ask for help for our loved ones.

Our Lord was direct in admonishing his listeners to ask repeatedly and not give up. When Jesus spoke in the 'Sermon on the Mount', exhorting those around him, "Ask, and you will receive," the intent of the message wasn't 'Ask once', but '**Keep** asking'. When Elijah kept praying for rain, the sky was as blue as the sea from horizon to horizon the first six times he prayed. It was only on the seventh time that there was a hint that his petition would be granted.

Even ecclesias need help

What is true for individuals is also true for ecclesias. From time to time they need help, and the same principles apply. Those ecclesias which reach out to others will usually see care, sympathy and the love of Christ showered on them in abundance. The need may be welfare for members, a perplexing problem with personalities, or a need for help with preaching ideas. Paul had a vision of a man pleading for help and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." The vision didn't present itself to Paul as a perfunctory request; it involved pleading and begging for help.

In the same way, it is wise for elders when necessary to seek counsel elsewhere, even though they may feel they are putting themselves on a lower footing than others by asking for assistance. The idea to grasp is that asking for help is not a show of weakness, but of strength in order to overcome a weakness or a deficiency:

"And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary" (1Co 12:21,22).

Be ready to help

Just as receiving help may be emotionally difficult at times, giving help is not always easy, requiring effort and often sacrifice. Our giving of help, however, is a compass for measuring love, showing the direction of our minds and hearts.

"How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?" (1Jo 3:17).

Real help is an act of love because it is God's love.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psa 46:1).

Let us be God's instruments of help for others, and let us prayerfully seek out those who will be God's instruments of help to us.

Michael Bull (Vancouver, BC)

(Note: all quotations NKJV)

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (13) Patience

*“...Who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’:
eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory,
honor, and immortality” (Rom 2:6,7).*

I am sure every parent, in fact every adult, who has had the occasion to take young children on a long car ride, whether to a CYC event, Bible school or on vacation, has experienced the impatient whine of the “Are we there yet?” syndrome. Perhaps this doesn’t relate well to parents today, but believe it or not: before iPods, DVD players in cars, and various portable electric games it was extremely hard to entertain children on even the shortest of trips. One excursion that particularly stands out in my memory is taking a group of CYC youngsters to a Yankee baseball game when we lived in Setauket, Long Island. From our house to the stadium was a car ride of about two hours. The parents brought all the children to our house, and we took off in a rented van with eight children ranging in ages from eight to 15 years old. We hadn’t gotten more than 10 minutes into our ride when the litany began: “Are we there yet, Uncle John?” And this phrase was repeated every few minutes by various children all the way to the Bronx. Fortunately, on the way home the children were so tired they more or less snoozed, and I was thankful for that blessing. The “Are we there yet?” syndrome is so familiar that it has become a symbol of childhood impatience that has been satirized in TV sitcoms, movies and various publications (a quick check of amazon.com yielded more than 10 media titles connected with this phrase).

Why is this phrase so ubiquitous? Probably because it is almost assuredly a universal lament of childhood, directly related to the inability of immature minds to postpone fulfillment. A corollary to the “Are we there yet?” expression is the “I want it now” demand, another phrase that is frequently blurted out by young children. Indeed, impatience is the characteristic feature of an immature person regardless of chronological age. It is the exact antithesis of the character of our heavenly Father, who is “longsuffering” in His graciousness (Exod 34:6; Num 14:18, and Psa 86:15 among others).

The apostle James exhorts us to be patient when he says:

“You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:8).

Almost 2,000 years have passed since he wrote those words, and some might say: What could he have possibly meant by seeming to indicate that the Lord was going to come shortly, i.e., that his coming was “at hand”? Without a doubt it would have completely discouraged the brethren and sisters in the first century if James had said: *Be patient, for the Lord’s coming is 2,000 years from now!* While it might be our earnest desire that our Lord Jesus Christ *come soon*, as I have heard expressed

in many prayers including some of my own, it cannot be a proper prayer unless accompanied by the phrase “if it be Thy will”. God is not slack concerning the fulfillment of His promises. As the apostle Peter tells us, He is “longsuffering... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2Pe 3:9). Impatient persons might lose their faith if they don’t realize that, as long as the work of calling out a people for His name is unfinished, the LORD God will patiently continue this dispensation.

As far as we are concerned, patiently waiting for the coming of our Messiah, in the sense recorded by James, does not constitute 2,000 years; at most it can only have reference to our own lifespan. Consequently, the apostle is exhorting us to a lifetime of patient waiting for the Lord’s return. Surely he will come; there can be no doubt that it will happen (Heb 6:13). We may go to bed tomorrow and wake up the next morning to find that our Lord Jesus Christ has come. On the other hand, one might be in the grave thousands of years like the patriarch Abraham, yet just as assuredly, with his next waking moment, he will see his redeemer (cf Job 19:25,26). There is no delay in either case, because there is no consciousness of time passing for those asleep in Christ.

There are many other aspects of leading a life of mature patience that we need to explore. In a sense, many people never grow up; when they want something they want it *now* regardless of the consequences! Such people invariably demonstrate certain characteristics:

- They are quick to speak, and slow to listen.
- They are prone to excessive speed when driving — in a hurry to get there.
- They are impatient at red lights, often running through stop signs.
- They may become extremely annoyed when caught behind a slow driver.
- They may be abusive toward their spouses or children if they don’t immediately get their own way.
- They have difficulty controlling their debts, sometimes running up unsustainable credit card balances.
- They demand quick job promotions without associated merit.
- They have difficulty in holding down a job; there is always some excuse for resigning or being fired, but never accepting one’s own responsibility.
- They are often jealous of what others have obtained, yet unwilling to put in the time and sacrifice to better their own circumstances.
- They fail to consider what effect their actions have upon others.

I have outlined just a few of the human behavior patterns of impatient people I have observed in my lifetime (including proneness in myself at times). The list is not meant to be all-inclusive, nor is it in any particular order of importance. If you see any of yourself in this list please do not be offended, but contemplate whether or not this is what you want to be. Ask yourself: is a change of behavior required? We might fool others, we might even fool ourselves, but our childish, immature behavior cannot be hidden from God:

“For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known” (Luke 12:2, NKJV).

God does not want immaturity from us. As we read and feed upon the word of God throughout our lives, there must be growth in our spiritual character. Without this concomitant development of our spiritual life, in doing the daily readings, for example, attending Bible classes and the memorial service will not avail us when we face our Master at the judgment seat. I believe we will not be asked how much we have studied (as valuable as that might be), but rather what we have done with the precious word we have been given.

"...As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby..." (1Pe 2:2 NKJV).

A baby is fed milk because it does not yet have teeth to dig into meat. Chewing and digesting are something that takes time and work, whether it is physical food or mental delicacies. A child cries when hunger pangs occur, and it needs immediate attention. An adult can wait with patience while a good meal is being prepared. (With apologies and my regrets to all who prefer fast food as opposed to slow food!)

Ultimately immature behavior leads to sin and can destroy any possibility of leading a Christian life. Consider the situation in the ecclesia in Corinth:

"I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able..." (1Co 3:2, NKJV).

The Corinthians were still acting like babies; their behavior exhibited extreme immaturity in Christ. Their lack of spiritual depth had caused dissension in the church and even the acceptance of moral depravity because family connections prevented them from doing the right thing. Factions had developed that were likely to lead to division:

"What I mean is this: One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ' " (1Co 1:12, NIV).

"For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal?" (1Co 3:4, NKJV).

The apostle made it abundantly clear that divisiveness and factionalism were altogether wrong behavior in the Corinthian ecclesia and it had to cease. Notice Paul's analysis of such immature behavior: "Are you not carnal?" We are of the flesh, not the spirit, if we are immature people, and if we are carnal we cannot inherit the kingdom of God:

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom 8:7,8, NKJV).

We are expected to grow up so that we can serve others. The Scriptures are emphatic in telling us that. As long as we remain immature Christians, we are not doing the will of our heavenly Father.

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe" (Heb 5:12,13, NKJV).

How then can we grow to become mature followers of our Lord Jesus Christ? There are some key guidelines we can adopt to nurture our spiritual growth. Growing in maturity means that our studies of the word of God must be applied to:

- Developing our character: if we don't grow in our love for our brethren and sisters and our families, and in our service to God, then we are still babes.
- Setting out long-term goals for improvement.
- Planning the necessary means for achieving these goals.
- Sticking to these goals, especially when faced with stormy emotional seas.

There are many examples I could choose to illustrate how this may apply in life, but obviously space is limited; hence a few will have to suffice. I recall once that a young brother was rather restricted in his job opportunities and wanted to get a master's degree to solve this problem. However, he was very discouraged about doing so because he had a wife and children and couldn't afford to quit his job and go to school full-time. He told me it would take five years going to night school, and that he would be in his mid-thirties before he would graduate. I asked him how old he would be in five years if he didn't go on for more schooling? He got the point and achieved his goal with distinction.

The same can be said of developing our opportunities in the ecclesia. If we want to preach in foreign lands we may need to learn their languages. This won't happen by magic, but only by planning and determined effort. If an ecclesia needs to improve its speaking brethren's exhortations, it won't happen by complaining about it. The ecclesia will need to spend the time and effort to have mutual improvement classes taught by qualified teachers. If we are to be of service to brethren and sisters in need (surely as worthwhile a goal as being a better speaker), we have to find out what those needs may be. Merely wondering why others do not come out for meetings and Bible classes will not solve the problem. Only appropriate action and organized effort to provide time and resources to satisfy those needs will alleviate the situation.

Our ultimate goal is to be citizens in the Kingdom of God. To achieve this objective we need a long-term plan and we need to stick to it. That requires patience. This is an extremely important aspect of our character development, because the Scriptures tell us it is absolutely essential if we are to obtain eternal life (Rom 2:6,7; also Rev. 3:10¹). We need to stick to the job at hand; there can be no vacation from doing the work of the Lord.

"But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience"
(Luke 8:15).

Undeniably, *bearing fruit with patience* can be extremely difficult at times, because life is not always smooth sailing. We may find that:

- Our brethren and sisters may disappoint us in their actions.
- They may offend us personally.
- Sickness may strike us or those we love dearly.
- Financial ill-fortune may fall upon us.
- Personal tragedy might strike us and sorely try our faith.

- Preaching work may yield very little return.
- Our own families may be aliens to the truth and make our service to God difficult.

It is when disappointments and sorrows pile on us that we most need to work at patient continuance in serving our heavenly Father; for He is patient and longsuffering with us:

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience" (Rom 5:3, KJV).

He will reward our patience with His grace:

"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32, NKJV).²

The apostle James superbly describes the attitude of mind that a mature Christian needs to develop:

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4, NKJV).³

The NIV renders the word "perfect" as "mature", and this is certainly a more reasonable translation since it is impossible for us to be "perfect" now, in the absolute sense!

In this lifetime, all of us will surely endure, in some measure, offenses, temptations, sufferings, trials, persecutions and tribulations. By patiently enduring such we emulate in a small way our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. It is only at such times that we can ever hope to come even marginally close to appreciating the horrible torture and death that our Lord and Messiah patiently endured for us. Jesus was the ultimate example of patient maturity, never losing sight of the ultimate goal. In doing so, he gave us an example that we need to keep before us every moment of our lives, so that we might be complete.

"...Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:2, NKJV).

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Notes:

1. Here the Greek word *hupomone* is used for the "patience", i.e., *logos hupomone* = word of my patience. See Strong's number 5281.
2. See also NKJV, Romans 5:3,4: "And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope."
3. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4, NIV).

"Patience is not passive; on the contrary, it is active; it is concentrated strength" (Edward Bulwer-Lytton).

"If you are patient in one moment of anger, you will escape a hundred days of sorrow" (Chinese proverb).

Bible Study

The Pastoral Letters of Paul

The letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus are often referred to as the Pastoral Letters. These letters do not concentrate on doctrinal matters, although they contain much of first principle teaching, but rather on pastoral matters — discipleship within an ecclesial setting. We shall concentrate on several words which do not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. In fact, it is estimated there are about 150 individual Greek words which only occur in these letters, or are used in a distinct manner here. These words and phrases provide us with rich metaphors and memorable ideas.

A good deposit

In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, there is a detailed exhortation as to how believers should use their money wisely. Instead of trusting in riches, one should be aware that it is God in whom we ultimately trust. In verse 19, there is the comment:

“In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age.”

The Greek word translated “foundation” is in fact a banking term and means a “good deposit”. In other words, the person who does what is good is able to save a “good deposit”.

What really is this deposit? May I suggest that it is the body of belief which a disciple learns and develops during the life of discipleship. This body of belief was expressed in a series of “faithful sayings”, ancient hymns and prayers of affirmation which are quoted in the Pastoral Letters. It is this teaching which becomes the deposit given to Paul for safekeeping, and which he describes as being passed on to Timothy and Titus:

*“Guard the **good deposit** which was entrusted to you” (2Ti 1:14).*

This deposit was to be entrusted to others also:

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men who will be qualified to teach others also” (2Ti 2:2).

There is, however, an extra dimension to this subject. We do not just deposit money in a bank or other safe place so that we can reclaim it in the future. We also expect the deposit to increase in value. We expect our deposit to gain “interest”. This was clearly alluded to in the parable of the talents; it was a well-known practice in Bible times to earn interest on deposited money. What is this add-on value in terms of the teaching in the Pastoral Letters? Paul writes:

“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share” (1Ti 6:18).

In other words, God has given the deposit which needs to be added to by the “giving of ourselves”. We must not be selfish; we must not steal from others. Here is the supreme paradox — to give is the only way to gain! The only way to add

to the deposit is to give to others. The more we give, the more we shall gain. We need to guard the deposit and add to it by a life of service to others.

God's philanthropy

Another Greek word hidden in our translations describes the work of God, the love of God to mankind. This word is found in Titus 3:4,5:

"When the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, he saved us."

The Greek word "philanthropia" requires a whole phrase to translate it: "love of God... toward man". This phrase matches the one word compendium of the work of God, which has been defined as "a benevolence of concern and a benevolence of giving." Out of God's rich store He has given us life and immortality. God took the initiative, for "God so loved the world that he gave..." It was a free undeserved gift — the grace of God.

We could think of the activity of God as being expressed in three words:

- (a) **Grace:** that aspect of God's power which is concerned with salvation. In other words, the work of God to save man from his sins is expressed in the word "grace". His word has gone forth throughout the world. Whether people respond to that word is their own personal choice.
- (b) **Mercy:** For those who do respond, the grace of God becomes mercy: the work of a loving father to his erring children. Mercy is the active disposition of God toward His family, forgiving and caring for them in order to save them from death.
- (c) **Love** is the third aspect of this trilogy, for "God so *loved* the world that he gave his only begotten Son."

All of this is in effect summarized in one word. "Grace" is a beautiful word that conveys so much to us — the free, undeserved gift of life and immortality in God's Kingdom.

Godly edifying (1 Timothy 1:4)

This term is expressed by one word in the Greek language: "oikodomeo". This is a word which is usually concerned with the building, whether literal or figurative. It is used metaphorically, in the sense of edifying, or promoting spiritual growth, that is, the development of good character by patient labor. It expresses, in one word, our responsibility toward God, that of building His house on earth according to His principles. The brothers and sisters in the ecclesia at Ephesus, where Timothy was living and working, had been taught that they were "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph 2:19-21). This phrase uses the term elsewhere translated as "godly edifying". The construction of the house of God is the practice of ecclesial fellowship — working together with a common aim in order to prepare a "people for the Lord".

Each ecclesia needs overseers who are able to manage the construction work:

"Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless — not overbearing, not quick tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain..." (Tit 1:7-9).

The term “overseer” here means a steward, a builder, a “site manager” for the ecclesia.

“To edify” is therefore “to build”. The ecclesial elder has the responsibility of managing the building, to edify the house of God.

In the Bible there are probably three descriptions of the Temple of the Lord:

- (1) the literal temple constructed in Jerusalem by Solomon, and repaired and added to by others, including Hezekiah and Herod;
- (2) the “temple of his body” — the spiritual, corporal community of believers; and
- (3) the temple of the future age, yet to be built.

In the New Testament there are many references to the second of these, this spiritual temple of the Lord. The apostle Paul describes it in great detail in 1 Corinthians 3:

“I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building upon it. But each one should be careful how he builds” (v 10).

This teaching is expanded in his letter to the Ephesians:

“In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph 2:21).

Then there is an even further development of thought in Paul’s letter to Timothy:

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed...” (2Ti 2:15).

The term “workman” can be linked directly to a builder or construction worker. However, the term can also be linked to a farm worker, who works consistently to harvest the crops, and anyone who works with others in a cooperative endeavor.

Titus and Crete

On the Day of Pentecost, there were men from Crete who heard the gospel. They presumably returned home and formed an ecclesia of believers. Later, the apostle Paul visited Crete and subsequently left Titus to teach and guide the infant ecclesia.

In the letter to Titus we meet several medical terms, and other unusual terms, which may help us to understand the letter and provide us with some memorable ideas.

Setting in order

Titus was left in Crete to “set in order” the situation. Paul writes:

*“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might **straighten out** what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every city” (Tit 1:5).*

The Greek word translated “straighten out”, or “set in order” (AV), is “epidiort-hoo”. This word is seen, in English, in such terms as “orthodontist” — one who straightens teeth — and “orthopedist” — one who sets bones straight. In other words, Titus was left in Crete to set in order that which was defective, to straighten

that which was crooked. Bro. Alfred Nichols states, “*Hippocrates uses this word when he refers to the setting of a broken limb. The prefix epi- indicates that Titus was to continue the process of correction. Paul has left Titus to bring to completion the process of organizing the ecclesia which has been already begun*” (*Letters to Timothy and Titus*, p. 356). A unique New Testament word for a unique task.

Soundness

Timothy’s task was to encourage “soundness”. The Greek word here is another very interesting term. “Hugiaino” means to be healthy, sound in health; it is used metaphorically of “sound doctrine” in that it is whole or complete. The English word “hygiene” has evolved from this Greek and Latin root. In other words, Titus was to work to achieve an ecclesia which was clean, where individuals were free from spiritual disease and corruption, whose beliefs were without error, that is, sound or whole. This is a word which is used throughout the Pastoral Letters with considerable impact:

*“He (the bishop or overseer) must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by **sound** doctrine...” (Tit 1:9).*

*“Rebuke them soundly (the brothers and sisters at Crete) so that they will be **sound** in the faith” (1:13).*

*“You must teach what is in accord with **sound** doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and **sound** in faith, in love and endurance” (2:1,2).*

*“In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and **soundness** of speech that cannot be condemned” (2:8).*

If we understand this word in this way, the teaching gains much meaning and is easily remembered.

Sobriety

Often the brethren and sisters were encouraged to be “sober”. This means much more than just not being drunk with alcohol. It means more than just abstinence. It means to show control in all things, to demonstrate restraint. Paul writes that an ecclesial overseer or bishop should be:

*“...hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is **self-controlled**, upright, holy and disciplined” (Tit 1:8).*

The AV/KJV actually translates the word as “sober”; i.e., “The aged men [should] be **sober**, grave, temperate, sound in faith...” (Tit 2:2).

Purity

Another interesting word is found in the Greek of Paul’s Letter to Titus. “Katharos” with its related words means to make clean, to purge or to prune. It is often translated by “pure” or other related English words. The English term “to cauterize” is derived from this Greek term. To cauterize is to cleanse by the application of heat. In earlier times, hot tar was used to cauterize amputations so that no infection could enter into the exposed wound. In the same way, this word is used to explain that the disciple of the Lord must ensure that spiritual infection and

disease are kept at a distance from the disciple:

*“To the **pure** all things are **pure**, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is **pure**. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted” (Tit 1:15).*

The implication is clear: the person who has been cauterized against contamination will not be infected by evil, but the person who does not perceive such danger will be easily infected.

The love of strangers

An interesting word is found in Titus 1:8:

*“He (the ecclesial overseer/bishop) must be **hospitable**, one who loves what is good.”*

The Greek work is “philoxenia”, love of the stranger. This is the basis of the word “hospital” in English, where a hospital is the place where love is shown to those in need, particular to the stranger. This same idea is behind Titus 3:2, where we read that the disciple “is to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility towards all men.”

Adorning

Some of the words we have considered here are found elsewhere in Scripture, but some are unique to these pastoral letters. The word I now wish to highlight is found throughout the New Testament, but in an interesting manner. “Kosmeo” means “to adorn” and is translated in various ways:

- (a) to arrange jewels in a brooch, ring or necklace;
- (b) to make an ornament or decoration;
- (c) to furnish a room; or
- (d) to trim a lamp.

Today the word has passed into many languages in the form of “cosmetics” — that which is added in order to improve! Servants were encouraged to:

*“Show all good fidelity, that they may **adorn** the doctrine of God our Savior” (Tit 2:10, AV).*

This was the meaning of the teaching of the apostle Peter in his first letter:

*“Your beauty should not come from outward **adornment** such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelery and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit” (1Pe 3:2).*

We need to add to the doctrine of belief the characteristics of humility and mercy in order that we might reflect the character of our Heavenly Father. Doctrine without action is like a clanging cymbal or even a violin with no strings — a totally useless instrument.

Slaves

Finally, I would like to consider a very important part of the New Testament. In the pastoral letters there is considerable comment about slaves. There are no comments about masters. It may be that all the converts in Crete were slaves, and therefore special emphasis is placed upon guidance for slaves. It might help

us to understand the situation by just considering the status of slaves in the first century. Slaves were thought of as live possessions, described as “under the yoke”; that is, they were beasts of burden. One became a slave as a prisoner of war or as punishment for a crime; or he may have been sold to cover debts, or as a child slave to enable other members of the family to live. Slaves were bought and sold and were in total subjection to their owners as goods and chattels.

Slaves were broadly of two kinds: household slaves who could become valued assistants to their owners, and others who were simply menial workers. Production slaves worked for the state in slave ships, armed forces, in quarries, in building roads, and on other state projects. It was a tough life with no freedom, rights or status. A slave was always a marginal person. Nevertheless, coming to knowledge of the gospel enabled such people to gain respect and a form of freedom.

The apostle not only gives practical and personal guidance to slaves in relation to their work but also in relation to each other. He also provides a wonderful demonstration of empathy with his readers:

“Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ” (Tit 1:1).

Here Paul uniquely describes himself as a slave of God. He is using the entire literal concept carried by this word, plus all of the metaphorical and spiritual ideas contained in the teaching of Jesus. He is clearly identifying with his readers in a unique manner, yet at the same time teaching us about his relationship to God. The one who was the greatest exponent of the gospel of Christ describes himself as a “slave of God”. What a man! Let us learn from his rich teaching and strive also to serve his Master, and ours.

As we read through the Pastoral Letters, let us be aware of the interesting figures of speech the apostle uses to illustrate his teaching. In this essay we have identified terms relating to banking, building, medicine, and other aspects of daily life. We have also attempted to expand upon the language, so that we may understand a little more about the grace of God. Let us read with care and understanding so that we might gain insights from our reading and become more acceptable disciples of our Lord.

Colin Edwards (Newbury, UK)

The Blessing of the Fire

*“I will kindle my fire this morning
In the presence of the holy angels of heaven
Without malice, without jealousy, without envy,
But the Holy Son of God to shield me.
God, kindle Thou within my heart
A flame of love to my neighbor,
To my foe, to my friend, to my kindred all.”*

Ecclesial Study

The Jury Duty Summons... What Should You Say?

"You are hereby summoned to appear at the Los Angeles Superior Court, office of the Jury Commissioner, Burbank Courthouse, for possible jury duty. Please read the following instructions carefully..."

The jury selection process

We never used to be "summoned" to appear at a local court house with the legal obligation to perform jury service. Potential jurors were always chosen from the voter registration lists and, as Christadelphians never voted, we were spared the inconvenience of being called for jury duty. Even in cases of a brother or sister who had recently come into the Truth, and who formerly participated in the political process, a simple letter to the jury selection clerk would suffice. In some areas, understanding courts supplied letters which Christadelphians could use to facilitate being excused. But that has all changed. Today in most court districts in the United States there are almost no standard excuses acceptable, and the only one who has the authority to excuse anyone is the judge himself. This means we must:

- (a) show up promptly,
- (b) sit with the other 50 people who make up the pool from which the jurors will be selected, and
- (c) listen to the judge extolling the benefits of living in a free democracy, with a system designed to provide everyone a fair trial, while complimenting everyone for their good citizenship.

While all this is going on, we are looking for the opportunity to explain to the judge our reason for being excused.

This can be awkward, and standing up in front of a group of people to explain our position can be embarrassing. Part of the awkwardness is inherent in the process. The procedures are not uniform from one court to the next. Before you know it, you may find yourself in the courtroom being sworn in with the entire group of prospective jurors. Then you are being introduced to the lawyers for the prosecution and the defense in preparation for the jury selection process. Here the lawyers may question each juror as to suitability. After hours of sitting around the jury pool waiting room, everything is now moving extremely fast. It is beginning to look like you are going to be in the jury box before you can explain your position. Some have had to interrupt the proceedings, raise their hands and, when acknowledged by the judge, state their requests. It can be difficult.

What should you say?

Should you write out your position, along with Scriptural references?

It is doubtful you will have a chance to present anything in writing to the judge beforehand. However, writing your position out is an excellent way to organize

your own thoughts. In thinking through our position and what to say, ***we should be careful not to lose sight of the forest for the trees.***

Jury duty, serving on a town council, voting, and military service are all trees in the same forest. Whether it is voting for the president of the nation or in a school bond issue, serving in the military in wartime or being a policeman, it is all of a piece. We may think of each of these services as a tree; taken together, they make up the forest of government. We have to be careful when we examine a single tree, or else we find ourselves explaining our position in a way that may be turned against us. Unlike the often hard-to-see relationship between some of our decisions and their effects on others, the lack of a consistent stand by some in our brotherhood can compromise the position of others, especially those of our young men if the draft should be reinstated.

The Christadelphian position

Our position is simple. ***We are not to be involved in the things of this world, and there is nothing that is more “of this world” than participating in its governing and defense.*** This position is a 180-degree change from that of the Israelites in Old Testament times. They were citizens in a nation of the world, and were expected to contribute toward its functioning. But this came to an end, and true Christians were seen as having no worldly nation, but rather being citizens of the coming Kingdom of God. Just as we believe the Mosaic institutions surrounding the Law and the sacrifices were done away with by Christ’s teachings and example, so also we believe his teachings instruct his followers to abstain from participation in the governments of this world during these times.

Jesus’ prayer sets forth both his and our relationship to this world:

“I have given them thy word and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14-16).

Jury duty is a form of participation in the functioning of this “world”, specifically the courts of the country and the application of its laws.

Shortly after this prayer, Jesus stood before Pilate:

“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from here” (John 18:36).

From a purely human standpoint, if ever there were a just cause, fighting to deliver the only sinless man who ever lived from a crooked court and an unjust verdict would certainly qualify. And the time will come, at Jesus’ return, when fighting at his command will be proper, as it was when God so instructed during the Mosaic age. Wars are not justified by the reasoning of men (who seem able to justify all wars, at least at the outset), but by God’s commands. The current “kingdom” in which we live, whenever and wherever it may be, is not Jesus’ kingdom now, nor can it be ours.

In his Olivet discourse Jesus, our true king, referred to these days as the “times of the Gentiles”. These times will have to run their course until they are finished:

“And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive unto all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:24).

Ultimately the kingdoms of this world are going to gather together to fight against Jesus:

“For I saw the spirit of demons, working miracles, that go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Rev 16:14).

Imagine being a Christadelphian in a country that is sending young people off to *that* war!

The whole tenor of Jesus’ teaching, in both example and words, is incompatible with being part of any government in this world. Try reconciling the principles stated in the platforms of the major political parties with the Sermon on the Mount. Can you imagine the apostles campaigning for office? No candidates can suggest their party adopt principles that espouse the qualities of meekness and turning the other cheek.

Nor do we suggest that governments can effectively function during these times with those principles. In fact, we believe that when Jesus returns he will rule with a rod of iron. The human condition can only be governed under a strong hand. What we do believe is that Jesus has called men and women to come out of this world and live as he lived, while leaving the governing of this world’s affairs now to those who wish to do so.

Cautions about certain verses

We differ with mainstream Christianity in our understanding of many basic doctrines; however, it can be a mistake to think that no one else knows the Bible. There are many sincere Christians in North America, more and more of whom are being exposed to Bible study groups in their churches. They can be serious about both their Christianity and their service to their country. The following are three examples of Scripture passages we have heard brethren cite in defense of our positions. We suggest that they are not the best responses for the following reasons:

1. Regarding jury duty: *“Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt 7:1)*. Quoting this verse as a reason for not being able to serve on a jury can cause a problem. In response, our interviewer might quote John 7:24: *“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”* When I asked to be excused because of my religious beliefs, the judge asked me if it was because I would not be able to deliver a judgment. I said I probably would not do so, but that my reasons were based on broader principles regarding non-participation in government. I did not want to get into a debate about the single “tree” of “judging”. I knew the judge could say that all I needed to do was weigh the evidence and deliver an “opinion”, and that he would

hand down the actual judgment. I was also concerned about the possible fine points between a “civil” case and a “criminal” case.

2. Regarding voting: *“The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men”* (Dan 4:17). The point of citing this verse is that, since God decides whom to put in power, I would be wrong to express my opinion because I might find myself voting against God! Therefore I should not participate in this process. A problem with using this passage is that the righteous Daniel, when he made this statement, was a key participant in a worldly kingdom, as was Joseph before him. Joseph, and probably Daniel, had the authority and responsibility to sit in governing counsels and make decisions involving incarceration and, we may assume, capital punishment as well. We must remember that our position today is based particularly on Jesus’ teachings, and not just the Old Testament.
3. Regarding military service, police, jury duty, etc.: *“Thou shalt not kill”* (Exod 20:13). This has sometimes been referred to as the reason Christadelphians cannot serve in the military or police or agree with the death penalty. But this passage presents a problem, both from the Hebrew and the context. The root word “ratsach” (Strong’s 7523) is only translated “kill” twice, “killed” once, and “killing” once in the Old Testament and always in the context of murder. The Jewish Old Testament English translation in the Soncino Pentateuch translates the word in Exodus 20:13 as “murder”. Strong’s defines the word as meaning “especially to murder”. We know that, contextually, the sixth commandment was not an absolute prohibition against killing, since the Law of Moses required that the death penalty be exacted in certain specified crimes.

Again, in contrast to the above approaches and some other “easy fixes”, our position is best set forth in the context of Jesus’ teachings that we are to be separate from this world and its current governments.

Early Christians in regard to their governments

The Christadelphian position in respect to governments is the same as it was in the earliest Christian communities. The following is a quote from Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Harcourt, Brace and Company, p. 288):

“The primitive Christians derived the institution of civil government, not from the consent of the people, but from the decrees from heaven. The reigning emperor, though he had usurped the scepter by treason and murder, immediately assumed the character of vice regent of the Deity. To the Deity alone he was accountable for the abuse of his power; and his subjects were indissolubly bound by their oath of fidelity to a tyrant who had violated every law of nature and society. The humble Christians were sent into the world as sheep among wolves; and since they were not permitted to employ force even in the defense of their religion, they should be still more criminal if they were tempted to shed the blood of their fellow-creatures in disputing the vain privileges or the sordid possessions of this

transitory life. Faithful to the doctrines of the apostle, who in the reign of Nero had preached the duty of unconditional submission, the Christians of the three first centuries preserved their conscience pure and innocent of the guilt of secret conspiracy or open rebellion. While they experienced the rigor of persecution, they were never provoked either to meet their tyrants in the field, or indignantly to withdraw themselves into some remote and sequestered corner of the globe.” [My emphasis]

The practice of Christians becoming full partners with government was institutionalized under Constantine in the fourth century. It was one of many doctrines that became corrupted along the way.

Reconciling obedience to authorities with God’s commands

How do we reconcile the Scriptural passages, those that teach obedience to the law, with our apparent unwillingness to obey the law by serving on jury duty and in the military?

We need to reconcile Scriptures which instruct us to obey our governing authorities (e.g., Rom 13:1-7) with the quandaries we can face now. How do we refuse to obey the authorities when they command us to do something opposed to Scripture? This can be quite difficult, and it can require personal courage.

The specific situations may sometimes be unclear in our minds. Fortunately, the general principle we must follow has been clearly set forth by the apostles. When the Sanhedrin forbade them to preach about Jesus Christ, they gave a clear, unequivocal answer:

“But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye” (Acts 4:19).

Scripture and our own experience teach us that there are times when a law will conflict with Bible teaching. The instruction to obey those who have the rule over us is not an absolute. For example, God has said homosexuality is wrong, while increasingly the governments in North America are supporting the position that it is not wrong, but merely different. Some of us who are school teachers may find ourselves in the uncomfortable position of being asked to teach a position on this subject which is opposed to God’s teachings.

As for another example, God has given us all clear instructions about disciplining our children:

“He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him early” (Prov 13:24).

“Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from Sheol [the grave]” (Prov 23:13,14).

However, the tendency of government to overreact in the pursuit of the goal to protect children from abuse, which is itself laudable, may put us in the position of having to decide whether to obey God or man.

The importance of Christadelphians being consistent

It is easier for our conduct toward the world to be consistent when we keep all the “trees” in perspective and always remember they are all part of the same “forest”. If we find ourselves living in another country, the fact that we are not “of this world” with regard to most of these “trees” becomes plainer. No one votes in one country when he or she is the legal citizen of another. We in Canada and the United States enjoy freedom from religious persecution, to a degree virtually unheard of in the past. But if one day the wind blows from another direction, then consistency will stand us in good stead. Our boat can be sailing very nicely at a good clip, but we always need to pay close attention to what the wind might do next. If we are caught off guard by a sudden gust from another direction, the boom can swing around violently, hit us in the head and knock us overboard. We need to keep one eye on the direction of the political “winds” at all times.

This was very important in the past when the military draft was in force. Where some religious organizations had a known, consistent position of requesting conscientious objection status and performing alternate service in mental hospitals and forest fire fighting, etc., their young men were often quickly approved. Being sentenced to jail for the duration of a war, with that on your record for life, may seem like an unlikely prospect today. But it might not be in the future. And in other countries our young brothers face extreme tests in this regard. Christadelphians in North America organized themselves to present a unified position to their governments in the past, and a few brothers have made it their business to continue to stay abreast of current events in this area. The draft may be reinstated sooner than we think. The current limited engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, which are on an extremely small scale compared with World War II, for example, are straining the capability of the armed forces to meet their voluntary recruitment needs at this time.

Consistency in less well-defined activities

There was a time, not too long ago, when our young men had to:

- a. go to the local post office when they turned 18,
- b. ask for the registration form for the draft board,
- c. fill it out,
- d. submit it, and then
- e. face a five-man board of volunteers in their own community (some of whom were devout churchgoers), where they had to defend their request for conscientious objection status, both Scripturally and by their previous conduct.

If we knew we had to do this again, we would all be taking this matter very seriously. We should, for example, be keeping records of attendance at meetings. This could document a consistent pattern of behavior if the need should arise to prove it.

We could be using Sunday schools, or CYC classes, to be sure that our young brothers (and sisters) are Scripturally prepared to stand up to any investiga-

tions or questions. For all of us, there are many other questions — perhaps less well-defined and upon which we may have differing opinions — but questions nonetheless, about which we could at least think among ourselves, or perhaps individually. Some examples:

1. Are we continuing to examine our thinking about pledging allegiance to the flag?
2. Do we sing the national anthem?
3. What do we think about playing or marching in school bands that perform at patriotic functions?
4. Do we participate in the quasi-military activities of such organizations as Boy Scouts?

Our “water cooler” conversations, and respect for others

While we were still in the jury pool room, and before we could ask the judge to be excused, the clerk came in and told us there were two trials for which jurors would be selected from the pool that day. One would be a typical three or four-day case, but the other might run for 20 days. Our names would be called first for the 20-day trial and we should respond as to whether or not we could serve that long. If we could not, we should go up to Window #1 and give our reasons. If those reasons were accepted, then we should return to the pool to be in the jury for the shorter trial. If we could serve, we should go up to Window #2 and receive our instructions. One by one those called responded, and most said they could not serve that long. One woman responded, “Yes”; we all looked at her and saw she was very old and very frail. Carefully she rose from her chair; as she started to walk towards the window she turned to the rest of us and said, “I’m 84; I hope I can make it to the end of the trial.” The whole room erupted in laughter. But I thought: if she ended up being selected by the lawyers, she was making a huge sacrifice for her community.

Our neighbors are being called upon to make big sacrifices in service to the community in which we live. And some of them see it as very much their Christian duty, as well as their civic duty. When I think about what I have done for my neighbors, I can’t really think of much. I have never given three or four full days to help out, and there are areas of need that are not opposed to God’s teachings. Twenty full days away from work and pay is a big sacrifice. In fact, for that matter I don’t recall ever giving 20 consecutive days of service to my ecclesia.

Our comments and behavior, as it relates to perceived inadequacies and injustices in the legal system, and in politicians and the political process, should be minimal and respectful. There are some sincere Christians, who hold beliefs with which we disagree, who nevertheless are trying to the best of their abilities to reconcile their beliefs in the course of implementing the governing process. It would be wrong to think they do not have battles of conscience in some of the situations they deal with.

We should not be critical of those who rule over us, or join in the ridicule at the water cooler that may be the current conversation when a political scandal

erupts. It is always unfitting to criticize the work of others when we do not pitch in ourselves — regardless of the reasons.

We would like others to respect the sincerity of our position. We do not like to be considered “cowards” because we will not serve in the military, or “parasites” who benefit from the hard work of others while we will not help with that work. For the most part, people with sincere, consistent religious beliefs in these areas are treated respectfully in North America. We would do well to treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated.

Kings and priests in training

Isn't it odd? We are undergoing a training or probation process in order to become kings and priests. The vision of the Kingdom Age speaks in the past tense, although referring to the future:

“And [he] hath made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev 5:10).

In some ways, we are a government in exile, waiting for the coming of our king, when he will call us to active service. Yet one of the principles of our training is to refrain from participating in governing and priestly functions in the present institutions of this world. We work in and guide our ecclesias, but we do not rule them in the sense that governments rule. Our king has no interest in most of what is involved in governing during this dispensation.

We abstain from participation in government now — even when we know it to be a necessity that such governments function. In this, we do well to remember that we are truly living by faith, every day.

Ken Sommerville (Simi Hills, CA)

God's “Kings and Priests”

Consider the words that are sung by the symbolic four living creatures and the twenty-four elders: “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” [Rev 5:9,10]. We know who literally answer to this description. Christ did not die to redeem 24 elders and four creatures: he died to redeem those that were under the law (Gal 4:4), and also to gather together the children of God that are scattered abroad (John 11:52) — the other sheep he had which were not of Israel's fold after the flesh (John 10:16), viz., of the Gentiles, whom he afterwards visited by the hand of Peter and Paul, to take out of them a people for his name (Acts 15:14; 26:17,18). Consequently the 24 elders and four living creatures, who in song affirm these things of themselves, are but the symbols of that element of the kingdom of God which consists of the glorified brethren of Christ in their numerical totality.

Robert Roberts, Thirteen Lectures on the Apocalypse

History

The Historical Interactions Between the CGAF and the Christadelphians

Introduction

The current CGAF (Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith) was formed in 1921 as a group of five churches or congregations in Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky. It has since grown to nine by adding affiliated meetings in Florida and Missouri. In 1921 it split from a much larger community, known generally as the Church of God (General Conference). Some of the General Conference churches are also known as “Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith”, or variants. This has been a constant source of confusion to many Christadelphians. The General Conference has approximately 100 associated churches in the USA, with perhaps 5,000 members. The CGAF group, which is the focus of this article, and the Church of God (General Conference) have no current connections or fellowship. We will briefly cover the interactions between the current CGAF and the Christadelphians from their common roots in the 1840s down through the present time.

Common origins: John Thomas

The Christadelphians trace their origin primarily to the work of one man, John Thomas (1805-1871), who emigrated from England to the USA in 1832. Arriving in Cincinnati, he was initially associated with the group formed primarily by Alexander Campbell (first called Campbellites but later the Church of Christ). But he soon became estranged from them over doctrinal issues and was re-baptized by one John Walsh in 1847. He had become convinced of the necessity of the “Hope of Israel”, otherwise known as the “Abrahamic Faith” or the “Age to Come”: the belief that the return of the Jews to the land of Israel would precede the return of Jesus, which in turn would usher in the future Kingdom of God on the earth.

During the period from 1840 to 1860 or thereabouts, John Thomas was part of a larger group of fellow believers, who shared his views on the falsity of the Trinity and the immortal soul, among several other areas in which they differed from the much larger nominally Christian community. This larger group had no organized structure, but traced their origins to three primary influences: those of Alexander Campbell, Elias Smith, and William Miller. Not all had the same set of initial beliefs or origins, but the group essentially coalesced around a set of magazines from John Thomas, Joseph Marsh, and Benjamin Wilson, among several others. During that period, the three groups — Christadelphians (followers of John Thomas), Adventists (remnants of William Miller’s followers), and Church of God (Marsh/Wilson followers) — were largely one body.

Common origins: Benjamin Wilson

Benjamin Wilson is best known for producing *The Emphatic Diaglott*, a Greek-English interlinear translation of the New Testament. After a century of being pub-

lished by the Jehovah's Witnesses, this translation is now published jointly by *The Abrahamic Faith Beacon* (a CGAF publication) and a Christadelphian trust. Born in England in 1817, Wilson and his family joined the emerging Campbellite movement in 1840, eight years after John Thomas. Soon after, he became acquainted with the magazine of John Thomas, and emigrated with his family to the USA, arriving in Geneva, Illinois, about a year after John Thomas left the area. Leaving the Campbellites shortly thereafter, he corresponded with John Thomas for many years before the two finally met in 1856. Commencing in 1855, Wilson published *The Gospel Banner*; it continued until 1869. Moving to California in 1871 as a result of his wife's ill health and the death of his son, Benjamin Wilson devoted himself to tending his wife and a small flock in Sacramento.



**Benjamin Wilson
and wife**

Common origins: Joseph Marsh



Joseph Marsh

Joseph Marsh was born in Vermont in 1802. After moving to Rochester, New York, he joined the “Christian Connection”, the group founded by Elias Smith. He took over their publication, *The Christian Palladium*, in 1839. Soon after, he came under the influence of William Miller, and joined with him in proclaiming the return of Christ in 1843. When there was no advent and this expectation turned into “The Great Disappointment” of 1844, Marsh continued his studies and came to believe in the Abrahamic promises around 1847, with John Thomas contributing to this change of views. (The Millerites also believed that the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21 would occur at the start of the Millennium.) Thomas and Marsh became acquainted in 1847, and

the two corresponded and visited for many years. Marsh always believed in the doctrine of “once baptized, always baptized”, the implications of which we will discuss below. He focused much more on the consequences of conversion than on the requirements of true doctrine. It is arguable that the emphasis on these two aspects was one of the main factors in the separation of the current CGAF from the rest of the Church of God, General Conference, as discussed below.

The initial estrangement

In 1864 John Thomas was forced by the impact of the Civil War to name his followers Christadelphians. By this time, the larger community had divided into three distinct groups of approximately equal numbers, with no clear distinction between many Adventists and the Church of God. This estrangement was initially

much more among the leaders than the members: for many years afterwards the same names appeared in the various magazines. There are stories from as late as the last part of the nineteenth century about isolated groups who happily turned out to hear and fellowship visiting preachers, whether they were Church of God, Christadelphian, or Adventist.

The estrangement was over several issues:

- Initially, there were some differences between Wilson and Thomas over what might be called behavioral questions, such as teetotalism and the eating of pork. But finally a more serious estrangement developed over what Christadelphians came to call “immortal emergence”. This will be discussed below. When Benjamin Wilson left for California in 1871, it seems the geographical distance between them may have precluded continuing communication.
- Between Marsh and Thomas, estrangement was over the former’s refusal to be baptized (ie., re-baptized) after coming, with the help of Thomas among others, to the correct belief in an Abrahamic faith. Marsh wrote the book entitled *The Age to Come*, which was for many years the touchstone of this doctrinal position. Marsh lost the argument when his congregation in Rochester deserted him for Thomas; this was the origin of the current Christadelphian ecclesia in that town.
- The relationship between Marsh and the Adventists on the one hand, and Thomas and Wilson with the Adventists on the other, was always difficult. Marsh was a follower of Miller prior to the “Great Disappointment” of 1844, when Miller’s predictions of the return of Christ proved inaccurate. Afterwards, he did not join in the attempts to unite, but beat his own different drum through the pages of his magazine. Thomas always disagreed with Miller, but used his access to members of the Adventists for his own preaching. Benjamin Wilson had in fact never really associated with the Adventists, although his nephew, Thomas Wilson, may have been. (Thomas Wilson later founded *The Restitution*, using the same press Marsh has used. It was also in large part a continuation of *The Gospel Banner*, because Thomas Wilson had, in 1869, merged his *Herald of the Kingdom* with it. *The Restitution* was for many years the magazine of the Church of God.)

In 1866, when a member of the Cleveland Church of God tried to fellowship with the newly-formed Christadelphians in New York, she was refused by John Thomas. This gave rise to some considerable correspondence, with Newell Bond of Cleveland complaining, but this incident brought to light the developing rift between the two groups.

In 1868 Benjamin Wilson, while on a visit to Scotland, gave an account of the scene in America. By that time the gulf had widened between himself and John Thomas — and he expressed great sadness over the divided state of the brotherhood in North America. He consistently advocated the unity of the body, and exhorted all parties to close the breach among brethren. In that account, he also gave a detailed overview of most of the Christadelphian ecclesias as well of those of what we would call the Church of God. A common thread that distinguished both groups was the concept of the “Abrahamic Faith”: the idea that believers,

as the spiritual seed of Abraham, look forward to the inheritance with Abraham in the Promised Land, which is the Kingdom of God on earth, when the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

Immortal emergence

Immortal emergence is a Christadelphian term for the belief that the righteous dead emerge from the grave in an immortal state. John Thomas and Benjamin Wilson seem to have shared a common view on the resurrection in the 1850s. However, Thomas either modified his view over time, or clarified the misconceptions that might have arisen from his quotation and exposition of the relevant (and admittedly difficult) passage, 1 Corinthians 15:52 (“The dead shall be raised incorruptible”). By 1864 for certain, and perhaps much earlier, John Thomas believed that resurrection and judgment will occur before immortality is bestowed. Wilson continued to believe that the responsible faithful would be raised immortal (or, to put it another way, ‘raised *to* immortality’). Wilson argued this should not be a test of fellowship, but Thomas came to view it otherwise.

Origin of the Cleveland Church

By far the largest Church of the CGAF is that based in Cleveland. The Cleveland Church was founded on October 4, 1863, with 14 members, according to Maurice Joplin writing a year later in *The Gospel Banner* as evangelist. Both Benjamin Wilson and Mark Allen had visited and preached in Cleveland, and the latter was asked to preside at the event, which was held at the house of Newell Bond. This congregation continued in its original faith for many years, growing and expanding. Around 1888 it appears to have settled on the name by which it is now commonly known, “The Church of the Blessed Hope”. Joplin continued as leader down through his death in 1907. Two “Christadelphians” were pastors from his death into the 1940s, as discussed below. With its undoubted roots mainly in the teachings of Benjamin Wilson, the Cleveland Church maintained its faith through the turmoil of 1921, when the remnant split from the much larger General Conference. This church was in large part the glue that held the CGAF group together, sending speakers to the other churches on a regular basis.

Origin of the CGAF

The origins of the Christadelphians is clear: this united group of Bible-believing Christians all acknowledge the initial leadership of John Thomas, followed by Robert Roberts as the acknowledged leader after the death of Thomas in 1871. Although there were many divisions — some later healed, some of which still persist — the common heritage is undoubtedly traced back to the re-baptism of John Thomas in 1847.

On the other hand, it may be said that the CGAF only came into existence in its present form in 1921. The true origins of the Church of God are more difficult to discern, since they lacked a central organization. It appears that in 1858 they separated from the larger Adventist Movement, largely over the question of “open fellowship”: the Adventists held that being a good Christian was sufficient, but the Church of God insisted that much more was required, including a belief in the

Second Coming of Christ. There was no single central organization prior to 1921, although statewide conferences were often held, regional conferences were occasionally held, and ministers traveled widely among the various congregations.

Beginning in about 1911, a group of five ministers (the self-proclaimed Ministerial Association) tried to exercise control over the emergent group. They attacked the then-editor of *The Restitution*, A.R. Underwood, falsely accusing him of financial fraud. Consequently he transferred the magazine to his assistant editor, Robert Huggins, whom we will discuss later. This transfer was wholly intended to ensure that *The Restitution* would continue on the established CGAF basis of the faith.

The Ministerial Association, meanwhile, would not be thwarted in their attempt to wrest control of the CGAF congregations away from *The Restitution*. They established a new magazine, *The Restitution Herald*; this magazine has remained the house organ of the larger group to this day.

In 1921, the new group — known as Church of God, General Conference — held a conference in Waterloo, Iowa. As part of its rules, this conference included the statement: “As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” This declaration, which may be characterized as “once baptized, always baptized”, meant there would henceforth be no further conditions upon any baptism, such as a prerequisite belief in any particular set of doctrines. This assertion, with its associated doctrine of “universal resurrection”, proved divisive.

Arguably, the dispute goes back to the dual roots: in the groups associated with Joseph Marsh, and those associated with Benjamin Wilson. To simplify, the larger group followed Marsh. The much smaller group, led by Robert Huggins of the Cleveland Church of the Blessed Hope, emphasized the importance of true doctrine. And so, with the five churches which followed his lead, the group we now call the CGAF came into being.

This handful of congregations stood apart from the rush to “universal resurrection” and hunkered down. For more than 50 years they continued steadfastly and quietly. In most cases, there were only occasional ties among the five congregations; the ties that did continue were mostly family ones. But the Bible roots of these groups were strong, and they defended the statement of faith that was first developed in Geneva, Illinois, by Benjamin Wilson around 1868. Beginning in 1954 Howard F. Ross from Miami guided a dialogue to unify the CGAF statement of faith. In 1966 those efforts resulted in a unified statement that was adopted by the six main churches. In about 2002, after prayerful consideration, several congregations modified it to align more closely with the Christadelphian position on “immortal emergence”.

Beginning in 1976, the six groups assembled together for the first time at Earlham College (Richmond, Indiana) for a fraternal gathering. Today, that annual Gathering is a seven-day Bible school held at Dennison College in Granville, Ohio. As many as 350 people have attended to hear Bible classes and share fellowship.

Note that there are differing opinions as to the origin of the name “Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith”. Some hold that Benjamin Wilson coined the term,

during or just after the Civil War, although there is no contemporary use of that term in his magazine. What is certain is that some churches were using that term by the 1880s, when it appears in *The Christadelphian Advocate* magazine.

Christadelphian influences



Robert Huggins

We have already mentioned Robert Huggins. He was baptized a Christadelphian in 1895, and one may find numerous references to his writings and preaching work in both *The Christadelphian* and *The Christadelphian Advocate*. In 1907, after the death of Joplin, Huggins took over the leadership of the Cleveland Church. Starting in 1913, he wrote a series of 12 lessons, published in *The Restitution*, which later became the basis of the Cleveland Church Statement of Faith. He also wrote *The Bible, Its Principles and Texts*, which includes a statement of faith quite similar to the Christadelphian Statement of Faith, as well as a section on “Doctrines we Reject”. It is not, I believe, a coincidence that he took over as leader of the Cleveland Church from A.H. Zilmer.

A.H. Zilmer had been a prominent evangelist and minister in the Lutheran Church. But coming to question many of their doctrines and learning a better way, he abandoned the Lutherans and joined the Church of God in 1897. In 1906, he left them to join the Christadelphians, with whom he traveled and preached extensively and where he became the editor of *The Christadelphian Advocate* in 1914. In fact, Zilmer and Huggins remained strong friends and associates down through the 1940s, for there was regular correspondence between them in Zilmer’s later magazine *The Faith* as late as the 1940s. (A.H. Zilmer died in 1951.)

During World War II, there were associations between CGAF members and Christadelphians who served together in work camps. At that time, some CGAF congregations permitted non-combatant military service for those with conscientious objection to fighting, but this changed in the 1980s as a result of the experience of some of those who served, particularly in Vietnam. Thereafter CGAF groups taught and counseled the same more absolute conscientious objection to military service that characterizes Christadelphians.

Beginning in the 1970s, the CGAF began to associate more strongly with the Christadelphians, attending their Bible schools, and inviting Christadelphian speakers to their annual Bible school. Around 1988, tentative discussions began with the goal of achieving a formal union between the two groups. The story of these interactions is part of another account.

Peter Hemingray (Detroit Royal Oak, MI)

Note on sources

This account is based largely on rare, sometimes unpublished sources. I have therefore prepared an electronic version, with sources stated and copies of all such attached. It also includes a select bibliography. Please contact the author at phemingray@gmail.com for information.

Seal of Zedekiah's Secretary Found in Jerusalem

According to Etgar Lefkovits (*The Jerusalem Post*, July 31), an intact seal impression belonging to a minister, or secretary, of King Zedekiah, dating back 2,600 years, has been uncovered during an archaeological dig in Jerusalem's ancient City of David. The seal impression, or bulla, with the name Gedalyahu ben Pashur, who served as minister to King Zedekiah (597-586 BC), was found a few yards away from a separate seal impression of another of Zedekiah's ministers, Yehukual ben Shelemyahu, which was uncovered three years ago. This was reported by Professor Eilat Mazar, who is leading the archaeological dig at the site.

The first bulla was uncovered inside an impressive stone structure, which Mazar believes is the Palace of David, while the second bulla was found at the foot of the external wall of the same structure, under a tower that was built in the days of Nehemiah. Each bulla, measuring about half an inch in diameter, was found among the debris of the destruction of the First Temple period. The letters are in ancient Hebrew and are very clearly preserved, Mazar said.

The excavation at the City of David, located just outside the walls of the Old City, has been a treasure trove for archaeologists. "On the one hand it is so unexpected to find such a fragile bulla in such harsh conditions of excavation, while on the other hand it was logical to find precisely here the bulla of Gedalyahu ben Pashur — only meters away from the place where we found the bulla of Yehukhal ben Shelemyahu — since these two ministers are mentioned side by side in the Bible as having served together in the kingdom of Zedekiah," Mazar said.

Gedalyahu ben Pashur is the "Gedaliah son of Pashur" mentioned in Jeremiah 38:1, and Yahukual ben Shelemyahu is the "Jehucal son of Shelemiah" of Jeremiah 37:3; 38:1. Both ministers are mentioned in Jeremiah 38, along with two other ministers, when they came to King Zedekiah demanding the death of the prophet Jeremiah for exhorting the besieged city to surrender.

Prof. Mazar said it was "absolutely fantastic" to have uncovered the seals "complete and in perfect condition" after 2,600 years. "It is a discovery... in which real figures of the past shake off the dust of history and vividly revive the stories of the Bible." Mazar, who rose to international prominence for the excavation that uncovered the probable palace of King David, has been at the forefront of a series of Jerusalem archaeological finds.

Other Biblical-era bullae have been found previously. In 1982, the Israeli archaeologist Yigal Shiloh discovered a collection in a nearby site, including one with the name of Gemaryahu ben Shaphan ("Gemariah son of Shaphan": Jer 36:10-12), an official and scribe during the reign of Jehoiakim (608-597 BC). Gemariah was the first cousin, once removed, of Jeremiah himself; he assisted Jeremiah's secretary Baruch in the public reading of Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer 36:10,25).

Reflections

Bro. Julian Webster



It is now 16 years since my brother Julian Webster passed away suddenly on November 3, 1992, aged 20. He was a wonderful example in Christ as well as a fun-loving person to spend time with. Although years have passed now, all his immediate and extended family remember him as a unique individual and continue to look forward to the day of Christ's return when "the dead in Christ shall rise first." The Webster, Mannell and Krassavin families in Ontario would like to share some of Julian's reflections from a letter he wrote to me nine months before his death. Somehow the profound words are more touching and meaningful as time goes on and we think that everyone will agree that they are applicable and meaningful for all time.

*With love in our great Hope,
Sis. Eleanor Mannell*

Julian wrote:

I don't know if this is just me or whether everyone finds the same thing, but time just seems to fly by. Before I know it I will be an old man. When I look back on things, they seem to be a blur, all blending together, shortening their actual time to seem like only yesterday. I am already well over halfway through my work term, and will soon be back at school. But I know that will also fly by and then I will be working again. To slow things down, I think one has to savor the present and enjoy every moment as it is now, no matter what is being done. Everything can be enjoyable! If everything being done now is looked at as something not liked, the events of the future are anticipated without thinking about the present. But what I find is that things I have looked forward to come and go and I haven't enjoyed them any more than anything else. But always being in eager anticipation means the time between big, exciting events is gone, leaving no imprint in the memory. Hence vast voids of time exist and the big, memorable things are all squashed together, making the past appear to have gone by quickly. I think every moment of our lives should be memorable. This is also a reason to look forward to the Kingdom, when with eternal life, time will not exist. The largest possible period of time we can think of is still 0% of all time. Isn't this a wonderful concept! We will be together as long as we can imagine, and then some.

[Note: Young Bro. Julian died of an unanticipated heart condition. He was perfectly healthy to all appearances, but collapsed and died after enjoying one of his usual runs with his younger brother, Andrew.]

“Then the land had rest from war”

“So Joshua took the entire land, just as the LORD had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions. Then the land had rest from war” (Josh 11:23).

“But that rest did not come quickly, nor was it realized until war had achieved the high purposes of God...” Furthermore this “does not mean that there was to be no more war, for in the settlement of the land the separate cities were involved in war. It rather declares that rest was reached through war. It has often been so in the history of man. Through blood and fire and vapor of smoke, the signs and symbols of conflict, God cleanses the land, and the heart of man, from those evil things which produce human feverishness and restlessness; and thus, through the terrible ordeal, leads men to quietness and rest. When passions are purified, and evil thoughts are no more, war will cease... Till then God makes it the awful instrument of cleansing and renewal” (Campbell Morgan).

In his second Inaugural Address in 1865, President Abraham Lincoln surveyed the devastation of almost four years of all-out civil war upon his country, and spoke these words:

“Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman’s 250 years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said 3,000 years ago, so still it must be said the ‘judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether’ [Psa 19:9].”

The melancholy fact is that, by God’s will, war **must** continue until the world is prepared to accept Christ’s Kingdom of peace and righteousness. Mankind might find it easy to accept peace, that is, the cessation of war by itself, but it will not be so easy to accept the righteousness that must accompany it. Isaiah wrote,

“When your judgments [O LORD] come upon the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa 26:9).

God’s judgments, of which war ranks high on the list, with revolution, famine, earthquake, and pestilence just behind it (Matt 24:6,7; Mark 13:7,8; Luke 21:9-11), are the means of cleansing the world, and renewing it, by leading men to righteousness. It is a fierce and frightening prospect, at which we shudder and from which we recoil. It is the great wind and fire that sends us scurrying into the cave for shelter, as it did the prophet Elijah. Nevertheless it is the Hand of God, and we must acknowledge it. Furthermore, it is the necessary prelude to the gentle whisper, or the still, small voice, that calls us into the presence of our Lord (1Ki 19:11,12).

And so again, as the prophet says, when...

“the law will go out from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem”...

then, and only then will the LORD, through His Son Jesus Christ...

“judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They

will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore” (Isa 2:3,4).

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Sis. Arlene Gordon

Sis. Arlene Gordon of Montgomery, West Virginia, fell asleep in Christ October 14, 2008, after a brief illness. She is survived by her husband Ronnie, and a brother and nephews, nieces, and cousins who live in New Jersey. Arlene was baptized into Christ on March 24, 2006. I had the privilege of meeting Arlene when I was blessed to have the opportunity of doing some work with the MidAtlantic A.S.K. program in the fall of 2004. Sis. Jean Cheetham of Moorestown, NJ, insisted that I visit Arlene when looking up contacts in West Virginia. Jean had been in touch with Arlene by mail and could see great potential with her.

When we first met, we bonded immediately. I found Arlene to be sincerely looking for God’s Truth, and we ended up having an extended Bible study that first day. I gave her more literature to read, to go along with what Sis. Jean had sent her, and the truth started to take hold. Although I had many contacts to look up, I kept being drawn back to Arlene. She was an avid reader of all Christadelphian writings she could get her hands on. With little or no preconceived ideas, she was open to believing God’s Truth. So she read her Bible and studied for about 1 1/2 years. Arlene had any number of physical problems which kept her from walking or functioning at a normal level. She had need of a catheter and used to joke that she could crawl some, but looked funny when going up and down steps. She had a way about her — a spirit that, despite her physical limitations, absolutely endeared herself to me and to all who knew her.

In the spring of 2006, I was able to drive through West Virginia on my way to New Jersey, and I again stopped by to see her and to see how far along she was in understanding the first principles of God’s word. I was pleased to find, upon giving her an interview, that she had come to understand the truth on most of the questions for baptism. This allowed me to go through those questions she had answered incorrectly, looking up passages so that she could see the truth on those topics. On my return trip, to my delight, she had done her homework and finished the examination getting all questions right. We discussed the possibility of baptism, but I was careful not to push her. I told her that either I or some other visiting brothers and/or sisters could baptize her at a later time. But I did point out that there were any number of great Scriptural examples showing the urgency of doing the right thing — of following Christ’s command. Acts 2, and the 3,000 who repented and were baptized upon hearing Peter’s words, made a strong impression. She was convinced, and then she was baptized. We were able to break bread together for the first time.

One of the things I stressed again and again with her was the uniqueness of the spiritual family that we have in the truth — that if and when she decided to obey

Jesus and get baptized, it was a far different thing than simply joining the local church. She was becoming a part of a worldwide family, of believers who believed the same truths, who loved the same God and the same Jesus, and who shared the same hope of eternal life in God's kingdom. This concept was one she had never experienced before. She did have a loving husband, but was not really close to her natural family members who were still living. And as far as her former church membership, when she was young with the Catholic Church, she could immediately see the difference. I told her that I would get her names, phone numbers and addresses of brothers and sisters all over the continent, and I did — on a continuing basis. One contact with one sister in Christ would lead her to inquire about another, and then another. Though she was technically in isolation, she made the very most of being a member of this new family. Many brothers and sisters made special efforts, either to go by and see her on their travels, to email her or to talk with her on the phone.

Arlene and I had a wonderful relationship. We talked on the phone about three times a week on average. She was not shy in asking me for help in getting some book she had heard about or seen “written up” in one of the magazines. She especially enjoyed receiving *The Christadelphian Tidings* and *The Glad Tidings* (from England). The last thing that I sent her, just a few days ago, were the final three lessons of the Exploring the Bible course from thisisyourbible.com.

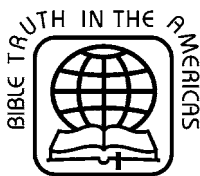
I can remember very vividly one incident. We were going through a lesson on the kingdom and how it would be established on the earth when Jesus came back. We started looking up and reading verses to show what this marvelous kingdom would be like, and we read Isaiah 40:31:

“Those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

Along with all the other impressive prophecies about that great age, this one really hit the mark with her. I can still see the twinkle in her eyes when she asked me if it was really true — if one day she would be able to do all those things, and I told her that it surely was. After that initial discussion, it seemed like every other time I saw her, she brought up that point again — just to make sure that nothing had changed in the meantime — one day her non-functioning body would really be empowered to function in that marvelous way.

Arlene was a beautiful person in many ways. She will be truly missed by all who loved her. I will miss the phone calls, the emails, and the Bible questions that would come up when she tried to witness to her friends and neighbors. And I will miss her friendship. May we all have the honor and privilege of meeting her one day in that glorious kingdom when we, like her, are blessed to enter into the joy of our Lord. Then we all, with glorified bodies, will run and not be weary and walk and not faint.

*With love in Christ,
Wesley Booker
(Austin South, TX)*



Bible Mission News

Guyana Report

Sis. Bibi of the New Amsterdam, Guyana, Ecclesia reports that they continue to function with the limited resources they have at their disposal. Although very few in number, they consider themselves truly blessed in many ways.

Shortly after the Bible school at Eccles, they were visited by Bro. Clive and Sis. Christine Drepaul, along with Bro. Richard and Sis. Dorothy Badlu, from Brooklyn, NY. Bro. Clive led Bible study, CYC, and Sunday school classes in New Amsterdam and also baptized Sis. Bonita Arjune, granddaughter-in-law of the late Bro. Abdool and Sis. Taj Hack. Sis. Dorothy was also able to do some studies with the sisters' class.

In June Bro. Ted and Sis. Dolores Sleeper visited Berbice, all three of the ecclesias. Bible classes, along with a joint CYC and Memorial Service, were held in New Amsterdam to coincide with the visit. A breaking of bread service was afterwards held at the homes of Bro. Vernon Yearwood and Sis. Nesha Hanif, two of the aged pillars of the ecclesia who are no longer able to make it to the meetings due to ill health.

Bro. Stafford and Sis. Leila Paltoo, from the Washington, DC, Ecclesia, and Sis. Miriam Scipico, from the Bronx Ecclesia, also visited during the summer. A joint memorial service was once again held among the three Berbice Ecclesias to facilitate the visit.

On August 1, the ecclesia had an outing at a water resort in Demerara. It was a beautiful day of fun and games for the entire family. We want to thank Bro. Sase and Sis. Amna Ramloachan (Barbados) and the Sacramento Ecclesia (California) for their contribution toward the cost of the trip.

The Annual Youth Camp was held in August at Plegt Anker. However, since New Amsterdam has many small children who were unable to attend the Camp, a vacation Bible school was held at our hall.

In September, Bro. Andy Bradshaw visited from Manchester, UK. Previously, he had been directly involved in instructing our now newly baptized sister, Sis. Bonita. He had also instructed Sis. Nafiza Phillips and Bro. Deo Budhan, who were baptized during his previous visit.

New Amsterdam is now preparing for the Sunday school year-end activities, and they wish to thank all the kind brethren who contributed to making this a

wonderful event for the children. Especially helpful were Bro. Nesbit Amos and the CSTCF committee for the Sunday school materials received.

God willing, New Amsterdam Ecclesia will once again be hosting the Guyana Bible School in April 2009, during the Easter weekend. We thank all those who continue to remember us in prayers, and we extend an open invitation to all to visit our ecclesia, especially at the Bible school next year!

Costa Rica

It was 10 years before I was baptized!

I was born and raised in a rural area of my country, in a home consisting of eight children and my parents. My entire family was conservative and very Catholic. When I was a young girl, my cousin moved close to our home. She was Evangelical, and would meet at her home with some of the members of her church. One night, I walked by her home and noticed the group praying during one of their meetings. I stopped to listen, and was very impressed with what they did and how they prayed.

Even as the years passed, what I felt that night persisted in my heart. At age 16, I began to take dance lessons, which I really loved. Then I soon realized there was an Evangelical church very close to my dance class. Therefore I began to combine both activities; I would dance for a while, and then go to church. Two years later, I met my husband.

A couple of months before my wedding, I asked a gentleman who supposedly knew about the Bible to teach me how to read and look for books and verses in the Bible. At that time, I admittedly had never opened a Bible. What I was most interested in learning was why the Catholics say that the evangelical Bible was different from the one they used. Then I began to generate questions that he was unable to answer, which led to a recommendation to speak to a gentleman from an Evangelical church. His name was Miguel Miranda (he is presently a Christadelphian brother). I accepted his offer and started to study with this man. After a few days, he invited me to his church. This was in 1984.

It was not too long until I decided to be baptized into the Evangelical Church and attend all the meetings I could. As the classes began to advance, contradictions began to emerge between the pastor of the church and Miguel Miranda and Francisco Ramirez. I used to listen; at first I thought that they could never contradict anything in the Bible, and that maybe these apparent contradictions were due to my lack of education. As this persisted, I began to have doubts. Around the same time, a lady from church found an announcement in the newspaper about a group that did not believe in the trinity, which was one of the topics being discussed by the pastor of the Evangelical church. She showed it to some other brothers.

Francisco Ramirez decided to visit them, and surprisingly, this group not only explained that the trinity did not exist, but he also discovered that the devil was not what we thought it was. Francisco Ramirez returned to us perplexed, and

talked with Miguel Miranda about these things. After this, both of them began to study the Scriptures in more depth, separating themselves from the Evangelical Church. They began to meet in Francisco Ramirez's home, with the group of people from the newspaper ad (the Christadelphians).

My curiosity regarding the topic of the devil made me attend some of these meetings. I wanted to hear what was said about the non-existence of a devil; I could not accept this concept — I could accept everything else, but not this. I started to attend more frequently. I enjoyed the way these topics were explained, and especially without any contradictions that I previously encountered with the other church. I stopped attending the Evangelical Church, along with other members that were also attending these classes at Francisco Ramirez's home.

Shortly after this, my second son was born, and I decided not to baptize him in the Catholic Church. My mother became very worried and registered me for a three-day instruction class called "Journey for Women." This was led by a group of Catholic priests in the community. She insisted in me joining this community activity to get rid of all the ideas with which she thought I had been brainwashed. I attended this group, but by the end of the class, it was proven even more to me that what I was learning from the Christadelphians was really the Truth. This experience motivated me even more to attend the Christadelphian courses.

Soon, many brothers and sisters from the Evangelical Church were baptized into the Christadelphian faith. Due to the fact that I was afraid to make the same mistake as I did with the Evangelical Church, it took me 10 years to get baptized. Presently, in this year 2008, I've been a Christadelphian for 24 years. I am a very happy woman, for God has called me to the knowledge of His Truth and made me part of His beautiful promise.

*Love in Christ,
Sis. Nidia Salas Alfaro, Santa Bárbara de Heredia, Costa Rica*



**Left to right, Sisters Gladys Barrantes, Doris Barrantes,
Nidia Salas, Lidieth Arias, and Elieth Salazar.**

This is Your Bible

If you haven't looked at the redesigned www.thisisyourbible.com website yet, please take a few minutes to have a look. It has a different look than the last one and has additional features both in front and behind the scenes.

The survey question for the most recent reporting month on the website was: 'What happens when we die?' The people who answered the survey said this:

- 57% Death is like a sleep from which those in Christ will be awakened at his return.
- 24% Our immortal soul goes to heavenly bliss or burning hell.
- 9% When we die, that's it. We are extinct forever.
- 6% We are reincarnated as another person, and the cycle of rebirth continues.
- 4% I don't know.

In addition to the survey, the booklet "After Death, What?" was read 92 times. We hope those reading the pamphlet were the ones who had given the incorrect answer to the survey.

There were also 118 questions received in August, as follows:

- | | | |
|-------|--------------|------------------|
| • 33% | 39 Questions | Bible Study |
| • 20% | 23 Questions | Life Issues |
| • 24% | 28 Questions | First Principles |
| • 8% | 10 Questions | Christadelphians |
| • 15% | 18 Questions | Technical |

Note that the "Technical" category includes people asking for password resets, etc. and comments and questions from various Christadelphians.

Want to help?

- Visit the website (www.thisisyourbible.com) to find out what it's all about.
- Become an on-line tutor; you can see from the statistics above that we need your help.
- Hand out the business cards available in your ecclesia. Let us know if you need more.
- Advertise the website in your local newspaper or as a link on your ecclesia's website — since the contacts in your area will come back to you and can be managed by your ecclesia.
- Continue your CBMA/CBMC financial support either individually or as an ecclesia. If you are not a CBMA/CBMC sponsoring ecclesia, please consider becoming one to support the important work on the website and in the mission field.

Jan Berneau
CBMA/CBMC Publicity

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, V8L 4V7, 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. We now have Canadian Charitable status. 866-823-1039

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

News & Notices

AUSTIN LEANDER, TX

We are pleased to report the baptism of BRIAN CAMARILLO on July 27. He is a friend of our Bro. Mark Berry, and he has been coming to CYC and Sunday school for several years. On June 28 Bro. Joshua Hefner and Sis. Brittany Ishman were united in marriage at our hall. We wish them every happiness.

We welcome to our ecclesia Sis. Nicole Nevers, transferred from Meriden, CT. Bro. Michael and Sis. Julie Herrera, formerly of the Seguin, TX, Ecclesia, and now in isolation, are welcomed as associate members. We are also pleased to receive back into fellowship Bro. David Ishman and Sis. Kim White.

Sis. Edith Scott fell asleep in Christ October 2; she now awaits the resurrection together with her husband, Bro. John, who passed away in 2000. She is the grandmother of Sis. Kimberly Smart, formerly of this ecclesia, and now of the East Texas Ecclesia.

We welcomed Truth Corps in July and were pleased to have them for two weeks, helping with giving presentations and our first Vacation Bible School. Team members included Bro. Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA), Bro. Ben Ridgway (St. John's, NF), Sis. Robin Sternad (Simi Hills, CA), Sis. Ruth Shivkumar (Echo Lake, NJ) and Bro. Jeremiah Hefner of our own ecclesia. Bro. Bob and Sis. Diana Stodel (Victoria, BC) led the team. Some of the students from the VBS are still attending our Wednesday evening kids' class.

We have also welcomed the following additional visitors from out of state: Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK), Bro. Mark and Sis. Jean Giordano (Norfolk, VA), Sis. Connie Goodlander (Avon, IN), Bro. Bruce Chisholm (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON), and Bro. Scott and Sis. Cindy Nevers (Meriden, CT). We thank the following brothers for their words of exhortation: Roger Long, Jason Hensley, Scott Nevers, and Shannon Strickland (North Houston, TX).

We would like to thank Sis. Gerry Ann Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA) for leading classes on "The Challenges Facing Sisters Today" at our sisters' study weekend in Glen Rose. Due to Hurricane Ike, those in Houston were not able to attend, but we are thankful God brought everyone in the Houston area safely through the storm.

Bro. Mack Lucas has been undergoing chemotherapy to battle leukemia, which has sent him to the hospital several times. Please keep Bro. Mack and Sis. Lori in your prayers.

Fred Bearden

BEDFORD, NS

We were elated when 16-year-old DAVID CRAWFORD was baptized on September 16 in St. Margaret's Bay. He is an example to our youth.

Guests have been Bro. Steve (who exhorted) and Sis. Jane Petrou and daughters Julia and Paige; also Andrew and Karen Petrou and daughter Hannah (Toronto West, ON); Bro. Brian Mukendi and son Kadima (St. John's). We had a successful study weekend September 20-21 on Micah 6:8 with Bro. Shawn Snobelen (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON). His wife, Sis. Marnie, and son Kaiden accompanied him, along with thirteen visitors

from Sussex. Our L.T.R.T.B.E. Seminar has started again with good turnouts.

Ronald A. A. Hill

BRANTFORD, ON

We rejoiced with HIROTAKA IWAMA (Johnny), who was baptized into the hope of Israel on August 8, 2008. Johnny had been in contact with the truth for many years through longtime family friend Sis. Marion Clayton, to whom he has been like an uncle/father. We enjoyed fellowship with our Bro. Carl and Sis. Ginny Parry (Australia), and thank them for visiting us as well as our Bro. Carl for leading us in an uplifting series of studies on “The Prophecy of Isaiah”.

Daniel Billington

HONESDALE, PA

Sis. Helen Gibson has transferred membership from the Florida area to Honesdale, and is breaking bread here. GARY GOODMAN was baptized into the saving name of our Lord on August 24. We were blessed that weekend with visiting Bro. Jim and Sis. Esther Harper (Meriden, CT). Bro. Jim exhorted and performed the baptism, for which we were very grateful. Gary is the husband of Sis. Arleen; he had attended here for over 20 years as an interested friend.

Jerry Frisbie

MERIDEN, CT

We’ve enjoyed the company of many visitors since our last report. Brothers and sisters have joined us at the Lord’s table from Austin Leander, TX; Baltimore, MD; Boston, MA; Cranston, RI; Echo Lake, NJ; Honesdale, PA; Moorestown, NJ; Southern New Hampshire; Wachusett, MA; Washington, DC; and Westerly, RI. We’d like to thank Bro. Ethan Bearden and his father Bro. Fred Bearden (Austin Leander, TX) for their exhortations when they visited in Meriden.

A lot has been happening in 2008! Stella Adin Cicero was born to Bro. Jason and Sis. Debbie Cicero on March 3. Little Stella, “star,” and her parents are doing just fine. Then in April we rejoiced in two baptisms. ALYSSA RAYE TUCK was baptized on April 6, followed by her brother, JOSHUA PHILIP TUCK, on April 27. Josh and Alyssa are the children of our Sis. Vickie Tuck and grandchildren of Bro. Warren and Sis. Dot Phillips.

In June our annual spring Bible study weekend was led by Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON). Bro. Dev presented a very exhortational series on the life of the patriarch Jacob, culminating in the Sunday exhortation, “I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord”. We welcomed many visitors, and the weekend ended with our annual Sunday school picnic. We are very thankful to Bro. Dev for his kind work on our behalf.

Bro. Devon Walker (Manchester, UK) lectured in July after speaking at the Eastern Bible School. His special midweek presentation, “Countdown to the Kingdom”, was well attended, including a number of our young people and several friends from past Bible seminars. The evening began with dinner and ended with discussion and dessert after the lecture.

In August, we rejoiced in another baptism. LAURA ELIZABETH HAMMOND was baptized on August 17. Laura is the younger daughter of Bro. Rob and Sis. Nanette Hammond of our meeting and the granddaughter of Bro. Skeet and Sis. Betty

Hammond of Rhode Island. Laura's request to complete her Bible studies and be interviewed for baptism came right after Bro. Devon Walker's special lecture. Things moved forward very satisfactorily from there.

We are delighted to welcome Bro. Louis and Sis. Shirley Budney into the Meriden Ecclesia. They transferred from the Pittsburgh, PA, Ecclesia in July. Bro. Lou and Sis. Shirley have already been a great help in many ways, and we are happy to have their fellowship. In August our Sis. Nicole Lynn Nevers transferred ecclesial membership from Meriden to the Austin Leander, TX, Ecclesia. We commend her to the brothers and sisters in Austin. Sis. Nicole will be starting college in Texas this fall.

We also had the company of Sis. Deborah Andrews at the Lord's table this summer. Sis. Deborah is the youngest daughter of Bro. David and the late Sis. Karolyn Andrews of Georgetown, Guyana. We very much enjoyed having Sis. Deborah with us for the short time she was in Connecticut.

A few members of our meeting have suffered the loss of close relatives in recent months. Sis. Ros Smith's brother died in March. Bro. Ray Demarest's father died in July. Bro. Dom Daddona lost his mother in August. Our hearts are with our dear sister and brothers in their bereavements.

Jim Harper

MILFORD ROAD, MI

We are thankful for the many thoughts and prayers for our Bro. Grant Anderson. Our heavenly Father has certainly blessed him from the severe auto accident by the amount of progress he has made over the past year. Bro. Grant is slowly walking and an active member of our ecclesia, with his prayers and readings during the memorial service. Please continue to pray for Grant and the Anderson family during this time.

We welcome by transfer Sis. Linda Putnick (Detroit Livonia, MI). We transferred Sis. Annette Ammons to the Ann Arbor Ecclesia.

We are happy to announce the births of two little additions to our ecclesia: Kegan David Dreffs was born to Bro. Dave and Sis. Lauren Dreffs on June 23; Alexandra Rose McCracken was born to Bro. Drew and Sis. Sara McCracken on June 27.

We very much appreciate the many visitors we have had over the past months; we especially thank Bre. Ken Comito and Peter Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI) and Bro. Nick Giroux (Detroit Livonia, MI) for their exhortations.

Jeff Livermore

OTTAWA, ON

With much joy we announce the baptism of CATHERINE SINCLAIR, wife of our Bro. Matthew Harrison, on September 7, 2008. We pray that our Heavenly Father will be with our new sister on her walk to the Kingdom. We welcome Bro. Mike and Sis. Hannah Jenner (Watford, UK), who have moved to Ottawa for a two-year work placement.

Over the past months our ecclesia has benefited from the fellowship of brothers and sisters from across North America, as well as Australia, New Zealand, Trinidad and the UK.

Charles Archard

PORT MARIA, JAMAICA

We are happy to inform the brotherhood of the baptisms of another into the saving name of Christ. We pray that his mind will remain focused on seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. He is HAROLD CAMPBELL.

Dave Clarke

ROUND HILL, JAMAICA

We rejoice in the baptism of seven young people, and one somewhat older person, into the saving name of Christ. We pray that they keep their faith unto the coming of Christ. They are LEECROFT BLAIR, LEVONNIA BLAIR, AISHA ELLIOTT, LASMINE ELLIOTT, RONIQUÉ ELLIOTT, TANESHA HONEYGHAN, VANESSA LEVY, and ELGA REID.

Sonia Blair

VANCOUVER, BC

We are thankful for the benefits of our worldwide fellowship, evidenced in the many visiting brothers and sisters from around the world who join us in fellowship at our Lord's Table. Our special appreciation goes to visiting brothers providing spiritual messages: Paul Billington (Brantford, ON), who gave fraternal talks on "Remember the Covenant" in 2007; Edward Hart and Dan Osborn (Maple Ridge); Gordon Dangerfield, Clive Daniel and Mike McStravick (Victoria); Tony Ball and Paul Skinner (Seattle, WA); David Lawrence (Prince George); and Stephen Snobelen (Bedford, NS). We thank our brothers for their uplifting Sunday messages and Bro. Dana Kohlman (Calgary, AB) for leading our 2008 Manning Park Youth Conference.

With sadness we report that Sis. Carol Lowe fell asleep in June; she now awaits the resurrection. We miss Carol's bright and positive outlook and cheerful greetings.

We rejoice with Bro. Einar and Sis. Debra Halbig as a new baby, Yzabelle, joined their and our ecclesial families in July 2007. We also rejoice in the May 2008 marriages of Bro. Shaun Budden and Sis. Jodi Mapstone, and Bro. Adam Seagoe (Olympia, WA) and Sis. Amanda Massey. We pray for our Father's rich blessing upon them as they walk as one to his kingdom.

Sis. Jolene Budden returned to us in September 2007 by transfer from Brantford, ON. Bro. Mike and Sis. Anne Bull came to us from New Westminster. Sis. Amanda Massey transferred to Olympia, WA, in March 2008; Bro. Art and Sis. Sharon Wood transferred to Victoria in August 2007; and Bro. Lee and Sis. Betty Polder transferred to New Westminster in September 2008. We pray that our Lord will bless them in their new ecclesias.

We look forward to our October 2008 fraternal gathering with Bro. Andrew E. Walker (Milsbridge, UK) on "Life before the Flood."

Phil Snobelen

WORCESTER, MA

The brothers and sisters of Worcester and the surrounding New England ecclesias wish to thank Bro. Devon Walker for leading a study day the weekend following the New England Regional Bible School, at which he also taught. His labor in our Lord's vineyard is an inspiration to all!

Mark Fulmer

Minute Meditation

Life is a Temporary Assignment

None of us are going to be around here very long, so we should not get too attached to things.

The Bible uses many metaphors to describe the brevity of our lives. We read that our life is like a mist, a breath, a wisp of smoke, a flower of the field, a morning cloud, as the early dew, and as smoke out of the chimney. Hosea includes several of these expressions in one sentence when he says,

"Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney."

David prayed,

"Show me, O LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life."

Repeatedly the Bible compares life in this world to living temporarily in a foreign country. Where we now live is not where we belong. David says,

"I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me."

Peter explains,

"Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear."

And Paul tells us,

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

An ambassador lives in a foreign country, and he represents the government who appointed him to serve there. The ambassador is expected to obey the laws of the country in which he is living, such as driving on the left side of the road if that is the case, but he would not dare to get involved in local politics. He could not vote and should be cautious with expressing his opinion about the candidates that might be running for office in the country to which he is temporarily assigned.

Our role right now is to represent the Lord who has chosen us to be his ambassador. Peter explains,

"Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul. Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing right you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God."

It is so important for us to realize that very soon our Lord will return to establish his kingdom on this earth. If we have been a part of this present order of things, we will not be asked to participate in his kingdom as kings and priests. Jesus tells us that we cannot serve God and Mammon. He did not say that we should not. He said that we cannot.

Joshua issued a challenge to the children of Israel: choose you this day whom you want to serve. Joshua even gave the Israelites several options that were all wrong choices. Then he concluded by saying,

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

We must make this choice now as we await our Lord's coming to call us to his kingdom. We really do not belong in the culture where we now live if we "desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one." If we choose to serve God rather than belonging to this world, we are told, "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called our God," and, "He has prepared for us a city" as part of a better future for us to share with the faithful of all ages.

Robert J. Lloyd

God or Mammon?

From this position [a lofty mountain... the adversary] showed Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world... and the glory of them". He knew that Jesus was destined to possess them all; but that he was also to obtain them through suffering. Jesus knew this, too. Now, as the flesh dislikes suffering, the tempter proposed to gratify the desire of his eyes by giving him all he saw, on the easy condition of doing homage to him as the god of the world. "All this power", said he, "will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine" (Luke 4:6,7). But Jesus resisted the enticement, and said, "Get thee hence, adversary: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve". "Having ended all the temptation he departed from him for a season." And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.

In this manner, then, was he put to the proof in all things... He preferred the grace of God with suffering, to the gratification of his flesh with all the pomp and pageantry of this vain and transitory world... If those who possess it, such as kings, priests, nobles, etc., were what they pretended to be, they would follow Jesus' example, and renounce them all... What fellowship hath Christ with Belial? Certainly none.

John Thomas, Elpis Israel

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

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 Bro. Craig Nevers craignev@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

14-16 New Hamburg, ON, Brothers' Weekend. Contact Bro. Nathan Badger 519-568-7830 natebadger@yahoo.com

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

29 Run for the Everlasting Cure: A Christadelphian worldwide prayer and 5 km run/walk to support those we know who suffer from cancer and other debilitating diseases. Please participate with your ecclesia/CYC/Sunday school. Website www.christadelphia.org/rftec. Prayer requests to www.new.facebook.com/group.php?gid+5595409986 or email for more information Rebekah and Kevin Hunter at bible@christadelphia.org

30 Ann Arbor, MI Thanksgiving gathering, Holiday Inn North Campus, Ann Arbor, MI. Bro. Malcolm Cross (Doncaster, UK): "Christ in you, the hope of glory". Memorial service 11 am; afternoon Bible talk 2 pm. Contact Bro. Peter Bilello webmaster@tidings.org 734-424-9254

DECEMBER

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

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

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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

MAY 2009

1-3 San Luis Obispo Sisters' Weekend. Sis. Jane Tunnell (San Diego, CA): "My Husband, My Lord" (Theme: Preparing ourselves as the Bride of Christ). Sunday memorial meeting conducted by ecclesial brothers. Contact Sis. Ann Crouse 805-239-3517 RoanCrouse@aol.com. Cost \$150; enrollment may be limited