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Editorial — “For kings and all those in authority”	523
Ecclesial Study — Fellowship Practice of Central Ecclesias, <i>Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee</i>	526
Exhortation — Why We Attend the Breaking of Bread, <i>Paul Schlicher</i>	537
Bible Study:	
Little Words that Mean a Lot:	
(14) Murmuring, <i>John C. Bilello</i>	544
“Two by Two”, <i>George Booker</i>	549
Current Events — Global Financial Turmoil, <i>Philip Jones</i>	558
Bible Mission News — Bolivia; Mexico; This is your Bible	561
News & Notices	567
Minute Meditation — The Lord’s Servant Must Not Quarrel, <i>Robert J. Lloyd</i>	569
Coming Events	571
Index	573

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

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“Live quiet and peaceable lives...”

(1 Timothy 2:2)

The Greek “eremos” [“quiet”] could mean free from outward disturbance, but “hesukios” [KJV “peaceable”, NIV “peaceful”] refers to an inner peace of mind resulting from restful contemplation (for example, on the Sabbath), yielding to the will of God, studying to be quiet, or following the example of the sisters in Christ who are “in silence” [“hesukia”; NIV “quietness”] [1Ti 2:11] and of a meek and “quiet” [“hesukios”] spirit [1Pe 3:4]. It represents exactly the proper attitude of the chaste bride of Christ or the people of God, who accept the responsibility of obedience and trust in the power of him who loved them and gave himself for them. So no disciple is a demonstrator or political activist, a passive resister, a “brawler” (Tit 3:2) or a striker for temporal advantage. And if our citizenship (“politeuma”, translated “conversation”) is really as becometh the Gospel of Christ (Phil 1:27), then we shall strive to rid our minds of our inbuilt socialism, conservatism or liberalism which hopes for better things for our material lives with every change of government. The whole aim and satisfaction of our lives is to live them in all godliness and honesty.

Alfred Nicholls (Letters to Timothy and Titus, pp. 57,58)

Editorial

“For kings and all those in authority”

“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone — for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness” (1Ti 2:1,2).

Last month, Americans — and observers around the world — saw the election of a new President of the United States. As the long campaign neared its climax, we published in this magazine several articles (written before the results were known) that reminded us of important matters:

1. God rules in the kingdom of men, and sets in power whomever **He** pleases, even at times the “basest” of men (Dan 4:17,25,32). It ought to be noted here that the old-fashioned English word “basest” (KJV) does not mean here the most immoral or the most inferior, but simply the “lowest” (ASV) or the “lowliest” (RSV, NIV).
2. As followers of Christ, who recognize that God works in this world, we must be respectful of those whom He places in authority over us. While we may disagree personally with what this leader or that one may do, we must not lose sight of the fact that he (or she) could not act at all if the Almighty had not allowed it to be so — or, perhaps, even directly caused it to be so. *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases” (Prov 21:1).*
3. Furthermore, we must not only respect, but also submit to and obey the rulers (Rom 13:1-7; 1Pe 2:13-17; Tit 3:1), except for the rare occasions when we have a clear duty to “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).
4. Finally, we dare not involve ourselves in any partisan political activities, lest we endanger our standing, first and foremost, as “citizens” of God’s Kingdom.

As the United States, or any nation in the world, selects its leaders, Christadelphians stand aside respectfully, as observers and not participants in the process. Of course, this standing aside does not preclude us from having opinions as to which candidate might make a ‘better’ president, governor, congressman, prime minister, member of parliament, etc. We may express our opinions privately, to one another, but we should be careful about how we express our opinions to others in the world around us. We could too easily be drawn into the “strife” or “quarrels” of this world (Prov 20:3), and stand accused of meddling in a quarrel that is not our own (Prov 26:17). *“The Lord’s servant must not quarrel” (2Ti 2:24; see the Minute Meditation in this issue).*

Our opinions

We might also want to give some thought to our opinions about political matters, even if held confidentially or expressed privately in Bible classes and the like. How do we develop these opinions?

Possibly we develop political opinions, even when we don't vote, on the basis of financial self-interest or personal prejudice of one kind or another. Putting that aside, however, we might answer: 'My opinion is based on an informed reading of the Bible, of course.' Even this may mean something like: 'I'm hoping for, or rooting for the candidate whom I believe will most effectively do God's will' or 'the one who will most likely fulfill my interpretation of Bible prophecy'.

This raises an interesting question: *If* I truly believe that God chooses whom He pleases, and *if* I truly believe that God can turn a ruler's heart wherever He wishes, and guide a ruler's actions to His own divine purposes, then... *why* in the world do I have a 'rooting interest' at all? "*Will not the Judge [shaphat: Ruler] of all the earth do right?*" (Gen 18:25).

As to our understanding of unfulfilled Bible prophecy, how and when (and by whom) any particular revelation might be fulfilled, we do well to remember three things:

- (1) The Jews of the first century, the best Bible students in the world, including some who believed in Jesus Christ, failed consistently — time after time after time — to see how or when the words of the Hebrew prophets, or the words of their Savior, would be fulfilled. Invariably, it was only when the prophecy was actually fulfilled before their eyes, and drawn to their attention, that they understood what Almighty God had done.
- (2) Christadelphians understand the general tenor of Bible prophecy, i.e., that when the Jews are back in their land but threatened by their enemies, the Lord will return from heaven to raise and judge the dead, to save Israel, and to establish the Kingdom of God in the earth. But our record as would-be 'prophets' is filled with mistaken expectations, and wrong guesses, about when and where and how latter-day prophecies will actually be fulfilled. We have guessed wrong so many times that the continual reordering of timetables, and the constant circling of new dates on our calendars, runs the risk of casting doubt on our fundamental Bible teachings. We really ought to be more careful.
- (3) Even when we *think* we know what a particular candidate might do upon becoming president, it often doesn't work out that way. History is filled with promising rulers who did little, as well as the most unlikely of rulers who actually fulfilled the purpose of God. Ages ago an Egyptian Pharaoh, who worshipped a myriad of idols, opposed the God of Israel, but his blind stubbornness brought about the Exodus. Adolph Hitler, whose hatred of Jews led to millions being exterminated, and whose lust for power precipitated a war that ravaged the world, provided the impetus for the remnants of God's people to return to their own land. Shortly after World War II ended, the American President Harry Truman — who had no reason whatsoever to be favorably disposed toward the fledgling nation of Israel — courageously approved their recognition by the United Nations. All this cries out for us to examine ourselves: *how can we ever know, before it happens, what the most unlikely or unpromising of rulers might do to further the purpose of God?*

Pray for rulers

This leads us back to Paul's exhortation that we quoted at the beginning:

"I urge that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made... for kings and all those in authority."

Paul mentions four distinct types of prayer above:

- (a) "requests": petitions, supplications for the wellbeing and the needs of ourselves and others;
- (b) "prayers": an all-purpose word, including especially public prayers;
- (c) "intercession": the work of a priest, going into the presence of God on behalf of others; and
- (d) "thanksgiving": a grateful remembrance of God's past blessings, by which those praying strengthen their faith that the same God will meet future needs.

Paul exhorts us to offer every sort of prayer on this list. Furthermore, every sort of prayer may have as its object "kings and all those in authority":

- (a) We may beseech God's care upon those who rule over us, that they may be protected and prospered, all with the aim that they will be better able to carry out God's will.
- (b) It is appropriate that, in our assemblies, we occasionally offer public prayers for our national leaders, and other government officials.
- (c) Of all peoples, we are uniquely situated to do the work of priests, that is, to offer prayers of intercession on behalf of leaders. Those very leaders will almost certainly be totally oblivious to our prayers, and to any good that those prayers might do. But we know better. If we do indeed know the Truth of God's Word, and belong to Him, then our prayers may be the most effective ones uttered for those rulers: *"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man [and woman, and congregation] availeth much"* (James 5:16, KJV).
- (d) We thank God for the protection He has given us, by means of those whom He has placed over us. In remembering what our heavenly Father has done in the past, we encourage ourselves and others that He will continue to do so, *"that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness"* (1Ti 2:2).

Undoubtedly, it is easier to pray for our rulers when we see them as good and admirable people, and when we are well disposed toward them personally. However, our obligation to do so is not lessened when they fail to suit us, or to meet the standards we may impose upon them. If we are tempted to shirk our duty in this regard because, frankly, we just don't want to do it, then we ought to remember:

- The respect and submission shown toward, and even the prayers on behalf of, rulers (Rom 13; 1Pe 2; 1Ti 2; Tit 3) had as their immediate beneficiaries Roman Caesars like Nero!
- If that weren't enough, then Christ has also commanded us to "love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44); only if you do

so, he implies, will you truly be “sons of your Father in heaven” (v 45).

- God is always in control, and can use even the most difficult of experiences in this life to shape our characters and prepare us for the world to come.
- Finally, to pray for anything is to acknowledge that — not just what we have or might have, not just what we are or what we might be — but our very lives, every day and every moment, are in His hands.

George Booker

Ecclesial Study

Fellowship Practice of Central Ecclesias

This article provides a brief overview of the fellowship principles and practices of the Central¹ community. It discusses our basis of fellowship, ecclesial-based practices, and autonomy issues. As will be apparent, this overview depends heavily on Scripture, and the sound advice of the *Ecclesial Guide* and of others who have helped navigate our community through transitions in the past. These sources provide consistent patterns that guide us in determining our proper course today. They also highlight the fact that extreme black-and-white positions can be shortsighted and may inaccurately represent true fundamental principles.

Basis of Fellowship

The Ecclesial Guide

The *Ecclesial Guide*, by Robert Roberts, is the fundamental document defining Central fellowship policy and practices. Our community has enjoyed the blessings of its wisdom for more than a century. Following its Scripture-based advice has enabled us to grow to the size we are today, to the honor of our heavenly Father and His Son. As its full title indicates, *The Ecclesial Guide: A Guide to the formation and conduct of Christadelphian ecclesias* provides guidance for the setting up and running of a Christadelphian ecclesia, and for the interacting of ecclesias with one another.

The *Ecclesial Guide* introduces the important concept of “a basis of fellowship” (we use small caps throughout this article to focus attention on the points being emphasized):

“34 – Basis of Fellowship

“Examination [for baptism] implies A RECOGNISED BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP; that is, a definition of the doctrines that are recognised as the Truth... The question for

1. The term “Central” originally referred to the Birmingham Christadelphian ecclesia that relocated from Temperance Hall to the Midland Institute in the center of Birmingham, England. This ecclesia was called the Birmingham (Central) Ecclesia in part to distinguish it from the Birmingham (Suffolk Street) Ecclesia. The Birmingham (Central) Ecclesia had earlier established the *Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith* (BASF) as its summary of Scriptural doctrines and precepts, thus defining its basis of fellowship. Ecclesias in the Central community were originally those in fellowship with the Birmingham (Central) Ecclesia.

applicants is, do they believe what the Scriptures teach? To test this, the teaching requires definition. This definition agreed to forms THE BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP among believers whether expressed in spoken or written words...

"Such A BASIS OF FAITH will be found at the end of this book. ...

"A System of Rules embodying the Foregoing Suggestions [a pattern for ecclesial constitutions]

1 – That we are a Christadelphian ecclesia.

2 – That we accept and profess the doctrines and precepts of Christ, as taught in the apostolic writings, and defined in the annexed *Statement of Faith* and *Epitome of the Commandments of Christ*.

3 – That we recognise as brethren, and welcome to our fellowship, all who have been immersed (by whomsoever) after their acceptance of the same doctrines and precepts. ...

"A Statement of the Faith forming our BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP [the so-called BASF]: The Foundation... Truth to be Received... Doctrines to be Rejected... The Commandments of Christ..."

As Bro. Roberts emphasizes, the BASF defines "the DOCTRINES AND PRECEPTS of Christ, as taught in the apostolic writings." It is the "DOCTRINES AND PRECEPTS" that are essential, rather than the specific wording used to define them. There are many acceptable statements in use today in the worldwide Christadelphian community, each of which summarizes the same doctrines and precepts. Of course, there would be justifiable concern if anyone were to emphasize too strongly any differences between their preferred wording and the BASF.

Even though an ecclesia may adopt its own statement of faith, to avoid ambiguity it is common to declare the basis of inter-ecclesial fellowship to be the gospel as defined in the BASF. Such a declaration establishes that the principles defined by the ecclesia's statement of faith are the same as those defined by the BASF.

This emphasis on Scriptural principles being the basis of fellowship, which are defined in the BASF, and equivalently in other statements, is a recurring theme in past unity agreements.

1957 Central-Suffolk Street (United Kingdom) Final Statement

"GENERAL BELIEFS

"(1) We agree that the doctrines to be believed and taught by us, without reservation, are the First Principles of the One Faith as revealed in the scriptures, of which the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (with positive and negative clauses, and the Commandments of Christ) gives a true definition. It is agreed however, that ecclesias in both fellowships may continue to use such statements as are current among them, supplementing them where necessary with the Clauses herein set out."

1958 Australian Unity Agreement

"Basis of Fellowship

"1. GENERAL BELIEFS

(a) We agree that the doctrines to be believed and taught by us, without reserva-

tion, are the first principles of the One Faith as revealed in the Scriptures, of which the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (with positive and negative clauses and the Commandments of Christ) gives a true definition. Clauses 5 and 12 are understood in harmony with the explanations provided by Brethren Carter and Cooper, reading: ...

- (b) Acceptance of this basis would not preclude the use of any other adequate Statement of Faith by an ecclesia, provided this is in harmony with the B.A.S.F., understood in Clause 1 (a) above.”

2003 NASU

The *North American Statement of Understanding (NASU)* follows this same pattern (p. 9):

“Fellowship/Statement of Faith

“It is understood and agreed that the doctrines to be believed and taught by us are the first principles of the One Faith as revealed in the Scriptures. The two principal statements of faith, *The Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (BASF)* and *The Birmingham Unamended Statement of Faith (BUSF)*, as set forth herein, (including the *Doctrines to Be Rejected* and *The Commandments of Christ*) understood as expressed in this document represent a true and common definition of the One Faith.

“Inter-Ecclesial Fellowship Practice

“We agree to conduct our inter-ecclesial fellowship at the memorial table of the Lord with North American Christadelphian ecclesias that agree with this understanding, and as set out in principle in *A Guide to the Formation and Conduct of Christadelphian Ecclesias* (commonly referred to as “*The Ecclesial Guide*”, R. Roberts). It is recognized that the basis of inter-ecclesial fellowship outside North America remains the *BASF*. Visitors in good standing from these ecclesias outside North America are welcome at the memorial table.”

CGAF-Central Fellowship Points of Agreement

The *CGAF-Central Fellowship Points of Agreement* is currently being considered as part of the unity effort between congregations of the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith and the Amended community in North America. It follows the same pattern as earlier unity agreements by declaring the *BASF* to be a faithful synopsis of the first principles of the one faith as revealed in the Scriptures:

“Statement of Faith and Basis of Belief

“The following Biblical principles will be used as the basis of our belief, teaching, and fellowship:

- “I. It is agreed that the doctrines and precepts to be believed and taught by us without reservation are the first principles of the one faith as revealed in the Scriptures. The Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (with Doctrines to be Rejected and the Commandments of Christ) is a faithful synopsis of these principles.”

Another pattern is apparent from these quotations: it has been our standard practice to use statements of understanding to clarify issues that had previously been the causes of division:

- *BASF*: The amendment clarifies our understanding of “resurrectional responsibility.”
- *Central-Suffolk Street*: The Final Statement clarifies our common understanding on several issues that had been the source of division in the UK. These clarifications are referred to in the phrase “supplementing them where necessary WITH THE CLAUSES HEREIN SET OUT.”
- *Australian Unity Agreement*: “Clauses 5 and 12 are UNDERSTOOD IN HARMONY WITH THE EXPLANATIONS PROVIDED BY BRETHREN CARTER AND COOPER, reading: ...” This refers to the Carter-Cooper addendum defining the common understanding on issues that had divided brethren in Australia.
- *NASU*: Some have said that the *NASU* declares the *BASF* and *BUSF* to be equivalent. This conclusion is oversimplified and inaccurate. Following the pattern of past unity efforts, the *NASU* clarifies our common understanding on several key issues that have caused division in North America. It clearly states that the *BASF* and *BUSF* “UNDERSTOOD AS EXPRESSED IN THIS DOCUMENT represent a true and common definition of the One Faith.” The distinction is critical. The *NASU*’s expression of our common understanding on fundamental issues is essential.

One final point needs to be addressed concerning the basis of fellowship. There are some today who take a “*BASF* Only” position; these brethren would like to mandate that the *BASF* be the only acceptable statement of faith, hence the only basis of fellowship for all Christadelphians. While well-meaning, this position is clearly out of harmony with our historical emphasis that it is the inspired doctrines of the Bible that form the basis of fellowship. It also gives unwarranted authority to a single man-made expression of those principles.

In addition, such a position denies the reality of the current situation. It is simply a fact that many Central ecclesias use statements of faith other than the *BASF*. This circumstance should not cause concern. Instead, the very existence of a variety of acceptable statements of faith emphasizes that our fellowship is indeed based on the Biblical principles themselves rather than the particular statements of faith used to define those principles. If this were not the case, we might lose touch with our true foundation, and fall into the trap of following men rather than God.

Brethren who push for this “*BASF* Only” position need to be cautious, because they can, without any intention to do so, come dangerously close to denying the Foundation Clause of the *BASF*, which states: “That the book currently known as the Bible...is the only source of knowledge concerning God and His purposes at present extant or available in the earth...” As valuable as the *BASF* has proven to be as an accurate summary of the One Faith, we must never give it the same authority as the Bible. To quote the *Ecclesial Guide*, “So long as it is understood that the written definition is not an authority, but merely the written expression of our identical convictions, there is not only no disadvantage, but the reverse, in reducing the faith to a form that shuts the door against misunderstanding.”

Inclusion and Exclusion

In its role as a basis of fellowship, the *BASF* cuts two ways:

On the one hand...	On the other hand...
It includes those who agree with the basis of fellowship.	It excludes those who do not agree with it.
Differences are not allowed on the agreed essential principles , what they are or what they mean. We must agree to all the principles and cannot selectively “overlook” any of them (e.g., resurrectional responsibility) as if they were not included in our “test of fellowship.”	Friendly, brotherly differences are allowed on issues that are not covered, because we have deemed them to be non-essential (e.g., Who wrote Hebrews? When was Revelation written? Where will the judgment be?).
We insist that others who are in fellowship agree to the same principles. It is not sufficient merely to agree personally with them, but rather we must agree to the principles <i>and</i> be willing to impose them on our brothers and sisters as well. (Otherwise, we would have to accept a Baptist who happened to agree with us.)	We cannot impose additional tests of fellowship, making them incumbent on our brethren (e.g., specific views of prophecy, the age of the earth, specific divorce and remarriage criteria).

1952 Berean-Central (North American) Reunion

The Berean-Central Reunion Agreement (“The Jersey City Resolution”) highlights the importance of both the inclusion of those who accept and the exclusion of those who depart from the basis of fellowship:

- “1. That we agree that the doctrines set forth in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith are a true exposition of the first principles of the oracles of God as set forth in the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and that therefore these doctrines are to be believed and taught by us without reservation: the doctrine of the Scriptures on sin and its effects and God’s salvation from sin and death in Christ Jesus being defined in the clauses three to twelve of the Statement of Faith.
- “2. That we recognize as brethren and welcome to our fellowship all who have been immersed by whomsoever after their acceptance of the same doctrines and precepts, and that any brother departing from any element of the one Faith as defined in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith is to be dealt with according to apostolic precept.
- “3. If an ecclesia is known to persist in teaching false doctrines, or to retain in fellowship those who do, other ecclesias can only avoid being involved by disclaiming fellowship” (See *The Christadelphian*, 1952, p. 376).

1957 Central-Suffolk Street Reunion

The Central-Suffolk Street Final Statement has the same inclusion-exclusion

pattern:

“FELLOWSHIP: (2) We agree that Baptism into the Saving Name of Jesus, as commonly understood by us, creates a relationship between the Father, the Son and the individual believer which is indissoluble save by the final declaration of God through Jesus. The conduct and teaching of brethren and sisters may be sometimes unworthy of this relationship; we agree that such unworthiness will be righteously assessed by the judgment of God. We agree that a process of disciplinary action (which may involve withdrawal) may be called for in accordance with the general principles laid down in the Scriptures (e.g. Matt. 18:15-17) or as conveniently set forth in paragraphs 32, 41 and 42 of the *Ecclesial Guide*. We agree also that when such disciplinary action has been taken by any ecclesia, other ecclesias should conform to it, subject to the qualifications defined in these paragraphs. Should any depart from any element of the One Faith, withdrawal shall take place after the procedure required by Titus 3:10, 11 has been followed. If an ecclesia is known to persist in teaching false doctrine, it is the duty of other ecclesias to dissociate themselves from such an ecclesia.”

1958 Australian Unity

The Australian Unity Agreement makes the same point:

“2. FELLOWSHIP

“It is affirmed that:

- (a) Where any brethren depart from any element of the One Faith, either in doctrine or practice, they shall be dealt with according to Apostolic precept and that extreme action would be ecclesial disfellowship of the offender. (Matt. 18:15-17; Titus 3:10-11.)
- (b) If it is established that an ecclesia sets itself out by design to preach and propagate at large, false doctrine, then it would become necessary to dissociate from such an ecclesia.

“The course of action necessitated by the above clauses (a) and (b), will be regulated by the principles of Scripture and follow the spirit of the *Ecclesial Guide*, Sections 32, 41 and 42.”

2003 NASU

In like manner, the NASU clearly addresses both sides of fellowship practice:

“**Fellowship Discipline**...Should any member depart from the One Faith...withdrawal shall take place only after the procedure required by Titus 3:10-11 has been followed.

“**Ecclesial Autonomy**...However, when an ecclesia officially renounces any of the first principles of the One Faith and persists in teaching false doctrine, it shall by its own action separate itself from the reunited community and the community shall so regard it as outside the community. In these circumstances, it is the duty of faithful members to absent themselves from such an ecclesia.” (NASU, p. 9)

Occasionally there are some brethren who focus only on the positive, inclusive side of fellowship. While this may be pleasant to our humanitarian sensibilities, this approach is flawed. To be unwilling to separate from those who do not hold to all aspects of our basis of fellowship is to put everyone in jeopardy, the ecclesia with

the open policy as well as the one who believes or teaches false ideas. Ironically, such a policy will not achieve its objective anyway. We are not divided because of the things we agree on. Emphasizing our common beliefs without addressing the root causes and implications of our differences cannot bring harmony or unity.

Ecclesial-Based Fellowship

In the current age, fellowship authority is vested in the ecclesia. There are some who argue that individual believers have authority to determine fellowship boundaries. On the contrary, Scripture makes plain that, until Christ returns to judge the just and unjust, “final” fellowship authority is the duty of the ecclesia.

Jesus taught this principle:

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. AND IF HE SHALL NEGLECT TO HEAR THEM, TELL IT UNTO THE ECCLESIA: BUT IF HE NEGLECT TO HEAR THE ECCLESIA, LET HIM BE UNTO THEE AS AN HEATHEN MAN AND A PUBLICAN. VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, WHATSOEVER YE SHALL BIND ON EARTH SHALL BE BOUND IN HEAVEN: AND WHATSOEVER YE SHALL LOOSE ON EARTH SHALL BE LOOSED IN HEAVEN” (Matt 18:15-18).

The ecclesia has the final say, and the ecclesia’s ruling is binding.

Paul wrote to ecclesias (Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians) and their leaders (Timothy and Titus), and Jesus wrote (through John) to the seven ecclesias in Revelation. In each of these cases the ecclesia, in order to remain in fellowship, was expected to take corrective action with respect to certain of its members.

Paul emphasizes that individual believers are part of the body and BELONG to the other members of that body:

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member BELONGS to all the others” (Rom 12:4,5 NIV).

In Christ, we all BELONG to the one body, we are all part of the one family of God, members of the one Church of God. Having a common set of beliefs is necessary but not sufficient. We must also BELONG to the same fellowship. We are joined to those of like faith. And as members of the one body we are no longer able to accept into our common fellowship those who *do not* BELONG to that body, those who do not share our accepted faith and way of life. We must remain separate from them. Paul highlights the importance of this principle by repeating it in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:2-6; and Colossians 3:12-15.

John also teaches the same principle:

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ...If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light,

as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1Jn 1:3,6,7).

Our fellowship is with the Father, His Son, and with fellow believers.

So what does "ecclesial-based fellowship" mean in practice? There are three guiding principles that form the general policy for an ecclesia to be in the Central fellowship:

- (1) The ecclesia declares itself to be in the Central community, and represents itself in ways that confirm this declaration. For example, following the pattern in the *Ecclesial Guide*, the ecclesia's constitution, if it has one, states that it is a Christadelphian ecclesia, and that it accepts and professes the first principles of the One Faith as revealed in the Scriptures. As such, its ecclesial statement of faith, which forms its basis of fellowship, summarizes the same principles as those defined in the *BASF* (or any equivalent statement of faith). This is the means by which Central ecclesias associate themselves with "The One Body."
- (2) The ecclesia restricts fellowship (i.e., the partaking of the emblems) to those with the same basis of fellowship, that is, to members in good standing of Central Christadelphian ecclesias. In other words, Central ecclesias practice a "closed" fellowship, as taught in the Scriptures.
- (3) The ecclesia is recognized as a Central ecclesia by neighboring ecclesias. The size of the Central community, in which it is essentially impossible to "know everyone," depends on this local recognition criteria as a pragmatic and preferable alternative to the establishment of a centralized governing authority determining the fellowship status of ecclesias. The publishing policies of the two primary Central fraternal magazines (*The Christadelphian* and *The Tidings*) both require local "sponsorship" before ecclesial news is accepted for publication. By following this policy, the magazines do not determine fellowship status; rather, they report it based on the judgment of the consensus of the surrounding ecclesias.

All three of these requirements are essential to defining the one body of Christ. They form the established practice of the Central community. If any one of them is in question, the standing of the ecclesia within the Central community will be in doubt.

Moreover, "ecclesial-based fellowship" means that individual believers belong to the Lord's body as members in good standing of ecclesias. The ecclesia provides the environment for the believer's discipleship. The believer's ecclesia is their spiritual home, their immediate family of fellow brothers and sisters. Each ecclesia is responsible for correcting its members when necessary. Consequently, membership in an ecclesia is critical. This is why we write letters of commendation when members transfer from one ecclesia to another, a practice that is based on New Testament precedent.

In addition to publishing their news and notices of events in the fraternal magazines of the Central community (i.e., *The Christadelphian* and/or *The Tidings*), it is common for the ecclesia to appear in lists of Central ecclesias (e.g., the *CALS Diary* and the address lists of North American Central ecclesias).

Ecclesial Autonomy

Christadelphians have long emphasized the importance of ecclesial autonomy, as indicated by these extended quotations from the *Ecclesial Guide*:

“42 – Ecclesias in Relation One to Another

...THERE OUGHT TO BE NO INTERFERENCE OF ONE ECCLESIA WITH ANOTHER. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY HAVE RECIPROCAL RIGHTS. ECCLESIAL INDEPENDENCE IS A PRINCIPLE ESSENTIAL TO BE MAINTAINED. But it is no part of THAT INDEPENDENCE to say that no ecclesia shall consider a matter that another has decided upon, if that matter comes before the first ecclesia, and challenges their judgement, and, in fact, requires a decision. In the example already discussed, if a brother withdrawn from by one ecclesia applies for the fellowship of another, that other ecclesia is bound to consider the application, and it is no infringement of THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE FIRST ECCLESIA that it should be so, subject to the rules and attitudes indicated. It would, in fact, be a renunciation of ITS OWN INDEPENDENCE, were it to refuse to do so. Respect for the first ecclesia requires that it accept its decision until it sees grounds for a different view; and in the investigation of these grounds it ought to invite its cooperation, as already indicated. But the mere fact of the application imposes upon it the obligation to consider and investigate the matter, if there are prima facie grounds for doing so. The other ecclesia would make a mistake if it considered such a procedure an infringement of ITS INDEPENDENCE. Such a view would, in reality, be a trammelling of THE INDEPENDENCE OF EVERY ASSEMBLY; FOR IT WOULD THEN AMOUNT TO THIS, THAT NO ASSEMBLY HAD THE RIGHT TO JUDGE A CASE COMING BEFORE THEM IF THAT CASE HAPPEN TO HAVE ALREADY BEEN ADJUDICATED UPON BY ANOTHER ECCLESIA. THE JUDGEMENT OF ONE WOULD THUS BE SET UP AS A RULE FOR ALL. AN ECCLESIA HAS NO RIGHT TO JUDGE EXCEPT FOR ITSELF.

“THIS IS THE INDEPENDENCE NOT TO BE INTERFERED WITH; BUT A SIMILAR RIGHT TO JUDGE MUST BE CONCEDED TO ALL, AND THE EXERCISE OF IT, IF TEMPERED WITH A RESPECTFUL AND PROPER PROCEDURE, WOULD NEVER OFFEND AN ENLIGHTENED BODY ANYWHERE. In the majority of cases the withdrawal of one ecclesia is practically the withdrawal of all, since all will respect it till set aside, and since, in most cases, a concurrent investigation would lead to its ratification. But there may be cases where a reasonable doubt exists, and where a second ecclesia will come to a different conclusion from the rest.”

Similarly:

“44 – Fraternal Gatherings from Various Places

These are beneficial when restricted to purely spiritual objects (i.e., let the brethren assemble anywhere from anywhere, and exhort, or worship, or have social intercourse together); but they become sources of evil if allowed to acquire a legislative character in the least degree. ECCLESIAL INDEPENDENCE SHOULD BE GUARDED WITH GREAT JEALOUSY, WITH THE QUALIFICATIONS INDICATED IN THE FOREGOING SECTIONS. To form ‘unions’ or ‘societies’ of ecclesias, in which delegates should frame laws for the individual ecclesias, would be to lay the foundation of a collective despotism which would interfere with the free growth and the true objects

of ecclesial life. Such collective machineries create fictitious importances, which tend to suffocate the truth. All ecclesiastical history illustrates this.”

This principle of ecclesial autonomy is the reason each ecclesia must be allowed to choose its own statement of faith, as indicated by the following quotations from *The Christadelphian* magazine.

“Brother R.W. asks us to countenance the movement at the antipodes to ‘give up the word “Birmingham” and substitute “Christadelphian.”’ Our answer must be as before: We have no authority to do so. Neither has anyone else. THE BIRMINGHAM ECCLESIA CAN ONLY SPEAK FOR ITSELF; AND IT IS SO WITH EVERY OTHER ECCLESIA...THE PRINCIPLE OF ECCLESIAL INDEPENDENCE MUST BE JEALOUSLY GUARDED, and it is the beginnings of things that have to be watched. There is no desire on the part of the Birmingham ecclesia to impose its form of words on any ecclesia; but there can be no valid objection to any ecclesia adopting it if it sees fit. But to adopt this statement and give it a universal title that the Birmingham ecclesia conscientiously refrains from giving it, does not seem right at all...” (C.C. Walker, March, 1904, p. 113).

“There is one matter on which considerable misunderstanding exists abroad. It concerns the proposed liberty for an ecclesia to retain its own Statement of Faith, while accepting the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith as a correct definition of the First Principles to be believed. The existence of different Statements has come as a surprise to some, but the history of the Truth’s revival makes it plain...The majority of ecclesias thus use the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith and this in increasing proportion as new ecclesias adopt it. Some would insist on all ecclesias using the same Statement. There may be good arguments for this, but they are not conclusive. For one thing, WE CANNOT MAINTAIN ECCLESIAL AUTONOMY AND AT THE SAME TIME DEMAND THE ADOPTION OF A PARTICULAR STATEMENT. In any case, who has the right to demand it? Again and again in *The Christadelphian* it has been pointed out that ‘The Christadelphian Statement’ does not exist; there is no universal Statement” (John Carter, November, 1955, pp. 425, 426).

Fellowship Practice

As for ongoing fellowship practice, there are two keys based on general management principles:

1. We must manage our fellowship by establishing an acceptable general policy to cover practically all cases, and without institutionalizing exceptional behavior as if it were an essential part of that general policy. This general policy represents the community standard.
2. We must recognize that exceptional circumstances can arise and, as such, these unique situations must necessarily be dealt with on the merits of the individual cases with no possibility of establishing a general standard by which to judge these or other exceptional circumstances. Ecclesial autonomy allows us to deal appropriately with these special cases.

As for the first of these principles, the *Ecclesial Guide* defines the essentials of the

general policy. The discussions above highlight some of the important features of this Scripture-based policy.

As for the second principle, ecclesial autonomy dictates that the ecclesia involved should be trusted to handle its own situations as it sees fit. The ecclesia must balance its freedom to judge with care and concern for the wellbeing of the community. On the other hand, all else being equal, the community should accept the judgment of the ecclesia. There are rare occasions in which ecclesias, after a joint examination of the facts, come to different conclusions concerning a given case. The *Ecclesial Guide* carefully applies Scriptural principles to outline how ecclesias ought to behave in such circumstances.

With reference to this balance between autonomy and responsibility, Bro. Harry Tennant wrote, “We have responsibilities to our brethren elsewhere since we claim their fellowship and wish to exercise ours in their midst. We cannot therefore claim autonomy without also bearing responsibility. We should not seek to exercise the one without regard to the other” (*The Christadelphian*, May 2006, p. 164). To which Bro. Ken Sommerville added, “Each ecclesia is free to govern its own affairs up to the limits set forth in the scriptural principles summarized in our *BASF*, to which we have all given our willing assent” (*The Christadelphian*, June 2006, p. 204).

Exceptions to the general policy should be kept to a minimum. If they are not limited to truly unique and exceptional cases, then unity will be at risk.

Applying the Commandments of Christ

The *Ecclesial Guide* gives excellent guidance concerning ecclesias who differ in their recognition of individual brethren, with all interactions guided by Christ’s “golden rule”:

“41 – Involved in another Ecclesia’s Trouble

“An ecclesia may be at peace in itself, but may get involved in the troubles of another ecclesia, through an incorrect mode of action. THE SIMPLE LAW OF CHRIST, TO DO TO OTHERS AS WE WOULD BE DONE BY, WILL GREATLY HELP US TO TAKE THE RIGHT AND WHOLESOME COURSE.”

See all of Section 41 for Bro. Roberts’ application of this principle to every step of the process.

In all things concerning fellowship, we should be gracious and caring for one another, following our Lord and obeying his commands. We must manifest the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance” (Gal 5:22, 23).

It seems fitting to close this article with the following quotation from the *Ecclesial Guide*:

“43 – The True Secret of Success

“This lies in the rich indwelling of the word of Christ in each individual member of an ecclesia—a state to be attained in our day only by the daily and systematic reading of the Scriptures. When every mind is influenced by the Word, the worst rules work smoothly. When it is otherwise, the best will miscarry... When the

commandments of Christ are remembered and acted on (and Jesus says none who fail to do so are his brethren), it will be easy to carry out any system of rules. In fact, a small company where Christ is in the heart ascendant can get on best without set rules. It is only because this is not universal, and when members increase, that rules become necessary.”

In this way, we show ourselves to be true brothers and sisters in Christ, reflecting the image of our heavenly Father, filled with His word, doing His will, loving one another even as He and His Son have loved us.

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee

Exhortation

Why We Attend the Breaking of Bread

When we attend the Breaking of Bread, we do so out of habit. It’s only one reason we do it, of course. It’s a good habit, one of those good habits that must be cultivated in our lives. Our lives can easily fall prey to not-so-good habits, leading to nothing but grief and hardship, both for ourselves and for those around us.

In our attendance we see a custom of life, part of a cycle and rhythm that we have cultivated. But as has been well observed, to attend merely out of habit, though necessary, is not *in and of itself* sufficient.

Higher reasons

Why else, then, do we come to the Breaking of Bread?

- We come to worship, to direct our thoughts and to sing Godward.
- We come to reflect on things that are read and spoken.
- We come to reinforce one another.

We are here out of conscience, also. Our attendance is the answer of our conscience to an illuminating goad or prompt. The illuminated conscience tells us that we have a reason for gratitude, a reason to feel indebted, particularly for the great and dreadful price of our salvation. And so we come out of a sense of obligation, what we may call the sense of “ought”. I am here because I “ought” to be here; I owe it.

We come here also because we want our existence to mean something. The thought of a life with no meaning, no purpose beyond itself, and no prospect of continuance beyond the grave... we rebel against that at a deep level. And so we grasp for meaning, for a sense of purpose. We stretch after eternity. We come here because we know, and we want to remember, that life is not pointless.

We are here because our affections are captive. We love. We love God; we love the Truth that He has taught us. We are attached to, and have affection and love for, one another.

But there is still more, and it's an essential more.

Summoned to community

We are here because being here expresses what we are communally. What we will do this morning after the exhortation is called the communion, the “common union”. We do not merely occupy the same place, standing and sitting in unison as the presider directs us. We also put our hands to the same plate that carries the bread among us, and we drink of the wine that has come from one source. In the Gospel record of the meal in the upper room, the instruction was: “Drink ye all of it.” The meaning was not ‘Consume it to the last drop,’ but ‘Partake, all of you.’ The instruction underlined the ‘common union’.

I once heard a brother make the penetrating observation: “Christianity is not the religion of lone wolves, but of a flock.” The Lord taught his disciples the parable of the Good Shepherd, the wolves, and the counterfeit shepherds who abandon the flock (John 10). The flock recognizes and responds to the voice of the authentic Shepherd. A community that has recognized and responded to the divine summons is before us also in the well-known passage on the need for assembly:

“And having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. For he is faithful that promised. And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works” (Heb 10:21-24).

The picture is drawn from the Mosaic system of worship, in which the people obeyed the call to come to a central meeting place, present an offering, and be instructed. On the Day of Atonement especially, the people would stand *en masse* and watch the high priest, maintaining their gaze as he entered the Holy Place and then penetrated even deeper, behind the veil to the Holy of Holies. They would then wait until he reappeared. When that happened, they would greet him with great acclaim.

The willful sin

In Hebrews’ exposition of the Day of Atonement, there is an exhortation and restatement of the summons to come together: “Let us draw near with a true heart.” And other words aptly follow: “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering... let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.” Just as aptly, they lead to what is said next:

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (v 25).

In extraordinary contrast to that picture of coming together to worship, the very next words speak of willful sin:

“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He

that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (vv 26-31).

Immediately *after* the appeal to come together, the contrary picture is drawn of willful sin — some conscious, deliberate choice of conduct that effectively treats with contempt the offering of the Son of God, with all the grace that made it possible.

The passage has always caused concern. What is this “willful sin”? Is it a distinct misdeed that I commit after an uneasy inward argument between impulse (‘Just do it!’) and conscience (‘Don’t!’)? I’ve done things that answer that description; is this passage talking about me? Have I forfeited all by some abject failure?

Well, perhaps I have. But I don’t think that is what Hebrews 10:26 is about. In Romans 7, Paul describes that kind of inner dialogue, that contest that is lost as a powerful law of nature asserts itself over what we know to be right. It’s the every-day dialogue of the disciple’s enlightened mind. But the “willful sin” of Hebrews 10, in the immediate context, seems to be something else. What, precisely? The willful abandonment of the community’s life, walking away from it, “forsaking the assembly”, which was “the manner of some” (v 25).

Think about it. What behavior could be more lethal to the disciple, and the community of which he should be a part, than the chronic failure to show up? All kinds of less-than-admirable behavior could be replicated across an ecclesia’s membership, and you would still have a community that could function and fight the good fight, at least on some level. Wrong behavior, unhelpful behavior, disorderly behavior, all kinds of behavior. But the members may still come together. The collective organism would still exist; there would be a corporate life. Someone would still open the doors, turn on the lights, and adjust the thermostat, having confidence that others would soon arrive. But not showing up is one behavior that, when replicated across the entire community, kills it instantly. If I were to think hard, I might be able to come up with something else, but it’s not easy to imagine anything as immediately lethal to the ecclesia as all of the members “forsaking the assembly”.

When ecclesias die, it is more often a slow death, in stages. It does not come through the “willful” abandonment of everyone at once. Instead, it’s a slow work, of one, who then becomes a few, and then a few more, until... well, you get the picture.

If I forsake the assembly, I deliver a great blow not only against myself, but against the resolve of others who remain. I am their discouragement and their vexation. They do not benefit from what I could bring; and they trouble themselves over

the best way to coax me to change direction, sometimes going through the most excruciating and paralyzing exercises in the dissection of reasons and excuses, straining, even haggling over what may or may not be the perfectly-mixed stimulant from the spiritual pharmacy. Moreover, abandonment is an evil exhortation-by-example to others. It's a toxic statement to the young who may not have decided yet to take up the good fight. When we really think about it, its obvious devaluation of holy things, and its consequent destructiveness, become clear. We should never underestimate the gravity of "forsaking the assembly" (not showing up, to put it more colloquially) — not only for the individual, but for the community as a whole.

We eat and we drink

What, then, does it mean to come here? Why do we do it?

Well, the centerpiece of what we do on a Sunday morning is eating something and drinking something. Nothing is more elementary to life than eating and drinking; our lives depend on it. But in the Breaking of Bread we don't eat or drink enough to sustain the natural life of the body. Obviously, in this simple rite, we feed something else, so as to sustain a different type of life. And that manner of life is brought to mind by the quiet remembrance of one solitary life — one life that was given, one life that was sacrificed. In the strange and difficult words of Jesus, we eat, not natural bread, but bread from heaven; and we sustain, not natural life, but a kind of eternal life (John 6:47-58)!

That's why we're here. That's why we come: to remind ourselves of him, and to proclaim together that the food of immortality comes from Jesus. Some professing Christians, and others who direct hostile comment toward Christ, have imprisoned their understanding within a superstitious and silly literalism, failing to appreciate the figures of speech Jesus uses in John 6. But we grasp, even if imperfectly, the spiritual significance of the bread and wine to which he refers.

The apostolic custom

Why do we keep this communion meal each week? Because the New Testament has recorded that it was the apostolic custom:

"Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them..." (Acts 20:7).

This was the custom of that early ecclesia in Troas. Not once in a year, not once in a month, but every week. In some other religious assemblies, the communion or "eucharist" is not observed on a weekly basis; in others it is scarcely observed at all. As surely as baptism by immersion fell out of favor as the centuries passed, so also did the weekly participation of the whole community in the bread and the wine. It came to be restricted to the priests, and to be something that the common worshipers, or laity, would engage in only very occasionally.

So it is upon the first day of the week that we do this. And the Book of Acts isn't the only witness:

"Upon the first day of the week, let everyone of you lay by in him in store,

as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1Co 16:2).

Here Paul refers to the weekly assembly that was the custom in Corinth, as it later became in Troas.

I think we all recognize the way that the mind and heart work: if we were to be apart any longer than a week, we would have serious trouble maintaining any community life, any personal attachment to one another, and any experience (having a pulse) of the faith.

So the One who made the mind and heart knows how often people should be called together. He knows how often we need this, and His summons is to a cycle of life that He understands better than we. We follow the apostolic, Scriptural custom.

Thinking about the bread and the wine

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul takes up the subject of the communion, appealing to the discernment of people who ‘get it’:

“I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” (vv 15,16a).

It’s the common union in, participation in, fellowship in the sacrifice of Christ. In this sacrifice his soul, the lifeblood, was poured out (not spilled, please) unto death:

“The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (v 16b).

Again, we are parts of a whole; we participate in the whole; we proclaim our shared identification with the whole. We have assembled together with this purpose: to bless the wine and the bread, and to partake of them, collectively.

One exclusive loaf, and one exclusive cup

There is another interesting thought:

“For we being many are one bread” (1Co 10:17a).

We take the bread, and of course we think of the body of Christ, the body yielded in obedience to his Father throughout his life, and finally in the consummating act of being nailed to the wood. But we should do more: we should think of his “body” as the whole community of believers, of which he is the head. We could do worse than remember the motto, “E pluribus unum”: “In many, one.” It’s not only that we partake of the sacrificed body of the Savior, but that we also recognize and declare that we ourselves are “one bread,” one loaf, one body.

This thought leads to the next:

“We are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?” (vv 17b,18).

The Israelites were fellowshipers of the LORD’s altar; they “partook” of it.

Returning to the subject of idolatry that he had raised earlier, the apostle says:

“What say I then? That the idol is any thing, or that which is offered to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they

sacrifice to demons and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons” (vv 19,20).

If you partake of any other altar, he says, then you have fellowship with it, and with that “demon”, or idol, it purports to serve. You make yourself one with it and with your fellow worshipers. Paul goes on to say that one can’t drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; one can’t partake of the Lord’s table and the table of demons (v 21). Because of what it means to do it, it must not be done.

Thus he establishes that the Breaking of Bread is “closed”; what we do is exclusive. When seen from one angle, it is *inclusive*, in the sense of drawing many together in one. When seen from another, it is necessarily *exclusive*, precisely because it is at once a shared affirmation of the Truth and a shared repudiation of all that is not Truth. We do not worship both the living God and lifeless counterfeits. If we attempt it, the One God will have none of it. Duality of fellowship is antithetical to Him.

Sometimes we may hear it said, ‘When I partake of the bread or the wine, it’s between me and God; it has nothing to do with the person beside me.’ The notion is that it’s a vertical thing only, without horizontal or lateral dimension. The Bible says otherwise, as we see in 1 Corinthians 10. We’re in this together.

Examining ourselves

But doesn’t 1 Corinthians 11 say, “Let a man examine himself” (v 28)?

It does. When we assert that communion is not only vertical but also horizontal, we’re not seeking a pretext to look at the person next to us. I can’t see past the log lodged in my eye, in any case. The obligation is this: “Let a man examine himself” so that... what? So that he can eat worthily and not to his condemnation (v 29). And upon what would his condemnation turn? Just this: the failure to discern or recognize the Lord’s body. There it is again — “the Lord’s body” — the very phrase that makes us think simultaneously of the Lord’s offering of himself and of the community created out of that sacrifice. It is not only an individual thing, but a communal thing that we do, not only vertical, but also horizontal.

The will to be at the Breaking of Bread

Being here is an act of will, of “oughtness” and hope. It arises from a sense of what is fit, what is right, what is necessary. It is our answer to God, and our answer to one another. It expresses our sense of mutual obligation, to be discharged in the sight of God. We are obligated to one another as part of our obligation to Him and to His Son. If we lack a robust sense of mutuality, we have a problem, a problem that is hand-in-glove with “forsaking the assembly”.

“That which I delivered unto you”

1 Corinthians 11 is the passage we cite again and again at the Breaking of Bread. We must concentrate and really listen to the familiar words for this reason: their reading may come perilously close, sometimes, to a robotic recitation. If we listen carefully enough, we learn, or remind ourselves, that communion was so important as to be a matter of precise revelation to the apostle Paul:

"For I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you" (v 23).

He **describes** with care what those assembled in the upper room in Jerusalem **did** with care. Why? Because it is to be the faithfully repeated practice of those who would remember and proclaim the obedient Life that nourishes their own lives.

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (v 26).

"To shew" has the force of 'to proclaim with thoroughness'. The Lord's sacrifice must be proclaimed with great power and sufficiency, right up to the Second Coming. Such a proclamation necessarily takes the reflective soul through the Lord's resurrection, his ascension, and his mediation at the right hand of God, "till he come". All of these thoughts are prompted here as we take a little piece of bread and a little sip of wine.

The KJV "shew" of 1 Corinthians 11:26 recalls the Old Testament "shewbread", set out before the LORD God in the holy place of tabernacle and then temple. Evidently, the old English word may be traced to Martin Luther's choice of the German "shaubrot", as he tried to capture the sense of the Hebrew, "lechem panim" (bread of faces, i.e., presences). How apt that the bread of God, of which we partake, is the bread of *presence*, not the bread of *absence*! We partake of it, whenever possible, not just in the presence of God but also in the presence ("before the faces") of one another.

We must continue in this act of communal worship, as often as possible. In doing so, we "shew" the Lord's death "until he come".

Paul Schlicher (Moorestown, NJ)

The brothers and sisters [in the early centuries] could not contemplate the Christian pilgrimage without the regular Breaking of Bread and Drinking of Wine 'until he comes'. They ran fatal risks to break bread. Arranging brethren were smuggled into prisons to break bread with brethren awaiting martyrdom; in North Africa in the third century it was expected that the ecclesias would make this arrangement. At Antioch in Syria, early in the fourth century, there lay in prison awaiting imminent death Lucian, arranging brother of the local city meeting and loyal upholder of the unity of God. Stretched out in the stocks he broke bread for the last time with his fellow martyrs, the bread and wine lying on his breast, and he passing them from thence in the darkness to his brethren. A few years before Lucian died for his faith, 1,600 miles to the west in a provincial North African town, the brethren and sisters had been going without the Breaking of Bread owing to their leader's apostasy. Unable any longer to bear the lack of it, they met together in a time of fierce persecution, and broke bread all together as of old, and were all arrested and all died for their Lord.

J.B. Norris (The First Century Ecclesia)

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (14) Murmuring

*“Neither murmur (NIV ‘grumble’, NKJV ‘complain’) ye,
as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer”
(1 Corinthians 10:10).*

There is a story told about a strange boy named Herbie. He seemed like a bright baby, but for some unfathomable reason he never seemed to learn how to talk. As he grew up his parents took him to numerous physicians, psychologists and psychiatrists, but no one could find anything wrong with him to explain his disability. His family eventually resigned themselves to his condition. One day, on his 35th birthday, his mother decided to make him a special dinner consisting of his favorite entrée, a prime beefsteak. Unfortunately she became distracted and burnt the steak. Unwilling to waste such an expensive meal she scraped off as much of the burnt flesh as possible and served it to Herbie anyway. After taking one bite he let out a loud shriek and shouted, “This steak is horrible!” Stunned and amazed that he could actually speak after all these years, his parents implored him, “Why have you never spoken before?” Thereupon he replied, “Up until now everything has been fine!”

The story is of course apocryphal, but the point is genuine. We seldom think of praise when we are treated well, but are quick to complain when we feel any sort of slight or discomfort. As Christadelphians we are of course prone to the same human failings. Murmuring about issues in the ecclesia is sometimes our favorite hobby. It is more fun to complain about the quality of a Bible class than to actually think about how we can contribute and make it better. Grumbling can carry over into our marriages, our relations with our children, with our colleagues at work, and so on. Being constructive takes time, effort and patience. On the other hand, being a complainer is destructive and easy. The Lord God is not pleased with brothers and sisters who complain without just cause and who do nothing to correct wrongs with patience and love.

“Neither murmur (complain, NKJV) ye, as some of them also murmured (complained, NKJV), and were destroyed of the destroyer” (1Co 10:10).

Murmuring in the wilderness

We are familiar with the incidents that the apostle Paul refers to in his letter to the Corinthians. They took place shortly before and after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and were miraculously saved from the pursuing Egyptian host. At the oasis of Marah (bitterness) the children of Israel chided Moses about the undrinkable water (Exod 15:24).¹ It is possible that the waters there were fouled with, of all things, crude oil percolating upward and mixing into the aquifer. Whatever the cause, the children of Israel were angry and blamed Moses for their plight. Virtu-

ally forgotten was the miracle that had happened only three days before, as they escaped dryshod across the Red Sea with the trailing Egyptian army swallowed in the ensuing deluge. Where was their faith? Again, about a month after departing Egypt, they once again faced a crisis in the wilderness of Sin. This time apparently their food supplies, which they had packed with them on departing Egypt, were now exhausted. They had seen the miraculous plagues that had freed them of Egyptian bondage; they had witnessed the destruction of Pharaoh's chariots in the waters of the Red Sea; and finally they had experienced the wondrous sweetening of the waters at Marah that had alleviated their thirst. Yet all was forgotten as soon as new discomfort confronted them. They murmured, grumbled, and complained (all synonyms for the same human failing) about missing the bread and meat they were fed in Egypt. Later they complained even more vehemently:

"We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost — also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic" (Num 11:5, NIV).

I find it extremely difficult to appreciate how they could be so forgetful of the conditions under which they had lived in Egypt. How could they claim that their Egyptian masters had given them food "freely" (as in the AV and NKJV), or at "no cost" (NIV)?:

"And they [the Egyptians] made their lives bitter with hard bondage — in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor" (Exod 1:14, NKJV).

"But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us" (Deut 26:6, NKJV).

This is another trick that memory can play. Things in the past, no matter how painful, often get dressed up in retrospect when we are faced with new difficulties that are more immediate. How often do we complain about one thing only to be relieved of that burden, and then soon after begin to murmur about the new conditions? Suddenly the past seems more glamorous. Some possible examples:

- complaining about a job, then taking a new job and finding it is even worse;
- disliking where we live only to move someplace else, and liking it even less.

The real problem may be in us rather than in some external agent² (as I have sometimes found out in circumstances that have arisen in my own life)! I have known brothers and sisters who complained about their ecclesia, only to join another one and to experience soon thereafter shortcomings (real or perceived) in their new ecclesial family.

Returning to our consideration of the wilderness wanderings, the children of Israel then moved on and pitched camp at the Rephidim oasis.³ It is common when traveling in a desert to look for trees and other greenery; such a site would necessarily indicate that water was present. However, the Israelites were sorely disappointed: something was nourishing the vegetation, but nothing seemed available to quench their thirst. Why? It may well be that God was testing them to see if they had learned their lesson from the incident at Marah. Surely there could not have been vegetation in the desert without an aquifer being present.

Their reaction was sadly lacking in faith:

“Therefore the people contended with Moses... and the people complained against Moses... So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, ‘What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!’” (Exod 17:1-7, NKJV).

They wanted to kill Moses. Instead of blaming themselves for lack of faith, they decided it was all Moses’ fault. How often do we seek to find a scapegoat for our own complaints? Sometimes this can cause terrible strife in the home, family or ecclesia. Instead of focusing on how best to deal with a situation, we look instead for someone else to blame.

The grumbling of the Israelites increased when they arrived at Taberah.⁴ The children of Israel had been living on *manna* supplied by the Lord God from heaven. Imagine the task of feeding such a large multitude every day in the desert. The diet of *manna* was apparently tasty⁵ and must have contained all the nutrients for a healthful existence, but it was monotonous.

I could not quite appreciate their ingratitude until I was faced with a somewhat similar situation, though on a much smaller scale. Some 25 years ago I was working in a third-world country. Our business hosts were very gracious towards us, but for almost a month we were fed, with only two exceptions, exactly the same diet — for all three meals every single day. After our work was done, we flew to a more westernized city and immediately went to a McDonald’s and ordered a Big Mac, coke and fries! We simply had to have a taste of some American-style food. Before you become too critical of the children of Israel, try serving your family exactly the same food for breakfast, lunch and dinner for even a week.

The LORD God knows our failings and limitations, and we are assured He will not test us beyond the bounds of our endurance. So I suggest that it was not that the Israelites found their diet monotonous, but rather the manner in which they criticized the boring sameness of eating *manna*! They threatened to kill Moses, which can hardly be excused as a spiritual way to approach their concerns. We can learn a valuable lesson from this incident: even if our concerns are justified, we cannot solve our problem with anger and strife.

The Promised Land

The rebellious complaining reached a crescendo when the children of Israel were put to the ultimate test upon entering the Promised Land. This was what they had hoped for when they left Egypt — a national home for the people of Israel, one in which they could be their own masters and no longer slaves to anyone. But they wanted it handed to them without difficulty or pain, and that was not to be.

So often, when we are faced with a difficult task in the Lord’s service, how do we approach it? Do we only do it if there is no inconvenience, no price to pay personally? Do we only undertake it if, in a sense, it costs us nothing — if it is a *freebie*?

The spies sent out by Moses to observe the land and examine the prospects came back with a mixed report. Indeed the majority were dead set against proceeding,

all they could see were the difficulties and pain that the children of Israel would face in trying to conquer a mighty people. It was no small task in ancient times to take strongly walled cities. The defense had a tremendous advantage if they could store enough food and water to outlast a siege. If ancient records are correct, that is exactly why walled cities were common. It wasn't until the advent of the cannon that they became irrelevant.

Forgotten, however, by the spies who gave a negative account, was that the LORD God of Israel was on their side. If they only had the attitude of mind recorded by Paul:

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31, NKJV).

The same LORD who had miraculously freed them from Egyptian bondage and had freely given them food and water in the desert would be with them in battle against their enemies. The Israelites would have none of it — they were gripped with fear:

"And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, 'If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?' " (Num 14:2-4, NKJV).

Again, it is all too easy for us to criticize the children of Israel, and forget how often our courage fails in difficult situations. The Israelites were fearful because they knew that attacking an entrenched people would cost many lives. Even more naturally, they also were terrified of the potential consequences to their loved ones. Many of us would have courage if we were the only ones affected, but our courage fails when our spouses and children are endangered. Every dictator knows this and enforces his regime by threatening individuals *and* their loved ones.

Nevertheless, two of the twelve spies, Joshua and Caleb (an Israelite and a Gentile) were not afraid. They had factored into their observations the memory that the LORD had been with them and would not forsake them. This attitude of mind is epitomized in what Joshua said later:

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh 24:15, NKJV).

We mustn't let fear of pain or even inconvenience deter us from doing the right thing. If we do we may also be denied access to the Land of Promise — like the unfaithful generation that murmured against Moses and sought to return to the land of Egypt. Why would anyone wish to return to bondage?

Complaining is a universal human attribute. Praise is something we give in very small doses and on thin rations! I have often heard it said that if you praise someone you will only build up their ego and that is bad for their spiritual development, *but* why is it we don't mind criticizing someone and destroying their ego and self-esteem!

Trials are inevitable

Life is full of trials, as the apostle Paul was well aware. Not one of us can live a perfectly carefree life. We may suffer difficulties at school, at work, in our family relationships; we may know economic losses, illness in ourselves and loved ones, and — most painfully — the loss of loved ones. Paul was aware of all this when he told the Corinthians:

“No temptation⁶ (literally adversity) has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1Co 10:13, NKJV).

When the apostle wrote these words to the Corinthians, the trials they faced were indeed horrendous when compared to anything we might possibly have in North America at the present time. First-century Christians were exiled, persecuted, grievously tortured, crucified, and fed to wild animals in the arena. But Paul did not expect them to complain or murmur about their fate. God indeed does provide a means of ending any adversity; that way is often death. In fact, we must learn to appreciate and accept death as the ultimate release from the sorrows of this life!

The answer to trials

The apostle Paul did not leave the Corinthians in despair, but rather provided them with an exhortation of hope. He showed them, and naturally by extension us, how to endure all life’s difficulties without complaint:

“We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed — always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body... knowing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you” (2Co 4:8-10,14, NKJV).

Here is the answer to all life’s adversities, difficulties, disappointments, pains and sorrows. It is not whining, murmuring, complaining, or grumbling. Rather, it is to be filled with faith that the Lord God will ultimately provide whatever we need. To a faithful believer nothing — absolutely nothing — in this life can compare with the glory that God has in store for those who love him and keep His commandments.

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Notes:

1. Marah was the second murmuring. The first occurred on the other side of the Red Sea when they were in fear of Pharaoh’s approaching army (Exod 14:10-12).
2. “The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves” (William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, I, ii, 140-141).
3. The site of Rephidim is uncertain; some place it at Feiran Oasis in southwest Sinai.
4. “Taberah” literally means “burning”.
5. “And it was like white coriander seed, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey” (Exod 16:31).
6. Strong’s number 3986 literally means putting to the proof (*i.e., testing*); it is synonymous with “adversity”.

Bible Study

“Two by Two”

“Missionaries”, money, and morality: Why Jesus sent out preachers two by two

“Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two” (Mark 6:7).

“The Lord appointed seventy-two [or ‘seventy’, according to the KJV] others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go” (Luke 10:1).

In both the small inner circle of the apostles, as well as the larger group of disciples, Jesus followed the pattern of sending his followers out on their missions in pairs.

This pairing up is discernible even in the order of the names of his apostles, as given in Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:16-19; and Luke 6:14-16. (With a couple of slight variations, the Twelve seem to be divided into six pairs: Simon Peter and Andrew his brother; James and John his brother; Thomas and Matthew; Philip and Bartholomew; etc. The last four — James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus/Judas son of James, Simon and Judas Iscariot — seem to be “mixed and matched” a bit; maybe they changed working partners at some point.)

Another practical example of this “two by two” grouping is found in Acts 13:2-4, where Barnabas and Saul (later called Paul) are set apart for the work of preaching. Later, when they go their separate ways in the continuation of this work, each takes along a companion, so that the “two by two” pattern is preserved while the total workers are doubled: Barnabas taking Mark (Acts 15:39), and Paul taking Silas (Acts 15:40).

Again, when the apostles in Jerusalem needed to assess the situation in Samaria, they sent not one but two investigators, Peter and John (Acts 8:14). There are many other instances of this approach in the New Testament. It seems that, as a matter of general practice, the apostle Paul was scarcely ever alone.

Why was this necessary?

Why was it thought necessary, or at least very desirable, that the disciples go on their missions in pairs?

One answer is found in a rather unlikely place:

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm... Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves” (Eccl 4:9-12).

Two working together can often accomplish more than the same two working separately. Sometimes an extra pair of hands, or an extra perspective, can surmount a problem that might otherwise stymie one person. *“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Prov 27:17).*

The writer of Ecclesiastes seems to envision two men on a journey in a distant land. Often the way is fraught with perils. If one falls into a pit, then the other is there to lift him out, or perhaps even to go for help. But if a single man falls into such a pit, or breaks a leg, or has some other accident, then he might very well perish where he falls, for no one will know of his plight.

The same may be true of individuals in ecclesial life:

“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:1,2; cp Job 4:4; James 5:14).

But that man, or woman, who walks alone may have no one who is even aware of his or her spiritual problem. So there is no one to offer a gentle helping hand when a moral crisis looms, or an overwhelming temptation or trial pushes the believer to the brink. It is good to have those around us who know something of our faults and our weaknesses. They can help us through the times when we stumble and when we fall. When we need rebuke, their words may wound us, but we know they are our faithful friends, and only desire to help us (Prov 27:6).

Ecclesiastes 4:11 introduces an idea that may appear incongruous to us today, when speaking of the relationship of friends:

“If two lie down together, they will keep warm.”

However, in cultures other than our own, people of the same sex will often sleep next to each other for the sake of warmth, with no hint of impropriety such as we might feel (cp the “two people in one bed” of Luke 17:34). This lesson may be driven home to us in times of crisis. Mountain climbers have found themselves stranded and unprotected from brutally cold weather, and have shared their body warmth so as to survive until help could arrive, or the storm passed.

So in this verse, and in these circumstances, the “warmth” we need may be more than physical; it may be emotional or spiritual. It may mean having someone who truly cares. In a cruel, callous world, what a blessed help he or she can be. As Matthew Henry put it, “So virtuous and gracious affections are excited by good society, and Christians warm one another by provoking one another to love and to good works [Heb 10:24].”

And Ecclesiastes 4:12 continues the thought:

“Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.”

Two men in a lonely and out-of-the-way place can take turns keeping watch, so as not to be surprised by ambush. Thus they can defend one another much more effectively than any one man, alone, can defend himself (cp 2Sa 10:11).

In traveling and working “two by two”, with a companion, there may be comfort, encouragement, and safety.

But are there other reasons why “two by two” is a good rule to follow? Or, to put it another way, what *bad* things can happen if we *don't* go about our work “two by two”?

First, there are dangers from...

Money...

“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust [‘stewards’: AV] must prove faithful” (1Co 4:2).

Several of Jesus’ parables emphasize this necessity of proving oneself “faithful” in the handling of money.

“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?” (Luke 16:10-12).

“ ‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities’ ” (Luke 19:17).

On the other hand, the servant who did not use his master’s money correctly was rebuked and punished and sent away (Luke 19:20-26). A very similar parable in Matthew 25:14-30 ends with these words for the man who misused his master’s funds:

“And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (v 30).

Finally, in Luke 12:42-48, the Lord draws a contrast between:

- (a) the faithful servant (the steward of his master’s property, who administers and dispenses that property prudently) and
- (b) the unfaithful servant (the steward who, thinking his master will not return soon to check up on him, “begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk”).

That is, he misuses his position, as well as his master’s property, to serve his own desires, both in hurtful treatment of other servants and in his own self-indulgence.

But what does this have to do with the “two by two” scenario? As it turns out, a good deal.

First of all, there is the story of Acts 6. When the apostles realized that the administering of the funds and resources of the new ecclesia in Jerusalem would take a good deal of time, they decided to choose seven men. These brothers, evidently endowed with wisdom both practical and spiritual, were assigned to handle the finances and see that the needy were cared for properly and fairly. They did this with great distinction, while still attending to the ministry of the Word of God as well. This is a wonderful exhortation in itself.

Seven brothers were chosen to oversee one another, providing checks and balances to what might otherwise be unfair or unscrupulous use of resources by a single man left to himself.

This observation raises an interesting question: did anyone keep such a watchful eye on Judas Iscariot, the only one of the Twelve, so far as we know, to function as treasurer? And if not, does this partially explain his great fall?

Furthermore, when the ecclesias in various places raised and contributed funds for the care of the poor, especially at Jerusalem, were such funds entrusted to one brother only? No, not at all. Notice the words of the apostle Paul:

*“And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches **to accompany us** as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift” (2Co 8:18-20).*

We see that it was important not only to act righteously and honestly, but also to be seen by witnesses to do so.

The same pattern is seen again in 1 Corinthians 16:2,3:

*“On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the **men** you approve and send **them** [Notice the plurals here] with your gift to Jerusalem.”*

Paul knows that one man alone should not be trusted with a large sum of money. Once again, the rule of “two by two” is enforced. One man may indeed be honest; in fact, he most certainly *should* be honest! (As it has been said, “Character is what we do when no one is watching.”) But how much easier it might be, in the company of another brother or brothers, to be perfectly honest.

In a situation like this, the support and help and companionship are just as necessary, as in the more positive ways described earlier. It is of use to the brother who might otherwise be tempted, as Judas was, to take money out of the common purse for his own sinful indulgences. And surely, if we look at ourselves squarely in the mirror, we ought to admit that we need such encouragement, just as much, if not more, to avoid the wrong as to do the right.

Bro. Harry Tennant, in *Ye Servants of the Lord*, stresses the wisdom of having a second person oversee the work of the ecclesial treasurer:

“There should be an auditor. It is not that dishonesty is suspected but that good stewardship is required of us. Accounts properly kept, with an initialed record of all collections, properly receipted bills, the bank books, and cash in hand properly produced to the brother appointed as auditor, will lift the matter into its rightful place. Jesus said, ‘The witness of two men is true’ — and, oddly enough, he said that in the treasury [John 8:17,20].”

There is an interesting Old Testament example of auditing also. In Ezra 8:26-29, Ezra entrusts the leading priests with the duty of transporting from Babylon to Jerusalem all the treasures, silver, gold, and bronze, allocated for the rebuilding of the temple:

“Guard [all the treasures] carefully until you weigh them out in the chambers of the house of the LORD in Jerusalem before the leading priests and the Levites and the family heads of Israel” (v 29).

After their journey, upon arriving at Jerusalem, the narrative states specifically that:

“Everything was accounted for by number and weight, and the entire weight was recorded at that time” (v 34)...

...so that it might be proven, before witnesses, that not one ounce of all the treasures had been stolen or even misplaced.

Widows’ houses

There are other negative examples of what can happen when the “two by two” format is ignored, and when individuals — acting on their own, without proper supervision and oversight — are tempted by large sums of money:

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Therefore you will be punished more severely” (Matt 23:14).

Widows, particularly, might be left alone with resources they are ill equipped to manage, since their husbands may have handled this function previously. And they may have no one to advise them fairly and honestly. A woman in such circumstances might easily become the victim of an unscrupulous man, who prevails upon her to sell her house and goods, and donate the money to his favorite ‘charity’, meanwhile flattering her on what a wonderful work she is doing. Or such a man, while pretending to take care of her property, may dispose of assets to his own advantage.

It may be said, ‘Surely such things would never happen with Christadelphians!’ There is a measure of pride in such protests, however — as if to say, ‘We are all better than that!’ But bitter experience tells us otherwise. So it is better if we say, ‘Surely such things *should* never happen with Christadelphians!’

In the world around us, a growing approach to fundraising in recent years has been for large institutions (and ones not so large) to encourage bequests. In other words, if you are a widow living on a small and fixed income, it may not be possible to give much to the work of the Truth. But you can remember your favorite cause in your will, and by this means charities can raise quite large sums.

Surely there is nothing wrong with this approach, provided that the funds are used for the purposes as advertised. A Christadelphian organization, whose administrators are accountable to the body of believers and operate with proper oversight and accounting methods, is a perfectly acceptable charity. And in such cases, yes, by all means, a bequest would certainly be in order.

But there may be other ‘organizations’ which operate basically as fronts for individuals — groups which are not recognized and supported by significant numbers of ecclesias, which may not comply with all the laws of the country in which they are organized, or which may lack appropriate checks and balances of a financial nature. Brothers and sisters should realize that good words and flowery speeches do not take the place of honest dealings. They should realize that, even in the brotherhood, promises are not always the same as practices. Therefore they should be extremely hesitant to entrust their resources, either by contributions now or by bequests later, to such an organization.

One mark of such organizations is that they frequently change their names, a bit like shady investment companies.

We ought to remember that there could be those, even in the brotherhood, who teach *“things they ought not to teach — and that for the sake of dishonest gain”* (Tit 1:11).

This personal “gain” certainly includes material wealth, but is not altogether restricted to that. “Gain” can also mean position or power or prominence. Men intent on personal advantage, whether it is increase in riches or increase in prestige, are more concerned with what they can take from their followers than with what they can give to them. When the preacher looks upon his preaching simply as a career, and a means to personal advancement and comfort, he is surely in a most perilous position. Over time, he may come to see the money he raises as less God’s money and more his. And over time, again, his attention to his own present advantage may replace his faith and hope in the future. Like the hypocrites who pray in the street corners to be seen of men, he already has his “reward” (Matt 6:5). But what a paltry reward it is!

Of course, we are all required to “examine ourselves,” but this is made all the easier when we know that others are charged with examining what we do as well. It is always good to avoid unnecessary temptations. None of us are immune to the pride that whispers in the ear: ‘You *deserve* this’, or ‘You of all people are indispensable to this work’, or ‘You won’t get caught’, or ‘Why not? *Everybody* does it!’

The warnings in God’s Word should be a light to disperse the shadows of darkness and pride, and bring the wisdom of humility:

“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov 16:18).

“When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom” (Prov 11:2).

In addition to the problems of money, and the love thereof, there are other dangers that await us if we forget the Scriptural advice: “two by two”. There is the danger of...

Unchecked self-indulgence

For that matter, this may be made even worse by too much easy money.

For the 'loner', the availability of money, without strings or oversight, may actually bring into play this second deadly threat. Plenty of money on hand, ease of travel, and lack of supervision — in short, being a long way from home and other brethren, in a distant land, and with full pockets — may all too easily translate into various indulgences, including especially sexual immorality.

In third-world countries, beset with a pervasive poverty that many of us can scarcely imagine, money in the hands of visitors can be a terrible temptation. It is not just that the possessor of such money may yield to the temptation to use it wrongly. It is also that young women in such places may be seduced by a promise for themselves and their families, implicit or explicit, in such wealth. Thus they may be led into sins from which they might otherwise refrain.

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be... lovers of money... abusive... slanderous, without self-control... treacherous... They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires" (2Ti 3:1-4,6).

This warning should not be restricted just to young sisters in third-world countries. Even in relatively well-off countries, money and prestige, coupled with the allure and 'romance' of 'doing God's work' at the same time, can be a practically irresistible combination to some.

Money, and what we imagine it might bring us, can just as easily lead brothers into other terribly dangerous sinkholes:

"In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up" (2Pe 2:3).

It is an observable and well-chronicled phenomena, at least in non-Christadelphian circles up until now: slick religious salesmen who prey on the latent sympathies of others, and the natural guilt that may be felt by those in more well-off countries and circumstances, when they see so much suffering elsewhere in the world. For such men, the temptation may prove irresistible to:

- (a) inflate the number of 'conversions' by quick-and-easy baptisms, without proper instruction;
- (b) give the well-to-do masses their most effective 'sob stories';
- (c) tell them of the desperate needs here and there; and then
- (d) open their coffers to receive a flood of donations small and great: the rich widow's bequest and the poor widow's mites alike.

But could the same techniques be tried upon Christadelphians? Again, we are revolted at such a thought. But the little voice asks us, 'Are we inherently better than the world? Are we immune to the blandishments of the flesh? To the lusts and desires of human nature? Let him who stands take heed lest he fall!'

Dare we even suggest it? Could some Christadelphians "exploit [us] with stories they have made up"?

A better way? Yes

On the other hand, let it be said as plainly as possible: there *are* organizations with long records of honesty and integrity (who don't, for example, change their names and reinvent themselves every few years). These organizations are directed by many different brothers, chosen and agreed upon by large numbers of ecclesias. These brothers have long records of fair dealings, and no reasonable complaints may be made against them. Nor do they profit in any way from their 'labors of love'. These brothers are not romantic 'loners', going their own way, but brothers who work "two by two", or in larger companies, overseeing one another in their work. These are the modern equivalents of the seven brothers of Acts 6. Their organizations, with long track records, include:

- Christadelphian Bible Mission
- Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas
- Christadelphian Bible Mission (Canada)
- Australasian Christadelphian Bible Mission
- Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation
- Joy Fund
- Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes
- Christadelphian Meal-A-Day Fund

...and others [see the page of charitable organizations in this magazine, p. 566].

Read their reports, and their careful and measured appeals for support. They are characterized by calmness and dignity, and their funds are properly accounted for, with full public reporting of accounts.

These committees are organized in such a way that, even *if* some one member were to fall into the sin of misappropriating or misusing funds, or abusing the trust given to him, for personal and illicit purposes, his brothers would be positioned to discover and repair the loss.

Jesus said, "*By their fruits you shall know them*" (Matt 7:16,20). It is entirely possible for those who wish to contribute to the Lord's work, in preaching or welfare or other areas, to evaluate the organizations around them, and make wise choices based on good principles.

The danger is very real

But, on the other hand, there are those who may be described quite differently:

"With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed — an accursed brood! They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness" (2Pe 2:14,15).

"They have rushed for profit into Balaam's error" (Jude 11).

Such New Testament passages point us toward the tragic story of Balaam the false prophet of Numbers 24; 25; 31; etc. There we see the Spirit's warning that the love of money may go hand in hand with the indulgence of every sensual passion. Such passions may well be the object of enjoyment for the false prophet,

as well as the means by which he beguiles others out of their money as well as their good names.

Money, sex and power — what an unholy trinity!

God's commands, advice and examples are all for our learning. We may see the worst of sins documented in the pages of the Bible, only to turn away in disgust, declaring to ourselves that such things will never, *ever*, be even “named” among the saints (Eph 5:3). But we ignore such warnings at our own peril.

We can be so naïve. Sometimes it takes us quite a while to learn otherwise. Sometimes it requires the bitter lessons of some terribly bad examples, before we begin truly to see the wisdom of God's appointments. It was there, all along, had we but paid attention.

Some general rules are surely in order, something like the following.

Rules for mission work

1. No individual brother should be traveling (and certainly not living) in missionary areas all alone, without proper supervision and companionship. If extraordinary circumstances require that such must be the case once in a great while, it should be for the shortest possible time only.
2. All money given to Christadelphian charities ought to be properly receipted by the organizations, and audited by independent brothers, and reported fully and openly to the brotherhood.
3. No novices or recent converts (cf 1Ti 3:6) ought to be entrusted alone in distant lands, and/or with large sums of money.
4. Brothers ought to work, and earn their daily bread as much as possible (cf even the apostle Paul in Acts 18:1-3; 20:34,35; 1Co 4:12; 1Th 2:9; etc.), and learn responsibility in managing their own financial affairs, before ever being considered as potential “missionaries” or “welfare workers”, and given stewardship over other people's money.
5. All of us should be warned, again and again, that merely professing the name of Christ is never a guarantee of righteous actions, or even of good motives.
6. Young sisters especially should be advised sternly against accompanying a brother alone on any sort of ‘work’, ‘preaching’ or otherwise, if it takes them away from the company of other brothers and sisters.
7. Young people should be exhorted and warned about the specious arguments by which young women (especially, but not exclusively) might be lured into dangerous places, and indiscreet and finally sinful actions. What might those arguments be? They include, among others:
 - (a) ‘Sweetheart, we are as good as married already; it's only a matter of time.’
 - (b) ‘As soon as this or that happens, we will get married. So there's no need to wait. We can enjoy one another right now.’
 - (c) ‘After all, a marriage license is just a piece of paper. Adam and Eve didn't apply for one.’

- (d) 'What *is* sex, and what is *not* sex anyway? Or, 'It's okay so long as we stop just short of real sexual intercourse.'
- (e) 'What's the big deal? Everybody does it!'
- (f) 'Don't worry: we can be forgiven. David was an adulterer, and a murderer, and God forgave him.'
- (g) 'Look at the young couple in the Song of Songs; they weren't married.'
- (h) 'Look at Solomon himself, and all his wives and concubines. We don't need those old "Victorian" standards any more.'

Conclusion

There are indeed good reasons for the Bible pattern of going abroad only with other companions, of exercising discretion in interacting with those of the opposite sex, and of handling funds only with proper safeguards. For there are many things done in secret, when others are not looking, or cannot look, which ought not to be done, even by — especially by — brothers in Christ.

"Wisdom is justified of her children" (Matt 11:19) ["proved right by her actions" (NIV; cp Luke 7:35)].

*"Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out **two by two**" (Mark 6:7).*

*"The Lord appointed seventy others and sent them **two by two** ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go" (Luke 10:1).*

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Current Events

Global Financial Turmoil

Saturday, October 11, 2008, turned out to be a surprisingly memorable day for me. I had been analyzing the financial mess in which the world now finds itself. My reaction was: "This is a really big deal! This is a moment of immense global and historic significance, a pivotal event in world affairs." In my lifetime, there have been only three events that have struck me immediately and forcibly with their profound significance. In my reaction on October 11, at a relatively early stage in this current drama, I don't imagine I had too much company. But for me, this was Eye Opener #3.

I had a lot more company back on September 11, 2001. From the unforgettable events of that day, it was immediately obvious that the consequences would be monumental in scope. This was my personal Eye Opener #2. (My Eye Opener #1: the 1967 Six Days War.)

1967, 2001, and 2008

It is useful to trace the links among these events. The Arab-Israeli War of 1967 fueled Arab resentments toward Israel and, more and more, toward Israel's pri-

mary sponsor, the United States. This paved the way for the long ugly “shadow war” of Arab terrorists against the West, but once again primarily against the USA. And an undercurrent of this conflict is the financial struggle between the oil-producing Arab nations and the oil-guzzling West.

On October 24, I heard a financial expert say, “We have witnessed stock market downturns in the past. These are cyclical events. The markets have always rebounded within a couple of years, before soaring to even higher levels. Don’t worry. Be happy. Sit tight.” By this time, I thought it was obvious that this is far more serious than any downturn we have witnessed previously; this involves fundamental, structural upheaval in the worldwide financial order. Evidently not as obvious as I had thought!

But later that day Alan Greenspan, former chairman of the US Federal Reserve, for 18 years the most powerful man in the entire financial world, described this situation as a “once-in-a-lifetime credit tsunami.” The following day the president of China spoke of the urgent need to overhaul the global financial structure.

Iceland, Russia, and foreign exchange reserves

Back on October 9, I had heard that Iceland was in terrible financial shape and was asking Russia for a multi-billion-dollar loan. Why Russia? Because the nation which Iceland calls its “new friend” has the third largest foreign exchange reserves in the world, after China and Japan.

What are foreign exchange reserves? The money, in foreign currencies, earned from selling goods and services to other countries, and stashed away for later use.

Iceland’s “old friends” are in no position to lend money. These countries have insufficient funds to meet their own needs as they attempt to rescue their domestic economies. But Russia, like some Middle Eastern countries, has been accumulating cash by selling oil. Meanwhile, China has been successfully selling massive quantities of manufactured goods. The transfer of wealth from the West to China and the Middle East in recent years is staggering.

External Debt

Another useful measure of a country’s financial health is its external debt. This is that part of a country’s total debt, owed by individuals, companies and governments, to creditors outside the country. Look at the external debt owed by six countries: USA, UK, Germany, France, Italy and Spain. Collectively, this group is approximately \$38,000,000,000,000 in the red at their “friendly” foreign lenders. *That is \$38 trillion!* And among themselves, they have on hand only \$1.2 trillion in total foreign exchange reserves. In other words, these Western nations owe about 30 times more than they have available to lend!

Meanwhile, China and Russia, together, have twice as much foreign currency tucked away in their “savings accounts” — about \$2.4 trillion. And their combined external debt is less than \$750 billion. That’s only 3/4 of a trillion dollars compared to the six nations’ 38 trillion. In other words, they owe 1/50 of what the Western nations owe!

Some simple math

Let's reduce this to some simple numbers. Some years ago US Senator Everett Dirksen famously said, tongue in cheek, "A million here and a million there, and pretty soon you're talking real money!" His point was: we need to have numbers that mean something to us personally before we can truly understand.

Let's reduce all the numbers above by a factor of \$1 billion; in other words, let's lop off nine zeroes. Here's what we have (all figures are approximate):

Nations	Foreign exchange reserves (What they have)	External debt (What they owe)	"Cash on hand" as a percentage of debt
1. USA, UK, Germany, France, Italy, and Spain	\$1,200	\$38,000	3%
2. China & Russia	\$2,400	\$750	320%

Think of it this way: If you needed to borrow, say, \$100 until payday, whom would you ask for a loan? Friend #1, who has a mountain of debt that he can't afford? Or "Friend" #2, who has in ready reserve several times more money than he owes?

Economic power is the key

In the real world, economic power has always been the cornerstone of all other power, whether political or military.

For decades, most of us in the West have enthusiastically adopted the philosophy of "Buy now; pay later." We did so both collectively and individually. 'Later' seems to have arrived. And the payment process could be exceedingly painful.

As goes America's economic strength relative to its competitors, so will go its political and diplomatic influence, and eventually its military power. Consider one outcome of this gradual shift of power and influence from West to East: humanly speaking, *the very survival of the nation of Israel has depended almost entirely on the support of the USA*. How do you suppose China (never mind Russia) views this tiny nation? At best, with indifference.

We might well ask: with all its financial woes, how long will it be before the United States cannot sustain its military presence in the Middle East, or its position as implicit protector of Israel? One day, the military consequences of the financial disparity outlined above could prove earthshaking!

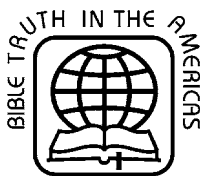
Philip Jones (Calgary, AB)

"Never fear the shadows. They simply mean there's a light shining somewhere nearby" (Ruth Renkel).

"To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom" (Bertrand Russell).

"Pure gold does not fear the furnace" (Chinese proverb).

"Courage is fear that has said its prayers" (Karl Barth).



Bible Mission News

Bolivia La Paz, Two Years On

It's been two years since we left Bolivia, after a 16-month stint there on behalf of the CBMA. When we arrived in May 2005 there were interested friends at various stages of personal development in their faith, and a database of contacts mainly concentrated in the city of La Paz, but no meeting hall and no contact among those different people from all walks of life. During the course of our stay, a small ecclesia of four members was formed and a meeting hall established in the city.

When we left in August 2006 only two of those members were still in the country: one sister had moved to Spain to find work and another had gone to stay in Australia for a while, leaving two brothers behind. These two continued to meet faithfully and helped to sustain the little group of keen contacts who kept attending, aided later by the sister who returned from Australia. However, in 2007, a year after we left, another couple came to work fulltime for the CBMA again, to bring some leadership and energy into the tiny group. We returned to the city at that time to help introduce Bro. Jacob and Sis. Fiona Styles to the job and to the country. Now, in July 2008, we were back again and able to see how things had progressed in their first year.

One immediately obvious change was to the Styles family: baby Zadok is now busy toddler Zadok and has been replaced as the baby of the family by little Judah. Judah was born in April and, thankfully, has proved to be a very easy-going little guy (as much as babies can ever be described as "easy"). However, little boys are hard work and the Styles therefore have their hands pretty full!

Their work during the last year has been challenging and varied:

- (a) learning the language,
- (b) getting to know the city and understand the culture,
- (c) maintaining the ecclesial activities,
- (d) giving instruction classes to a couple of women, and
- (e) bringing people closer together through social events and work for the Truth.

They have even had to conduct the first-ever Christadelphian wedding ceremony in South America, that of Bro. Martin and Sis. Laura. [*See Tidings, Feb. 2008, p. 91*] All of this they have done with great dedication and wisdom. They have been an invaluable support to the ecclesia and its wider circle of contacts.

Within the ecclesia, the immediately obvious change has to do with children. The Sunday school has more than doubled in numbers! Not only has it grown, but it has also flourished after enjoying the concentrated expertise of Sis. Carolyn Thiele from Australia for 6 months. During the last year Carolyn had brought in a more structured and disciplined approach to the Sunday school, and had introduced a point system award scheme.



La Paz Sunday School

She had also gotten the children to learn the books of the Bible, as well as proofs taken from *The Christadelphian Instructor*. Points are awarded each week for attendance, proof and behavior; once the children have earned enough points, they are awarded a prize. The difference in the motivation and attitude of the children was tremendous! The Sunday school is now being run mainly by Sis. Laura, who returned a while ago from her stay in Australia. Whilst the children are kept busy with their lesson and activity, their parents attend the Bible class in the main room. Thus the Bible class attendance has increased too.

La Paz, Bolivia Bible class

One of our objectives for the week was to help run a weekend of special talks on “The Way, the Truth and the Life”. Adverts were run in local papers, all of the contacts on the database were contacted, and we managed altogether to hand out 10,000 leaflets



in the city center. We were pleased that on the first evening, a Friday, about 15 visitors came to listen and took away armfuls of literature on a variety of topics. However, the Saturday evening talk had a rather disappointing turnout. Only five people came this time, although we were thankful for them!

We suspected that the low numbers were because of a couple of other events happening in the city on the same night. Firstly, the city center was full of processions of people celebrating the beginning of the university term. Anyone with much of a party bent was therefore out on the street joining the madness. Anyone without a party spirit but also without a strong conviction was put off attempting to cross the city in all the traffic chaos. And anyone with a religious interest was off to experience the hugely advertised event of the year: Pastor Cash Luna in action in the city arena.

Cash Luna is an evangelical “preacher” of great fame throughout the Latin-American “Christian” world. He books huge stadiums around the continent, and promises to book the Holy Spirit too, to stage an enormous gathering of people in front of whom he gets one person after another to come up and testify to extraordinary acts of healing in their lives. The whole event is carefully choreographed and stage-managed; his whole act is so obviously phony that it seems incredible to us that people go along. But they do, by the thousands, and during the course of the evening, fall down full of the “Holy Spirit”, becoming overwhelmed with emotion, and generally making ridiculous spectacles of themselves. Sobbing individuals claim to have been cured of anything and everything from paralysis to AIDS, from blindness to cancer.

Cash Luna’s appeal is enormous and his coffers even greater. Maddeningly for us, his show was taking place on the very weekend that we were there too. We had known this a few weeks’ prior to arriving and had been tempted to change our advertising to the theme “The Still, Small Voice”! We certainly felt like a very small voice in a very noisy world — which, really, we are. Yet we trust that the work is the Lord’s, and that He will continue to work through our weakness to call a people for His name.

So the work goes on. Some people come and go, and this is at times demoralizing and depressing, but a handful of others, like the wheat in the parable, grow to produce precious fruit. It is slow and labor-intensive work in somewhat dry and thorny ground, baked hard by years of Catholic tradition and full of the choking influences of material pursuits. Nevertheless, the little ecclesia has potential to continue growing, nurtured by the Styles, supported by many others, and above all cared for by our Head.

*Steve and Sally Jefferies,
CBMA support workers for Bolivia*

A Difficult Question in Mexico: When are More Christadelphians Coming?

This may be a sign of our advancing years, but we now find ourselves reflecting more and more upon the events and circumstances of each day. You can imagine, therefore, our thoughts on our last day in Guadalajara, Mexico, after spending four weeks assisting the ecclesia in various preaching and pastoral activities. On that occasion, we spent the day rejoicing with the angels and the ecclesial members as we witnessed the baptism of Luis Macías on Sunday, April 6, 2008. The Breaking of

Bread service that followed with our new brother in Christ was a moving experience for all of us, but especially for ourselves, since we had met on three occasions with Luis in order to carry out a systematic and extended interview. During our stay in Guadalajara, we presented a study series on the Body of Christ, talks and



Baptism of Luis Macías

workshops on the prophecy of Obadiah, as well as classes on the relationship between Jacob and Esau, and Israel and Edom. We also did a review of present-day events in the Middle East. Some dedicated time was well spent, with several of the brothers in the area of “mutual improvement” and Bible study.

From Guadalajara, we traveled to Mérida, capital of Yucatan, famous for its Mayan culture and amazing archaeological sites. Jutting into the Gulf of Mexico, this peninsula separates the state from the rest of Mexico. A Christadelphian family of three were our hosts and, from their home, we witnessed to their friends and Bible correspondence contacts for a period of about two weeks. During Bible discussion, you get a feel for this isolation and a sense of the many aspects of ancient superstitions that dominate its culture. The family of three, our family in Christ, is in need of regular support by other Christadelphians. They much appreciate receiving the tape-recorded talks from the Los Angeles Hispanic Ecclesia in California.

A three-hour bus ride, heading southwest from Mérida along the western coastline of the peninsula, took us to the port of Campeche and more house Bible classes with correspondence course contacts. Here we met Damaris Cuevas, who has been studying the Bible for 25 years. Last August she found what she had been searching for on our website, www.labibla.com.

There are no Christadelphians in Campeche; as we left, you can guess what she and her husband asked! Reflecting on this, we felt sad because we simply didn't know what to say. There is a need for Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters to help out in various ways with the Latin American effort by keeping in touch with many contacts; contact linkmen's addresses below if you can assist in this area.

Bill and Carol Rawson, CBMA fieldworkers
Jim Hunter and Don Luff, CBMA Linkmen for Mexico
jdhunter@gte.net luffs@sympatico.ca

ThisisyourBible.com

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 previous one and has additional features both in front and behind the scenes. Last month's *Tidings* carried a very informative article about how your ecclesia can use the website to manage contacts. Again, please take a look at what great things can be done using the website.

The Survey Question for October was "Stock Market Meltdown — Sign of Jesus' Return?" The people who answered the survey said this:

- 64% said, "Yes, but it is only one of many signs in the world today pointing to his return."
- 15% said, "No, it is just a normal economic blip."
- 12% said, "Yes, the economies of the world are going to collapse just before Jesus returns."
- 4% said, "No, the Bible has nothing useful to say about the world's economy."
- 5% said, "I don't know."

In addition to the survey, the booklet "Christ is Coming!" was read 236 times, up 45% from the previous month.

Next month we hope to share the details of some good news: three more baptisms connected to website activities. These usually start with website contact, continue with correspondence sources, and then lead to a referral to an ecclesia (or a CBM if in an outlying area).

Want to help?

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

Sis. Jan Berneau,
CBMA/CBMC Publicity

"Preach the gospel at all times — if necessary, use words."

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

DETROIT LIVONIA, MI

We rejoice in the marriage of Bro. Michael Bell and Sis. Abi Kitchen on September 6, 2008, and ask that the Lord's blessing be on their newly united walk in Christ. Sis. Abi has subsequently transferred her membership from the Harrowgate, UK, Ecclesia.

Jeff Adams

HAMILTON BOOK ROAD, ON

The Hamilton Ewen Road Ecclesia has been blessed with the problem of overcrowding, and has been able to purchase a small school on three acres of property — where we are planning to build, God willing. As of now we will be known as: Hamilton Book Road Ecclesia. The address will be: RR #2, 522 Book Road, Ancaster, ON, Canada, L9G 3L1.

Ian Macfarlane

MENDOCINO COUNTY, CA

This year we had our annual campout at Lake Mendocino over the Labor Day weekend. This turned out to be a better time for everyone. We had three days of spiritual object lessons, led by the brothers, and plenty of food. We encourage everyone to check this out and register early for next year, as space is limited. From northern California, we send our heartfelt greetings to all the brothers and sisters.

Sis. Debra Phenicie

NANAIMO, BC

On Sunday morning, October 26, 2008, we joyfully baptized EVELYN LUDVIGSON into the saving name of Jesus. Evelyn is the daughter of Bro. Tom and Sis. Mary Alexander. We welcome our new sister in Christ to join us in the work of the Lord in this part of the vineyard. Again, we extend our thanks to the several brethren from our local area ecclesias, who have supported our speaking and proclamation work. Please note that correspondence should now be sent to the undersigned.

Kevin Daniel

NORFOLK, VA

It is with great joy in the Lord that we report the following baptisms, occurring since 2006: CHRIS BOWMAN, HAILEY RANKIN, WANDA SETZER, ERIC LANGE, JESSICA PITTMAN, SUQUOIA MOSBY, MELANIE BOLDUC, and AL STURGEON. We also are pleased to announce the following transfers: Bro. Andrew Culver (Brantford, ON) and Sis. Alana Markwith (Petersburg, VA). We also welcome into fellowship Bro. Tom and Sis. Cheryl Hamlin. Finally, joining us from the Unamended community are Bro. Pharoah and Sis. Maria Mosby, Bro. Fred and Sis. Deanna Hartman, Bro. David Porterfield, Bro. Joshua and Sis. Amy Lagasse, and Bro. John and Sis. Becky Laben.

Mark Giordano

SUSSEX, NB

We are very grateful to Bro. Mark Carr (Toronto West, ON), who led our Thanksgiving gathering study on “Joseph — I Seek my Brethren”. Our visitors this year were Bro. and

Sis. Peter Edwards (Derby Bass St, UK), Bro and Sis. Alan Baines (Rugby, UK), Bro. and Sis. David Pride (Cranston, RI), Bro and Sis. Jim Boyko and family (Boston, MA), Bro. and Sis. George Jackson (Toronto East, ON), Bro. and Sis. Ben Saxon and family (Mississauga West, ON), Bro. and Sis. Philip Baines and Sis. Jenn Baines (Cambridge, ON), Sis. Amanda Baines (Kitchener/Waterloo, ON), Sis. Susan Norman and family (Toronto, ON), Bro. and Sis. Michael Buxton-Carr, Bro. and Sis. Steve Snobelen and family, Bro. Nathan Crawford and Bro. Phil Camplin (all from Bedford, NS). With the additional children, over 70 enjoyed a wonderful weekend of fellowship. Our next study weekend will be April 25-26, 2009, God willing, and the speaker will be Bro. Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON). We also anticipate our first Young People's Weekend, May 15-17, 2009. Details will be supplied soon.

Cliff Baines

CD on Conscientious Objection, etc.

The website Christadelphianco.org has been closed for several years. Most of the information that was available there has been compiled into a computer CD by Bro. Nathan Giordano. The CD also includes references and resource material on jury duty, politics and voting. The CD may be obtained from Bro. Andrew DeLorenzo, 10 Pine Brook Lane, # E-1, North Springfield, VT 05150. Or you may call 802-886-5462, or email andymart@vermontel.net.

Tapes available

We have two outstanding sessions, available upon request, recorded in both the DVD and CD format.

Session #1: Bro. Carl Parry: "The Priest Upon the Throne":

1. "I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy"
2. "I will be the Glory in the midst of her"
3. "The stone with seven eyes"
4. "The Lord of all the earth"
5. Current events: "Watchman, what of the night?"
6. "Wickedness in Shinar"
7. Exhortation: "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch"

Set of six classes (DVD) \$40.20; Exhortation (DVD) \$6.75; Set of six classes (CD) \$19.50; Exhortation (CD) \$3.50; Postage will be added to your package.

Session #2: Bro. Roger Lewis: "From Eden Lost to Eden Restored"

1. "From the foundation of the world"
2. "The mysterious tale of two temples"
3. "Bold initiatives for Benedict XVI"
4. "Dramatic moves in the Gaza Strip"
5. "At the time of the end"
6. "Startling developments in Europe"
7. "New alignments in the Middle East"
8. Exhortation: "Simon of Cyrene"

Set of seven classes (DVD) \$46.90; Exhortation (DVD) \$6.75; Set of seven classes (CD) \$22.75; Exhortation (CD) \$3.50; Postage will be added to your package.

Bro. Reuben Washington, christadelphiantapelibary@verizon.net

Minute Meditation

The Lord's Servant Must Not Quarrel

*"The Lord's servant must not quarrel;
instead, he must be kind to everyone."*

"Constant kindness can accomplish much," said Albert Schweitzer. "As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust and hostility to evaporate."

At a time when we are facing opposition within our family, in our ecclesia, or in our brotherhood, it is wise to remember to be kind. When we believe that our position on a matter is being challenged, we may rise to the defense by speaking in a manner more forthright than kind. Sometimes we may say things we wish we could take back. It is even possible to be correct in the position we have taken and yet sin in the way we treat those who oppose us.

Don't we have an obligation to speak the truth, to show people where they are wrong? It is quite right to stand up for what we believe, but we should do so with kindness. Paul gives us good advice as to how to handle those who oppose us. "Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance, leading them to a knowledge of the truth." We need to try to work with those who disagree with us by teaching them gently, as Paul says. We need to help them to a clearer understanding because we care for them and want them to be saved.

We all need the wisdom of Solomon, and sadly, we do not have it as we ought. He tells us, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly. The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good. The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit."

We can be ever so sincere in standing up for what we believe, but if we crush others rather than working to heal them, we are not doing right. We all know how sincere Saul of Tarsus was as he "was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." Although the Lord may not strike us down and speak to us from heaven, as he did to Saul, we need to let the inspired word touch our hearts and cause us to stop and consider our ways. No one was more sincere than Saul, but no one was ever more wrong. He was not ignorant of the Old Testament writings — he had been taught at the feet of Gamaliel — and yet he did not understand the purpose of God in Christ. He thought that eliminating Christians would be pleasing to God.

Isaiah warned Israel, “Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word: Your brethren that hate you, that cast you out for my name’s sake, have said, Let the Lord be glorified, that we may see your joy; but it is they that shall be put to shame.” Those in Isaiah’s day who thought that they were glorifying God by casting out some of their brethren, those who thought that their actions were in God’s name, were wrong. They were going to be put to shame. We need to realize that there is a danger that we can think we are acting on God’s behalf when we are not.

Solomon tells us, “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.” Most folks think they are right. Since it is possible to be completely sincere and still be sincerely wrong, we need to be kind and gentle with those whom we consider wrong. Brian Tracy has said, “You will regret many things in life, but you will never regret being too kind or too fair.” Gently instructing those who oppose us, working together to gain a better understanding of the issues that divide us, and giving differing opinions a fair hearing, is a kind and fair process. More than that, it is a process that helps all parties, including ourselves, gain a better understanding. After a careful analysis, we may find to our surprise, as Paul did, that some of our viewpoints are not entirely correct.

Jesus teaches us, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” We all want peace in our family. We want peace in our ecclesias and in the brotherhood. The LORD ponders our hearts. He knows all that is going on in our lives. There is no doubt at all that He tests us by arranging circumstances to see if we are kind and gentle and easy to be entreated in our dealings with others, even when under stress. Whatever we do must be done in such a way as not to sow discord, for again it is Solomon who tells us, “These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him...” The seventh item Solomon lists is “he that soweth discord among brethren.”

Sowing discord is not spelled out in our statement of faith, but it is plainly something the Lord hates. We had better be careful that we are peacemakers and not stirring up strife in our dealings with others. Let us always remember Paul’s admonition: “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

Robert J. Lloyd

The Theme of the Book of Revelation

The theme of the Book of Revelation is simple enough. Regardless of disasters, despite sufferings, in spite of the seeming victories of the gross and the wicked, there is a power in righteousness that will ultimately prevail. It is a frivolity to scan through the pages of the Apocalypse for hints and clues as to the likely date of doomsday, when the real point of the Book is not the date itself, but the urgent need to straighten up while there is still time!

(Author unknown)

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

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

JANUARY 2009

- 3-11 Sydney (Australia) Youth Conference.** Studies led by Bre. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA), James Rasmussen (Australia), and Craig Blewell (Westville, So. Afr.). Details and registration information at www.yc09.net
- 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
- 17-18 San Francisco Peninsula** Study Weekend. Senoir and Community Center, Belmont, CA. Bro. Kurt Ruhland (Cambridge, ON): "The Children of Lot." Contact Sis. Ruth Ann Gover, 650-260-2694 ragover@aol.com

FEBRUARY 2009

- 14,15 Saanich Peninsula, BC** Study Day. Bro. Kyle Tucker: "The Believer and the Diabolos". Three classes starting 1 pm; supper at 5:30. Sunday school and exhortation on Sunday. Activities for children. Contact Bro. Duncan Kenzie 250-655-3228 djkenzie@gmail.com
- 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

MARCH 2009

- 28 - April 4 Florida Bible School** Bradenton, FL. Bro. Dennis Paggi (Verdugo Hills, CA): "Spiritual Growth — Bible Metaphors for our Daily Walk"; Bro. Bradley Butts (Denver, CO): "Lessons from the Levites"; Bro. Andrew Walker (UK): "Life Before the Flood". Contact Bro. Walt Dodrill waltdodrill@msn.com 727-528-1197 or Sis. Diane Jennings diane@dianej.net 727-290-6702

APRIL 2009

- 25,26 Sussex, NB** Study weekend. Bro. Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON)

MAY 2009

- 1-3 Central Coast Women's Weekend,** Cambria. Sis. Jane Tunnell (San Diego, CA): "My Husband, My Lord" (Theme: Preparing ourselves as the Bride of Christ). Sunday

memorial meeting conducted by No. Co. SLO Ecclesia. Contact: Sis. Ann Crouse 805-239-3517 or RoanCrouse@aol.com. Cost \$150; \$50 non-refundable reservation; enrollment due by January 15th, 2009, and may be limited to 40.

15-17 Sussex, NB Young People's Weekend

JUNE 2009

27 - July 3 Terra Nova Bible School Newfoundland, Canada. Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "Prophetic Images" and Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): "King Josiah: the Young Reformer". Online registration and full details at www.terrannovabibleschool.com or call Bro. Gary Hynes 709-747-2750

JULY 2009

25 - August 2 Midwest Bible School Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Bro. Matthew Blewett (South Africa): "On the Road with the Ark"; Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD): "Job: The Spirit of a Just Man Made Perfect"; Bro. Matt Norton (Australia): "The Return of Christ". Contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 44943 Yorkshire Drive, Novi, MI 48375 248-462-5740 mike.live@gmail.com or visit www.midwestbibleschool.com

AUGUST 2009

8-14 Niagara Falls Bible School Brock University Campus, Ontario. Adult classes: Bro. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA): "Spiritual Finances — Lessons from Scripture about Money"; Bro. David Smith (Sunderland, UK): "The Family in Genesis". Teens: Bro. Lloyd: "Lessons from Daniel"; Bro. Smith: "The Moral Maze — Finding a Way Through". To register and for information see www.nfcbs.com or contact Bro. David Brierley david.brierley@sympatico.ca or 416-236-5295

The Intention to Please God

It was this general intention [to please God in all their actions] that made the primitive Christians such eminent instances of piety, and made the goodly fellowship of the saints, and all the glorious army of martyrs. And if you will here stop, and ask yourselves, why you are not as pious as the primitive Christians were, your own heart will tell you, that it is neither through ignorance nor inability, but purely because you never thoroughly intended it. You observe the same Sunday worship that they did; and you are strict in it, because it is your full intention to be so. And when you as fully intend to be like them in their ordinary common life, when you intend to please God in all your actions, you will find it as possible, as to be strictly exact in the service of the Church.

And when you have this intention to please God in all your actions, as the happiest and best thing in the world, you will find in you as great an aversion to everything that is vain and impertinent in common life, whether of business or pleasure, as you now have to anything that is profane. You will be as fearful of living in any foolish way, either of spending your time, or your fortune, as you are now fearful of neglecting the public worship.

(William Law, A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life)

The Christadelphian Tidings Index for Volume 71 (2008)

Editorials, G. Booker

America's Presidential election, <i>J. Hill</i>	471
Coals of fire	419
"For kings and all those in authority"	523
Only sixty years	59
Sacrifice of the wicked	159
Seeing God's face	211
Times that try men's souls	107
Treasure hunt	367
'When lame men dance'	263
Why the delay?	3

Exhortations

At the Last Supper, <i>C. Edwards</i>	216
Common meal and the right paw of fellowship, <i>G. Booker</i>	6
Eighty-year journey, <i>J. Banta</i>	55
Instruments of God's help, <i>M. Bull</i>	475
On a scale of 1 to 10, <i>D. Styles</i>	112
One, <i>J. Fry</i>	369
Rules for holy living, <i>A. Merg</i>	424
Touching, <i>G. Brown</i>	268
Where can wisdom be found?, <i>J. Coutts</i>	162
Why we attend the breaking of bread, <i>P. Schlicher</i>	537

Series and Special Issue

Apologetics — the hard questions, <i>D. Levin</i>	62,280
Ephesians, Paul's letter to (concluded), <i>T. Barling</i>	8,72,116,166,219,272,372
Hebrews, thoughts from (concluded), <i>C. Edwards</i>	18
Little words that mean a lot, <i>J. Bilello</i>	12,77,120,171,223,275,388,429,478,544
Women of Matthew 1 (special issue), <i>G. Booker</i>	315

Articles and Bible Study

Adorned in fine white linen, <i>P. Bartle</i>	434
Even Christadelphianism can kill us!, <i>C. Snobelen</i>	437
Job's monsters, <i>E. Archard</i>	176
Pastoral letters of Paul, <i>C. Edwards</i>	483
"Two by two", <i>G. Booker</i>	549

Ecclesial Study

Care Line & Caring Network, <i>B. Lawrence & M. Styles</i>	381
Fellowship practice of Central ecclesias, <i>Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Com- mittee</i>	526
Jury duty summons, <i>K. Sommerville</i>	489
Why has Christadelphia survived?, <i>K. Camplin</i>	376

History

CGAF and Christadelphians, historical interaction, <i>P. Hemingray</i>	497
Early history of California Christadelphians, <i>G. Hensley</i>	21,229,441
President Truman and the State of Israel, <i>A. Booker</i>	289
Washington's battle over Israel's birth, <i>R. Holbrooke</i>	294

Reflections

"Answer not a fool", <i>L. Richardson</i>	257
Bread of deceit, <i>A. Maclaren</i>	28
Come, follow me, <i>L. Walters</i>	192
Electronic witness, our, <i>J. Livermore</i>	454
Gordon, Sis. Arlene, <i>W. Booker</i>	506
"If you want a better world"	30
Kindness or Christianity, <i>H. Whittaker</i>	27
Nature of the bread and wine, the, <i>R. Roberts</i>	395
"No doubt!", <i>S. Grazda</i>	194
Prince returns, the, " <i>Bithiah</i> "	237
Seven things the LORD hates, <i>A. sister</i>	127
Tamar the upright, <i>E. Styles</i>	239
"Then the land had rest from war", <i>G. Booker</i>	505
Unjust extremes, <i>I. Collyer</i>	455
Webster, Bro. Julian	504
What then?	125
Who is "the Mighty God"?, <i>G. Booker</i>	241
Will he come?, " <i>Abiathar</i> "	190

Youth

Austin Leander, a baptism in, <i>H. Hill & E. & F. Bearden</i>	285
Baptismal confession, <i>J. Sleeper</i>	452

Book Review

<i>Bible and Science</i> — Design vs. Chance, <i>Matt Drabenstott</i>	31
--	----

Current Events

Global Financial Turmoil, <i>P. Jones</i>	558
---	-----

Archaeology

Seal of Zedekiah's secretary found in Jerusalem.....	503
---	-----

Music in Worship, *K./J. Curry*

Brown, David, brother and hymn writer.....	180
Design and purpose of our hymns	84
“God moves in a mysterious way”, <i>G. Booker</i>	184
“Lord, dismiss us...”	384
“Loud organs, His glory forth tell”, <i>B. Burr</i>	386
Music in Scripture, <i>B. Burr</i>	182
Purpose in singing hymns	83
Seven angels, seven trumpets, <i>B. Burr</i>	84
“Shine”, songs for kids.....	86
Walker, C.C. and hymns.....	82

Letters

Bathsheba's guilt or innocence?.....	451
Considering God's providence.....	447
Did David deliberately “reason out” his sin?	34
Ecclesial Guide, the.....	450
“Everlasting Father”, the	448
Jamaica, letter from	36
Scenes in a country cemetery	34
What is ours to know	35
Who is “the Mighty God”?	447

Bible Mission

Argentina	299,396
Argentina, personal account, <i>F. Gilardoni</i>	132
Bahamas	243,398
Bangladesh, <i>Ron Easson</i>	141
Bolivia.....	91,297,561
Brazil.....	457
Bring power of internet preaching to your ecclesia.....	459
Chile.....	299
Costa Rica	244,509
Ecuador.....	87,396,399
El Salvador	244,396
Faith at work.....	249,302
Guatemala.....	246
Guyana	508
Guyana Bible School.....	403

“I don't think I could...”, <i>Kathryn Pearce</i>	39
Jamaica.....	89,249
Mexico.....	244,245,402,563
Panama	246,458
Peru	297
Searching the internet for truth, labiblia, <i>B. Raimil</i>	133
St. Lucia.....	248
Stone(s) the builders rejected, the, <i>L. Birchall</i>	302
Thisisyourbible website	38,93,131,250,300,511,565
Urgent appeal for resident missionaries	94
Welfare in Africa and beyond, <i>A. Walker</i>	135

Miscellaneous and Poems

Alford, Henry	76
Baptismal prayer, <i>J. Curwen</i>	451
Breaking of bread, early centuries, <i>J.B. Norris</i>	543
“By their fruits ye shall know them”, <i>R.J. Lloyd</i>	210
Destruction of Sennacherib, <i>Lord Byron</i>	101
Dress of young sisters, the, <i>J. Roberts</i>	418
Faith and action, <i>R. Roberts</i>	215
Fruit of the Spirit, the, <i>C. Attridge</i>	236
God or Mammon?, <i>J. Thomas</i>	518
God's “kings and priests”, <i>R. Roberts</i>	496
“Great music never complains”	170
Intention to please God, <i>W. Law</i>	572
Keeping a balance, <i>R. Roberts</i>	106
Kingdom of men, <i>R. Roberts</i>	474
Lebanon: the more things change..., <i>W.M. Thomson</i>	411
Lincoln: turning an enemy into a friend, <i>D.K. Goodwin</i>	423
“Live quiet and peaceable lives”, <i>A.H. Nicholls</i>	522
Making melody in the heart, <i>T. Fuller</i>	181
My journey, <i>M. Garner</i>	126
My neighbor's Bible, <i>D. Keeling</i>	456
Name of Christadelphian, the, <i>J.M. Evans</i> ..	151
Prayer.....	71
Purpose of trouble, the, <i>R. Roberts</i>	179
Revelation, theme of the book.....	570
Roads of Rome, the, <i>P. Borchsenius</i>	81
Rough parts of the road, the, <i>M. Beattie</i>	464
“Take a little honey”, <i>C. Lamb</i>	284

"They made ready the Passover", G. V. Growcott.....	218
"We are brothers", M. Henry.....	255
What shall I do then with Jesus?, A.B. Simpson.....	44

News

Austin Leander, TX.....	146,305,513
Barrie, ON.....	196
Bedford, NS.....	146,253,305,405,513
Brantford, ON.....	96,146,253,405,462,514
Broughton, Jamaica.....	196
Calgary, AB.....	405
Cranston, RI.....	253
Detroit Livonia, MI.....	146,305,567
Double Springs, AL.....	45,147
Echo Lake, NJ.....	45,405
Edmonton, AB.....	462
Georgetown, Guyana.....	254
Guadalajara, Mexico.....	305
Guatemala City, Guatemala.....	96
Hamilton Book Road, ON.....	567
Honesdale, PA.....	96,514
Jasonville, IN.....	254
Kamloops, BC.....	147
Kingston, Jamaica.....	406
Lima, Peru.....	406
London, ON.....	407
Los Angeles, CA.....	147
Manitoulin Island, ON.....	196
Mendocino County, CA.....	197,567
Meriden, CT.....	198,514
Milford Road, MI.....	515
Mississauga West, ON.....	96
Montego Bay, Jamaica.....	148
Montreal, QC.....	149
Moorestown, NJ.....	198
Nanaimo, BC.....	199,567
New Westminster, BC.....	200
Norfolk, VA.....	567
Orlando, FL.....	200
Ottawa, ON.....	515
Paris Avenue, OH.....	149
Portland, OR.....	200
Port Maria, Jamaica.....	407,515
Prince George, BC.....	201
Raleigh/Cary, NC.....	97
Round Hill, Jamaica.....	516
San Diego County, CA.....	46

San Francisco, CA.....	150,407
San Francisco Peninsula, CA.....	201
San Salvador, El Salvador.....	46
Sarasota, FL.....	150,201,255
Saskatoon, SK.....	47
Seattle, WA.....	97,306
Southern New Hampshire, NH.....	201
St. Lucia.....	408
Sussex, NB.....	408,567
Thousand Oaks, CA.....	150,409
Toronto Church Street, ON.....	306
Toronto East, ON.....	47
Troy, IL.....	462
Vancouver, BC.....	516
Verdugo Hills, CA.....	48,462
Vernon, BC.....	98,307
Wachusett, MA.....	151
Wichita Falls, TX.....	99,202,463
Worcester, MA.....	409,516

Announcements and Notices

Anderson family, the.....	409
Bible talks online.....	203
Brothers' weekend.....	144
Camp Hashawha.....	307
CGAF Gathering.....	124,165,228
Christadelphian Heritage School.....	202
Conscientious objection, etc., CD.....	568
Isolation League.....	202
Mid-Atlantic Bible School.....	48
New England Bible Study Weekend.....	463
New England Fraternal Gathering.....	410
Southwest Bible School.....	99
Tapes available.....	568

Minute Meditations, R.J. Lloyd

"Be ye angry and sin not".....	256
"Fool so feish".....	204
How much do you care?.....	308
Life is a temporary assignment.....	517
Life is a test.....	412
Life is a trust.....	465
Lord's servant must not quarrel, the.....	569
Love never grows old.....	49
She did what she could.....	100
That's all I need to know.....	152

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