

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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No. 1

Editorial — Why the Delay?	3
Exhortation — A Common Meal and the Right Paw of Fellowship, <i>George Booker</i>	6
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (12) The transcendent love of the Lord Jesus, <i>Tom Barling</i>	8
Bible Study — Little Words that Mean a Lot: (5) Gossip, <i>John C. Bilello</i>	12
Bible Study — Thoughts from The Letter to the Hebrews: (3) Pictures of Suffering and Survival, <i>Colin Edwards</i>	18
History — Robert Strathearn — Early California Christadelphian, <i>Gordon Hensley</i>	21
Reflections: Kindness or Christianity?, <i>Harry Whittaker</i>	27
Bread of Deceit, <i>Alexander Maclaren</i>	28
“If you want a better world”	30
Book Review — Design vs. Chance, <i>Matt Drabenstott</i>	31
Letters — Scenes in a Country Cemetery; Did David deliberately...; What is ours to know; Letter from Jamaica	34
Bible Mission News — Thisisyourbible.com; “I Don't Think I Could...”	38
News & Notices.....	45
Minute Meditation — Love never grows old, <i>Robert J. Lloyd</i>	49
Coming Events	50

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

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A New Year

The arrival of a new year always suggests endings and beginnings. We think of this as we do "the readings". Three endings:

1. *In Job a faithful old man lives through great trials, finally coming to accept God's ways, even when he cannot fully understand them.*
2. *Malachi ends the prophetic books in hope of the coming Sun of Righteousness.*
3. *And John closes our year with a prayer: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."*

And three beginnings:

1. *What could be more fitting than "In the beginning..."?*
2. *...the blessed man who is like a tree, delighting in God's law?*
3. *...and the old story we love to tell, of Jesus, "the son of David, and the son of Abraham"?*

Thanks...

...to those who contribute... subscriptions, gifts, articles, news, announcements, letters, proofreading, good advice, kind criticism, and other labors — often above and beyond the call of duty.

Minor changes

Careful readers will note some minor style changes. We hope soon to publish, on the website (www.tidings.org), a sort of "style guide" for those contributing articles and other items. Meanwhile, don't stop sending them anyway — that's what editors are for!

Editorial

Why the Delay?

As we begin a new year, it is appropriate to think of milestones and changes — to look to the past *and* to look to the future.

What will 2008 bring? We cannot know, in any detail, or with any degree of certainty. But we *can* know, with certainty, that... one day... Jesus Christ will return to this earth.

We also can know that, with every passing day, we are closer to that return. The message of Christ's imminent return is as urgent as ever. The certainty of his Second Coming is clearly good news for a world in distress: there is not a country on this earth that is not suffering from confusion, hardship and turmoil. Our world needs God's help now.

Why then the apparent delay in the Second Coming?

When asked privately by his disciples, "Tell us, when will this [the destruction of the Temple] happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Mat 24:3), Jesus gave several examples and predicted specific events that would be perceived and understood as indicating a soon fulfillment of his prophecy. Near-term fulfillment was the authenticating mark of a true prophet (Deut 18:21,22). And Jesus was proved true. Spoken around AD 30, the parts of the Mount Olivet prophecy about the overthrow of Jerusalem were fulfilled in AD 70.

Jesus' complete prophecy as recorded in Matthew 24-25 also included a number of parables:

- (a) the budding fig tree,
- (b) the unwatchful householder,
- (c) the wise and wicked servants,
- (d) the wise and foolish virgins, and
- (e) the servants entrusted with money.

All were calculated to teach his disciples their need to "watch", that is, to be ready, to be prepared, and to be occupied in his work, while the Lord was away (Mat 24:42,44; 25:13).

But for how long? No one knew, not even Jesus — at that time (Mat 24:36). The wait for this fulfillment has been going on nearly two thousand years. Did the parables indicate such a long delay?

One parable did speak of a delay. Concerning the ten virgins "who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom" (Mat 25:1), the story goes on to say:

"The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep" (Mat 25:5).

Jesus did not state the reason for the delay. However, it did have the effect of allowing slumber to overcome both the wise and the foolish virgins. Assuming that the correct interpretation is that Jesus is the bridegroom or master (cp Luke 5:35; 12:35-38; Rev 19:7), what might be the reason(s) for his delay in returning to the earth?

Consider the story of the death of Lazarus told in John 11. When Jesus had been informed that “the one you love is sick” (v 3), he said: “This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it” (v 4). So Jesus was very clear on his purpose and priorities. The next two verses are quite enlightening:

“Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days” (vv 5,6).

Having emphasized his love for the whole family — which is repeated from v 3, and which is pointed out again in v 36 (“See how he loved him!”) — the text indicates that Jesus deliberately delayed his coming to them.

Why? “For the glory of God”, as mentioned earlier. And for the instruction of his disciples, as the story unfolds. When Jesus finally said, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going to wake him up” (v 11), the disciples were glad to hear that recovery was imminent (v 12). Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe” (vv 14,15). So the delay was for the benefit of the twelve.

The delay was also for the benefit of Martha and Mary when Jesus finally arrived. Both in turn, when they went out to meet him, said with evident reproach: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died” (vv 21,32). Yet Martha was quick to add: “But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask” (v 22). The ensuing verses are wonderful to read:

“Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’ Martha answered, ‘I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ she told him, ‘I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world’ ” (vv 23-27).

Jesus knew how Martha and Mary would be tortured by his delay. He also knew that their belief in the resurrection was solid. Yet he held back in order to let their faith grow. He stretched them to the limit. He took the sisters to the tomb. With mourners wailing, bystanders questioning (“Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”), and a body starting to smell after four days of death, Martha could hardly believe Jesus’ instruction to take away the tomb’s stone door (vv 34-39). But Jesus reminded her: “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” (v 40). Simply, but wonderfully, the text then says: “So they took away the stone” (v 41). This was **great** faith!

That Jesus was always looking for his Father’s wisdom in this situation is evident

from his acknowledging prayer:

“Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me” (vv 41,42).

Who knows what blessings came to the people in Perea during those two extra days of bewildered uncertainty before Jesus set out for Bethany? We do know of the saving belief that was generated at the graveside in the next few moments, to the glory of God. For when he finished his prayer, Jesus “called in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, ‘Take off the grave clothes and let him go.’ Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him” (vv 43-45).

To summarize the reasons for Jesus’ delay here, it was for:

- (1) the glory of God,
- (2) the instruction of the twelve apostles,
- (3) the increasing of the faith of Martha and Mary, and
- (4) the convincing of the tomb bystanders.

The last three are clearly benefits for people who thought that Jesus had done wrong in delaying his coming to save Lazarus.

This is exactly the point made in 2 Peter 3. Having written that in “the last days” there would be scoffers saying, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised?” (vv 3,4), Peter went on to write:

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (v 9).

In other words, any delay on Christ’s (or God’s) part is for the purpose of saving men and women. For Peter, there was no doubt that “the day of the Lord *will* come” (v 10) as promised, along with the dissolution and destruction of the world of sinful men, in order to make way for “a new earth, the home of righteousness” (v 13).

But eventually the Day will come. So Peter exhorted his readers:

“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed [‘hasting unto’: KJV] its coming...” (vv 11,12).

This “hasting unto” is alternately rendered “earnestly desiring” in the RSV. Like the wise virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom, and whose keenness and preparation was represented by their extra oil, we should be eager for — and prepare ourselves and others for — that day.

For them, there was no problem with delay. And for us, there should be no problem either.

George Booker

Exhortation

A Common Meal and the Right Paw of Fellowship

*“Rich and poor have this in common:
The LORD is the Maker of them all”
(Prov 22:2).*

Some ecclesias have regular “pot luck” meals, either after memorial meeting or at other get-togethers. At other times, they may encourage “basket lunches” or “sack lunches” — that is, with every individual or every family bringing his or their own.

Whenever reasonable, the sharing of a common meal — a pot luck — is a good idea, because it reminds us that we are, all together, one family in the Lord.

As the name “pot luck” suggests, you take your chances. After all, you are not there for the natural food but the spiritual fellowship.

This accords with Paul’s implied advice in 1 Corinthians 11:

“When you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk” (vv 20,21).

The implication is, of course, that keeping one’s food to oneself is not a good thing — for it may call attention to the variations of position and means among different members of the ecclesia.

The expression “pot luck” is an apt one. It recalls the old Cockney expression, “You pays your moneys and you takes your chances” — which in turn echoes “caveat emptor” (“let the buyer beware”). It may also have referred to various gambling activities. In this case, “pot luck” means you bring your own food, “sacrifice” it to the common good, and then “takes your chances” on what else is available.

This emphasizes an important aspect of ecclesial life altogether — much more than a common meal in the ecclesial hall. We all bring our resources, our talents, our time, and our very beings to the ecclesial “table”. There we share what we have for the wellbeing of others, and we rely on others for our sustenance and support also. Are we prepared to do this without complaining, or begrudging others, when they seem to get the better end of the deal? Are we, in fact, eager to see that others benefit — if possible — from what we bring... more perhaps than we seem to benefit by the exchange? If not, then we may have forgotten, not just 1 Corinthians 11, but 1 Corinthians 12 as well:

“There should be no division in the body, but its parts should have equal concern for each other” (1Co 12:25).

In an old series of Peanuts comic strips, Snoopy the precocious beagle endures a running feud with the (always unseen) big cat from next door. He appears in the

strip, first one day and then another, with scratches and bruises from his encounters with the great “beast”. Finally one day, Linus — the eight-year-old resident philosopher and theologian of Peanuts — approaches Snoopy, reminding him that it is “Be Kind to Animals Week”. “You animals expect to be treated a little bit nicer by people this week, right?” (Snoopy smiles and nods.) “Then,” Linus concludes, “Doesn’t this mean that you in turn are also going to make an extra effort to be kinder to that cat who lives next door?” (Now Snoopy turns suddenly glum, and mutters to himself, “I hate questions like that!”)

But the question gnaws at Snoopy. Later we see him sitting atop his doghouse, thinking: “I wonder what would happen if I tried to make friends with that stupid cat next door... I could show him my good will by extending my paw in friendship.” A bit more thought, then, “Okay, I’ll do it!”

Next we see Snoopy with his paw encased in a hockey goalie’s thick padded mitt. Approaching the still unseen cat, he mumbles to himself, “It’s the holiday season, cat! It’s time for you and me to forget our differences! It’s time to be friends. So here I am extending to you the right paw of fellowship.” The paw, thoroughly encased and protected, reaches out to the unseen cat, and returns a moment later, to his consternation, with the mitt entirely shredded!

The story continues the next day. Linus talks with Snoopy: “I hear you tried to make friends with the cat next door...” (A glowering Snoopy: “Stupid cat! I offered him the right paw of fellowship, and he almost tore it off!”) Linus reflects: “Maybe you shouldn’t have been wearing a hockey glove... maybe he thinks you don’t trust him.” (Snoopy astutely observes, “I trust him, but my *hand* doesn’t!”)

Still later, Linus offers further advice. (Linus’ advice has this in common with the Bible: the more we really listen to it and think about it, the tougher it is to follow.) “I think you showed the true spirit of Christmas,” he tells Snoopy. “But now I think you should try it again... I think you should offer the cat next door your right paw of fellowship, *but without the hockey glove.*” *

What can Snoopy do? There is only one thing to do. He “takes his chances!” With a completely bare paw, with fear and trembling but also some courage, he slowly stretches out his paw to his feline nemesis... and receives — to his amazement — not a worse mauling, but a candy cane!

As believers in Christ, we share common meals, sometimes as a simple “family”, sometimes as brothers and sisters keeping our Master’s “Passover” together. We do this, presumably, with no regard to our differences in financial or social standing, ethnicity, levels of education, or philosophies and ideas about all sorts of non-essential matters. As members of Christ’s ecclesia, we share — or should share — so many other things as well... our resources, our sorrows and joys, our hopes and fears... Our homes... Our beds and bed linens... Our books... Our clothes... Our lives...

Let us think what it might mean to “pay our moneys and take our chances” — to share all these things with the “gloves” off, without reservation. Perhaps as we do so, with common dishes of food and unprotected hands, we may come closer

and closer to the true spirit of the One who shared all he had with us — even his body, his blood, and his life.

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

** Editor's Note: One of our in-house researchers points out that, in the United States, "National Be Kind to Animals Week" comes in May, while we all know when Christmas is celebrated (whether we have anything to do with it or not). We must conclude that the two observances come quite close to one another only in "Peanuts Land". (This demonstrates the level of research our fine staff is capable of!)*

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (12) The transcendent love of the Lord Jesus

We have seen how Paul, having in Ephesians 2 stressed the equality of Jew and Gentile in the Lord Jesus, felt constrained to speak of his special mission to the Gentiles. He then proceeded to offer a prayer (Eph 3:14-21) on behalf of his readers, a prayer that must have moved them, as it should move us. In reading this prayer, we ponder the wonder of this great man of God, one who was so utterly devoted a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. The prayer is effectively a resumption of the prayer just barely started in Ephesians 3:1 (notice the incomplete thought and sentence there).

"I bow my knees..."

The posture in prayer can vary. Thus in Luke 18, in the Lord's parable, both supplicants stand, the Pharisee enveloped in his self-righteousness but the despised publican beating his breast, asking for God's mercy. Here Paul bows his knees in reverence (Eph 3:14), conscious as he is of the majesty and holiness of the Father of glory.

There are situations in life where prayer posture can be the expression of deep emotion and affection. When Paul and his party were in Tyre on the way to Jerusalem, as they took leave of the local disciples, they knelt together on the beach and prayed (Acts 21:5). The Lord, in the agony of decision in Gethsemane, fell on his face to pray (Mat 26:39).

"...unto the Father"

The One to whom Paul offers his prayer is the Father,

"from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (v 15).

It is rightly pointed out that the two words in Greek, father-*pater* and family-*patria*, are closely related. This relationship is lost in English, with *pater* corre-

sponding to “father”, and *patria* to “family”. But who are the members of God’s family? Primarily, the term must refer to God’s children by adoption, and to the angels in heaven.

But there is a possible second application: Adam is called “the son of God” (Luke 3:38); Paul himself declared to the Athenians, “for we are also his offspring” (Acts 17:28), and when, after the Flood, God was instructing Noah, He said to him, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (Gen 9:6). Although people are too often woefully ignorant of the fact, man occupies a unique place on earth, and the gap between man and the highest forms of animal life is unbridgeable. We are answerable to God in a way that is unique.

“The riches of his glory”

The first part of this petition is that the Lord God, as an expression of “the riches of his glory”, may powerfully strengthen Paul’s readers “in the inward man” (v 16). It is the inward man that counts. Appearances can be deceptive, but our God reads the heart:

“There is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do”
(Heb 4:13).

Paul has the highest estimate of God’s glory in all its aspects, as we already have had occasion to observe. Consequently a superficial faith, for the apostle, is meaningless — and how right he is. If the Lord Jesus is a living force within us, then indeed we may hope to be conformed to his image, and in the process to that of the Lord God Himself. No outward show is of any significance. We can be far too concerned with impressing our fellow men, and acquiring some hollow fame that will perish with time. The source of our rejoicing should be that our names are written in heaven (see Luke 10:20). The fault of the Pharisees was to perform their deeds to be seen of men. God has the power to transform us, if we humbly submit to him. As Paul wrote to the Philippians:

“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure” (Phi 2:13).

We achieve transformation by allowing Christ to dwell in our hearts by faith (v 17). We need a humble and grateful response, and a conviction that we can be transformed. If we do this, then we can be rooted and grounded in love. It is no accident that this same exhortation, with a slight variation, appears in Colossians:

“As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and builded up in him, and established in your faith, even as ye were taught, abounding in thanksgiving” (Col 2:6,7).

So to be rooted in love is the equivalent of being rooted in Christ Jesus. Roots are enormously important in any process of growth. In one of his parables, the Lord spoke of the disciple who was like a plant without roots: he may initially show much enthusiasm, but when trials come, he stumbles, sometimes never to recover (Mat 13:21). The moral is clear: no casual acquaintance with the Lord

and his teaching and example is sufficient. As he declares in his own allegory of the vine:

*"I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that **abideth** in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: **for apart from me ye can do nothing**" (John 15:5).*

These are challenging words, and we all need to heed them; they show clearly it is not our earthly record that counts, but what treasure we have laid up in heaven.

There is a detail in Paul's words, the implication of which we could miss; we refer now to Colossians 1:6,7. In these verses the apostle refers obliquely to the good work of Epaphras, who had been so active in the Lycus valley. In the first of these verses, the apostle refers to the teaching the Colossians had received from Epaphras, and in the second, he likewise refers to the instruction the Colossians had received, and Paul clearly endorses it. Here is a lesson for all preachers of the Gospel in all ages: it is not a matter of numbers, of making converts ourselves; rather, the aim should be to bring all to an appreciation of what life in the Lord Jesus requires.

The dimensions of love

So what is the thrust of the prayer Paul offers for his readers? That they may be granted the strength to understand, with all other believers,

"what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" (Eph 3:18,19),

so that they might be filled with all the fullness of God. Thus, in one sense, Paul is calling on his readers to attain what is unattainable, and we may then enquire whether the exhortation is pointless. Far from it! Paul speaks of the fullness, the completeness, the perfection of the Father's love — and then of our grasp of this quality. In doing so, he follows in the footsteps of the Lord himself, who instructed his disciples:

"Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mat 5:48).

What has characterized the children of God is their appreciation of their Father's majesty and power, evidenced so conspicuously in nature. As a young shepherd, David had gazed at the sky, and his sense of wonder is embodied so beautifully in Psalm 8:

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that thou visitest him?" (Psa 8:3,4).

Our urban civilization seems to have blotted out the heavens. We notice less of the wonders of God's universe, and we think less of God's love.

Now we remind ourselves of Paul's immediate concern: that his readers should acquire insight into the love of Christ, that love which is four-dimensional, possessing breadth, length, height and depth. What thought is the apostle endeavoring to communicate when he writes in these terms? He appears to be striving to tell us that our Lord's love is all-embracing.*

It is a profitable and rewarding exercise to take note of the great variety of situations in which the Lord found himself, and his reactions in word and deed. The four Gospel records are a wonderful help in this matter. To engage in that exercise is beyond the scope of this present study. However, we can at least remind ourselves of the Lord's sublime prayer upon the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). If indeed we are to be conformed to the image of our Lord, our Lord's love should be a constant preoccupation. So often what was true of Peter can apply to ourselves: "You do not realize now what I am doing; but later you will understand" (John 13:7, NIV). Then again, in the upper room, he put the question to all the apostles: "Do you understand what I have done for you?" (v 12, NIV). This surely is the fundamental question we must constantly ask ourselves.

"Filled with all the fullness of God"

Developing a proper appreciation of the Lord's love is necessary to being filled with all the fullness of God (v 19). This appears to be an echo of John 1: the Lord Jesus was full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Then John proceeds to say: "For of his fullness have we all received, and grace for grace" (v 16). This indicates a process: like our Lord, we must empty ourselves (see Phi 2:7, RV) of our natural thoughts and cares, so that we can be progressively filled with grace.

The chapter concludes with rapturous praise:

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen" (Eph 3:20,21).

The apostle pours out his soul here, as at the end of Romans 11:34-36. He knew from personal experience what the Lord God and His beloved Son had done for him, and through what trials he had been sustained. We must ever remember that Paul's theology was not something learned at university, brilliant student as he had been at the feet of Gamaliel, but something experienced through the pouring out of God's grace in overflowing measure. It is this sense that the apostle, and especially through this glorious letter, can help us to develop: we must open our hearts to our God and to our Lord. There is ever the danger that we stand in the same need as the Corinthians: Paul says to them, in the rather colorful language of the AV:

"Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels... be ye also enlarged" (2 Co 6:12,13).

Briefly, they were deficient in love, thus contrasting with the unfailing affection Paul bore to them.** Our affection for our fellows in the Lord should constantly grow, for, as the apostle wrote to the Thessalonians, they were taught by God to love one another (1Th 4:9). The Thessalonians, at least, responded to the exhortation, for in his second letter to them, he states: "We are bound to give thanks to God for you, brethren, for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each other all toward one another aboundeth" (2Th 1:3).

In conclusion, we remind ourselves that so many of the great themes in Ephesians

appear also in Colossians: the two letters serve to reinforce each other. There is this difference, though: while Colossians 2 makes a frontal assault on the heresy assailing the ecclesias in the Lycus valley, no such polemical note appears in Ephesians. This serves to impart a unique character to the letter. However, Ephesians proclaims the all-sufficiency of the Father's work in the Son.

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

Editor's Notes:

- * *In Ephesians 3:18, the first three dimensions, breadth and length and height, also refer to the perfect cubical space of the Most Holy, in Solomon's Temple (1Ki 6:20), and almost certainly in Moses' Tabernacle (cp Rev 21:16) also. These dimensions graphically portray the perfection of God's love. The fourth dimension, depth (when combined with the height) illustrates something of the great distance between the Loving Creator and His creation, man. We are so far beneath the LORD God of the Universe. Yet, we are also part of all that He does. As David said, the One who created the sun, moon, and stars is also "mindful" of man! From the great "depth" of the earth we see the great "height" of heaven, and know — almost instinctively — that we can also be a part of the perfect dimensions of the Father's love, filling the universe and shown to us in the Most Holy and in His perfect Son.*
- ** *The KJV may be "colorful" here, but surely the NIV expresses the idea much more clearly: "We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us... open wide your hearts also."*

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (5) Gossip

*Without wood a fire goes out; without
gossip a quarrel dies down (Prov 26:20)*

In referring to the insidiousness of gossip Mark Twain is reputed to have said, "It takes your enemy and your friend, working together, to hurt you to the heart; the one to slander you and the other to get the news to you." Today we almost always associate the word *gossip* with surreptitiously spreading slander about a person or group. That indeed is the commonly understood meaning today in America, and accordingly the word appears 10 times in the NIV (but not even once in the KJV, and once only in the NKJV). The word "gossip" almost without fail conjures up a note of mischievous intent and worse — outright fabricated slander — being spread about someone. However, that was not always so; the earliest occurrence of the word in English literature is in 1590 and the tertiary meaning was *to talk idly, mostly about other people's affairs*.¹ This didn't necessarily mean slandering someone; it could have been as innocent as simply passing on the news of a recent betrothal, or about someone who had bought a beautiful

new mare. The relatively harmless meaning that prevailed in the 16th century is probably why the King James translators did not use this word. It is in fact only in relatively recent times in America that the primary meaning of “gossip” has taken on a more sinister meaning.

Some years ago many newspapers carried what were known as “Gossip Columns”.² These reported the doings of the rich and famous: who was seen dating whom, who was seen listening to jazz at the Cotton Club, who was divorcing whom, and so on. Sometimes celebrities were reported doing things they shouldn’t have been doing, but by and large these columns were pretty innocent by today’s standards, and the reporters stuck to the facts. Naturally, if a newspaper printed slander they could have been held liable for damages; hence, gossip columns were more about titillation than fabricated vilification. Today we have *E! TV* and *Us, People* and similar magazines, that have carried on the gossip column tradition, only in a slicker format. Unfortunately the advent of the Internet with email, chat rooms, blogs, etc., can make anyone a gossip columnist capable of spreading slander instantaneously all over the world — with just a push of the “send” key and with no apparent accountability.

When it comes to the Scriptures, several different Hebrew and Greek words have been translated as “gossip” in the NIV. Without fail, all of them refer to the worse possible meaning, namely, intent to fabricate lies, exaggerations, and embellishments with the aim of destroying a person’s (or group’s) reputation. The AV uses words such as “talebearer”³ or “whisperer”⁴ in most instances to translate these same Hebrew and Greek words. There are also occasions when the concept of gossip, or talebearing if you prefer, comes into play even though the stories are not labeled specifically as such.

Let us explore instances of gossip in the Scriptures — some apparently innocent, others clearly malicious — and see what we can learn.

Jesus the subject of “gossip”

First let us consider the case of our Lord Jesus Christ healing the leprous man (Mark 1:40-45). Here the text tells us that Jesus “strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, ‘See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way.’” We are not specifically told why Jesus did not wish publicity at this time. Perhaps it was a test for this man:

“A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter” (Prov 11:13, NKJV).

Or perhaps our Lord wanted some solitude and did not wish to be overwhelmed with a crowd at this time (this is hinted in Mark 1:45). Whatever the reason, the healed leper did exactly what he had been warned *not* to do: “However, he went out and began to proclaim *it* freely, and to spread the matter...” (v 45, NKJV). It has often been said that the surest way to get a tale spread is to tell someone *not* to tell anyone else!

There are many forms of gossip, and the cured leper illustrates one type. (We do not know how he may have perhaps even embellished the story!) Who can resist

passing on a good story? The juicier the story, the more likely we are to pass it on to another person. Rare indeed are the times when stories of someone's good deeds are spread abroad! The leper is at least worthy in that respect: he at least passed on miraculous good news, something we ourselves rarely can claim to do; we are far more likely to forward disparagement rather than acclaim. Regardless, spreading a story when one has been asked to keep one's counsel is a trust broken. It is the main reason why brothers and sisters in difficulty often are extremely reluctant to discuss their problems with their arranging brothers, or even with anyone else in their ecclesia. The feeling that, then, *everyone will know about their problem* is unfortunately often the case. May we learn that a confidence broken is not only an affront to man, but also to our heavenly Father (Prov 11:13).

The Law of Moses

The Law of Moses specifically forbids spreading slander:

"You shall not go about as a talebearer ⁵ among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD" (Lev 19:16, NKJV).

This verse goes further here than immediately obvious from the KJV; the NIV translates the close of this verse as follows: "Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life; I am the LORD." Today, while we may not actually goad someone to murder with our gossip, nevertheless we can slay their reputation with the sword of the tongue: "A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends" (Prov 16:28).

Why does this happen? Why do we find ourselves so prone to spreading gossip? There are many different motives, but I believe the best and most succinct explanation is provided by the words in Proverbs as expressed in the NIV:

"The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts" (Prov 18:8).

The food metaphor is an apt one and we even use it today in such expressions as "This is a juicy (or meaty) piece of gossip." The more embarrassing the details, the more it shows the other person in a bad light, the faster the tale will spread and we will eat it up like cake (yet another food metaphor!). The verse in Proverbs quoted above explains it all: juicy gossip satisfies our appetites for feeling superior to others, just like a good meal satisfies our stomachs.

Gossip against Moses

There are plenty of Scriptural examples of how slanderous gossip was painfully aimed at holy men of old. Remember what happened to Moses when the spies came back from the land of Canaan:

"So the men Moses had sent to explore the land... returned and made the whole community grumble against him by spreading a bad report about it" (Num 14:36, NIV).

The words "spreading a bad report" give us a chilling picture of what transpired. The ten who feared the Canaanites, and trusted not in God, were not content to merely report back to their leader Moses and let him decide what to do. Instead, they spread gossip throughout the camp aimed at promoting their (false) impres-

sions. We can probably imagine that as gossip spread, the rumors of giants dwelling in the Land made them taller and taller. The walled cities of the Canaanites became so thick that many chariots could ride on top of them, and the height of their battlements reached to the heavens. Since it is clear they turned the people against Moses, we can only wonder what other embellishments they may have used to bolster their case.

What we do know is that the gossip had the intended effect: it turned the people against Moses. More importantly, it showed their lack of faith in the LORD God. It was the spreading of gossip against Moses, and ultimately against the power of God to redeem them, that kept the children of Israel in the wilderness for 40 years. In turn, God judged their wickedness. We all know the outcome of the story: they all died without setting either eye or foot upon the Promised Land (except for Caleb and Joshua).⁶

Moses, as is true of all leaders, was especially apt to be the object of gossip. It can even happen in the ecclesia today when we are displeased with some action of our arranging brothers, or some other individual. We may not be content to simply argue based solely upon the facts, but we may also be tempted to spread rumors and innuendoes to strengthen our objections. Once gossip starts, it spreads like a virus. First one tells another, then they tell two, who speak to four more, who speak to eight, and so on. It only takes three or four retellings to infect a whole assembly. Soon bitterness, strife, and disunity follow. Indeed, gossip can destroy a congregation as surely as it destroyed the nation of Israel in the days of Moses.

The problem of gossip led to difficulties in the first century church, as we are aware of from the epistles of the apostle Paul. He admonished the Corinthians for their gossiping (2 Cor 12:20). The KJV uses “whisperings” to describe the antics going on in Corinth, while the NIV uses “gossip” in v 20. The same errant behavior is berated in the Roman (Rom 1:29) and Ephesian (1Ti 5:13) ecclesias.

We cannot be certain about what was the source of gossip for the brothers and sisters in Corinth, Rome or Ephesus. However, we do know the gossiping behavior was extremely repugnant to the apostle. Gossiping was included in the same breath with numerous character flaws — flaws which, I believe, all of us agree should be most unacceptable in our ecclesias today. Consider that in Corinth gossip was lumped together with quarreling, jealousy, anger, factions, slander, and arrogance (2Co 12:20, NIV). In Rome the stakes were raised to include gossip in the same company as envy, strife, deceit, malice, and even murder (Rom 1:29, NIV). When we spread tales about someone, we are slaying them with our tongues. The extraordinary thing about gossipers is that, while they are in the process of destroying the reputation of others, they are at the same time smearing their own reputations. Who trusts a gossip? No one! My grandmother used to say to beware of anyone speaking ill of another, because chances are when my back was turned he would be doing the same thing of me.

Gossip against John

The apostles were themselves personal victims of gossip:

“Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us (gossiping, NIV) with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church” (3John 1:10, NKJV).

Apparently, a church elder named Diotrephes was disfellowshipping brothers and/or sisters unjustly, and John had contended with him for doing so. This man Diotrephes, to bolster his position in the ecclesia, reacted by spreading malicious gossip against the disciple most beloved by our Lord Jesus Christ. We know once again, from this incident, that no one is immune to slander being spread about him. If one could attack the apostle John for his fellowship beliefs, who is exempt from such rumor mongering? The moral here is *not* that we are never to make any judgments about a person (or group).

Taking it too far

Sometimes our Lord’s reproach against judging others is overextended. The pronouncement “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Mat 7:1) is not a general prohibition against ever condemning the wrong actions of others. The next two verses that follow in Matthew 7 make it clear that judgment has to be carefully weighted, not ignored. Furthermore, the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John — “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24, NKJV) — make it clear that it is the manner in which we judge that is critical. Our judgments must be “righteous”, and the only way that can happen is if we consider anything we may hear about a person (or group) in the light of the Word of God. By this standard the ecclesia in Asia should have known that Diotrephes was a scoundrel, and that the slanderous gossip he was spreading about the apostle was not to be tolerated.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was, and is even today, the victim of much malicious gossip. Just think of how many deny his virgin birth, and instead ascribe immorality to his beloved mother Mary. The Pharisees and Sadducees belittled his humble circumstances in life: “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?” (Mark 6:3). We can imagine the whisperings: ‘Some Messiah! A mere carpenter!’ They were expecting a king, not a servant. Jesus did not fit the image they had conjured up from their narrow understanding of their own Scriptures; hence, gossiping about him was fair sport. No one is immune to gossip, not Moses, Paul, John, or even our Lord Jesus Christ.

How to deal with gossip

How do we defeat gossip? Fortunately, the Scriptures provide us with detailed instructions for doing so. First, don’t fall for the flatterer who tries to pry information from you about someone who has taken you into his confidence:

“He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips” (Prov 20:19, NKJV).

If someone tells you something in confidence it should end there. The information should not pass your lips even to your spouse or best friend! The same goes for privileged information that may be discussed at an arranging board meeting. Sadly, I have seen this ignored time and again. It invariably leads to trouble. It is

a dismal fact of human existence: some people think that if they repeat a story to only one other person it is still a secret. Some may even be offended that I said not to tell even your spouse a confidence entrusted in you, but ethically that is exactly what you should do *unless* the person giving you that private information has given you permission to do so.

A second way to defeat gossip is not to allow yourself to become part of the process. How? Refuse to hear it. And certainly, if you have been exposed to it before you realize that it is gossip, make sure it dies with you!

"Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases" (Prov 26:20, NKJV).

Finally, don't be the source of gossip. The apostle Paul told the Ephesians:

"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Eph 4:29, NKJV).

James the brother of our Lord Jesus records nearly identical words:

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren" (Jam 4:11).

If we follow this advice we can never be the source of gossip.

The ecclesia ought to be a place for building up (1Co 14:26) and healing (Luke 5:31), *not* for tearing down and destroying. Gossip is an inherently destructive disease that can destroy the body of Christ. May we be able to say to our brothers and sisters, as the apostle Paul was able to declare to the Corinthians:

"We do all things, beloved, for your edification" (2Co 12:19).

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. *The Oxford Universal Dictionary*, 3rd edition, Oxford University Press, London, 1964.
2. Some readers might remember the newspaper columns epitomized by writers such as Irv Kupciet, in *Chicago*, Walter Winchell and Ed Sullivan in *New York*, Louella Parsons and Hedda Hopper, in *Los Angeles*, Herb Caan in *San Francisco*, etc. These created the cult of the celebrity through what was called "gossip columns".
3. Strong's number 7400: **rakiyl**, *raw-keel*'; from 7402 meaning a scandal-monger (as travelling about) — slander, carry tales, talebearer.
4. Strong's number 5372: **nirgan**, *neer-gawn*'; from an unused root meaning to roll to pieces; a slanderer — talebearer, whisperer.
5. The NIV uses "slander" here.
6. God did allow Moses to see the land from afar (Deut 34:1-3).

*"Family members, neighbors, office workers, and even some church members love to spread news of negative events. They say, 'Did you know she was divorced?' 'Have you heard the latest about him?' 'Can you believe she did that?' And off go wicked lips to discuss the private details of others that should be concealed. This sin is an abomination to God, and He hates it. He knows that spreading damaging news about others is to rape their reputations... Physical rape is a horrible crime, and it should be punished severely. But talebearing may be worse, in that it can have greater consequences... it can leave permanent scars on a person's reputation and character" (Jonathan Crosby, **Let God Be True**).*

Bible Study

Thoughts from The Letter to the Hebrews: (3) Pictures of Suffering and Survival

Faith is the motivating force of our life and the underlying substratum of our thought. It is an attitude of mind that enables us to go forward to perfection. When around us people are falling by the wayside, we are empowered to stand up “in faith.” Faith is the bedrock of our life in Christ. It is because we believe certain things that we do what we do. It is ultimately faith that enables us to accept suffering and to survive. Faith is therefore both an enabling power and an ennobling power.

The argument of the latter part of the Letter to the Hebrews is that men and women of past ages suffered and died because of their faith in that which God had promised them. “*The just shall live by faith*” is an important principle for believers of all ages. Hebrews 11 is an overview of the lives of past characters who demonstrated great faith. It contains incidents which we would probably not list or describe, but which the author, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, says are indicative of the faithful life of the person described.

Let us note some interesting examples described in the chapter:

Abel is first — a strange example, one might feel — but Abel clearly demonstrated the divinely acceptable form of sacrifice, a sacrifice that demanded the shedding of blood and the selection of the correct animal.

Enoch and **Noah** are both praised for their obedience and cited as examples of faithfulness.

Abraham is the first major example. He is commended in several aspects: firstly, as one who obeyed by traveling according to divine instructions; and secondly, as one prepared to sacrifice his only son. Abraham was a man of significance who, by thought and action, demonstrated the greatness of his faith.

Isaac, **Jacob**, and **Joseph** are all identified as men of faith, with rather interesting details being identified as exemplifying their faith.

Moses is given rather more coverage than the others with significant teaching about his time in Egypt.

The list concludes with reference to three examples drawn from the Exodus that seem a little strange to us but are part of the divine commentary on the history of Israel (vv 29-31).

At the end of the list the reader of the letter is linked to these dead saints. All of these faithful people are dead and buried, awaiting the resurrection from the dead of many more faithful men and women, “that they without us should not be made perfect”.

Running with patience

Hebrews 12 opens with a very vivid picture, probably an allusion to the long-distance runner entering the last stages of the race. He alone is competing, but all around him are massed the great circle of past runners. They are “watching” him as he concludes the race. To him they seem like a cloud of witnesses, observing him and waiting for him. At the same time, ahead of him is the “One” who has gone before, the captain of the team who ever lives to train and guide all other athletes on this race of a lifetime. The training advice echoes down the ages:

“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (12:1).

Of course, in the first-century Roman games the competitors ran naked, literally removing everything that might impede their progress. The message should not be lost upon us — in order successfully to compete in the race of life, all the trappings of this life have to be removed. In a spiritual sense, this should not be thought of as removing literal clothes, but rather as curtailing or suppressing those aspects of our lives that have a negative impact upon our ability to “run the race”.

Such things are the suffering and anguish experienced in daily life. In order for us to realize the real meaning of these words, the writer continues to describe the nature of our suffering. The comparison is made between Jesus and ourselves:

- (a) he suffered unto death so that he might become a faithful Son of God, while
- (b) we have not yet suffered unto death, but we do have literal, physical suffering.

Hebrews 12:5-13 provides us with a very helpful analogy of our suffering. It uses that teaching to give practical guidance for survival. The writer begins with a quotation from Proverbs 3:11,12 that emphasizes the necessity for a father to chasten his children. The natural here is a pattern for the spiritual; it is an object lesson for disciples who may need to accept the discipline of a heavenly Father. We all know how annoying a spoiled child can be. We accept that, in order to develop a balanced character, children need correction to help them grow up as civilized human beings.

Suffering is therefore the lot of man, so that man might be acceptable to God and able to inherit the promises. It is not that God is vindictive or malicious in causing the suffering of humanity; rather, He allows suffering as a faithful and wise parent. He does this in order for us to be changed — from sinful, selfish creatures of dust into selfless sons of God. By suffering with the rest of humanity, we can understand the pain of life and have empathy with others. Suffering forces us to look toward the future, instead of being content with this present life. Suffering teaches us to hope for what we do not possess now, but what we hope to receive in the future.

Years ago, I remember talking to a sister in a far-off land, living in fairly poor circumstances with obvious family problems. She told me that she had three children, one of whom had only one leg, but that she could remain happy and content because she knew that one day Jesus would return, and that he would be

able to restore her son to full health. She quoted the passage, “Then shall the lame man leap as an hart.” That kind of faith enables her to triumph over suffering and to survive in a hard world.

How can we learn to survive such suffering? First, by realizing that — although our suffering is as a result of Adam’s transgression — it is also a result of the circumstances of life, circumstances provided for our edification.

Unfortunately, a misunderstanding of a key reference in Ecclesiastes has led to an unhelpful approach to the events of life. The phrase “time and chance happeneth to all” (Eccl 9:11) has been interpreted as stating that events just happen in a casual, “throw of the dice” manner. However, in God’s world, events happen for a cause, and they have an effect. They are structured to help disciples respond in faith. Events are not random, isolated, and without reason. Rather, they are structured according to a divine plan, so that we might be challenged and changed.

It is our response to the challenge that is all-important. In considering the portrait gallery of faithful men and women in Hebrews 11, we should remember how the individuals responded to the circumstances of their lives. I believe this is why the list includes many apparently trivial items. These items are the everyday events of life — ordinary things which we also experience. If we are to survive the attacks of pain and suffering, then we have to learn to use our life situations as opportunities to serve and praise our Heavenly Father.

Faith is the power to survive. Faith is the vision to see beyond the immediate. Faith is the motivating power that can change sinners into saints and transform ordinary things into the divine. Faith is both an enabling power and an ennobling power — faith is vital for salvation.

Faith is the raw material from which saints are made.

Colin Edwards (Newbury, UK)

*“In all the wide range of accepted British maxims there is none, take it for all in all, more thoroughly abominable than that ‘a young man must sow his wild oats.’ Look at it on what side you will, and you can make nothing but a ‘devil’s maxim’ of it. What a man — be he young, old, or middle-aged — sows, that, and nothing else, shall he reap. The only thing to do with wild oats is to put them carefully into the hottest part of the fire, and get them burnt to dust, every seed of them. If you sow them, no matter in what ground, up they will come, with long, tough roots... and luxuriant stalks and leaves, as sure as there is a sun in heaven — a crop which it turns one’s heart cold to think of... And you, and nobody else, will have to reap them; and no common reaping will get them out of the soil, which must be dug down deep again and again... This encouragement to the sowing of wild oats simply means that a young man is to give way to the temptations and follow the lusts of his age” (Tom Hughes, **Biblical Illustrator**).*

History

Robert Strathearn — Early California Christadelphian



**Portrait of Robert
Strathearn**

The red-haired Scotsman gazed up at the 300-foot-long ship anchored in Glasgow harbor in early July, 1874. Emblazoned on the side of the iron hull was the ship's name, *The State of Georgia*. As the wind blew in his face and sea spray filled his senses, 49-year-old Robert Strathearn boarded the vessel that would change his life.¹ He would soon be leaving his native Scotland behind and emigrating to a wild and unsettled place called California. Walking beside him were his 54-year-old sister Isabella and his 18-year-old future daughter-in-law, Mary Lamb. After a two-week voyage across the Atlantic to New York,

Robert, Isabella, and Mary headed out to Southern California. Their new home would be in Carpenteria, near Santa Barbara.

Robert had lost his wife a number of years before, and his only child, Robert Perkins Strathearn, had made this same journey two years earlier. Robert was eager to see his son again but he worried about leaving his established ecclesia in Tranent, Scotland, to settle in a land of relative isolation. Robert would not be the only, or even the first, Christadelphian in California. In fact, he was not even the first Scottish Christadelphian to emigrate to the Golden State. That distinction belonged to a widow credited with introducing Robert to the truth: Sis. Helen Shiells, who had sailed to California with her son in 1872. In 1870, Helen's daughter, Jane Rosenberg, had become the first Christadelphian in Southern California when she was baptized by her husband at Santa Barbara. Robert was, however, the first prominent brother to emigrate to California.

The history of Christadelphians in California is a tale of hardship and struggle, but it is also a story of endurance. There have been Christadelphians in the Golden State for nearly 140 of the 160 years that California has been a part of this nation. Our history here is so deep-rooted that John Thomas himself had an impact on it, along with many other brothers and sisters who, though less well known than he, contributed to the growth of our community and left the Christadelphian legacy that the state enjoys today.

One man who played a large role in the early days of California Christadelphians might have been forgotten if not for the fact that his son was a pioneer in the history of one of California's cities. That man's name was Robert Strathearn.

Early life

Robert Strathearn was born the son of a coal miner in Pencaitland, Scotland, on

July 21, 1824.² In the 1830s Robert's family packed up and moved from Pencaitland to Tranent, a mining village about ten miles from Edinburgh, Scotland's capital. By 1851, Robert had taken a bride named Jessie Perkins, and she gave birth to their only child, Robert Perkins Strathearn, in 1853.³ Robert P. Strathearn had only reached his eighth birthday when his mother died, so Robert, Sr., moved in with his brother George and sister Isabella. Also living with the family was Robert's niece, Margaret Stocks. Margaret's parents were Alexander Stocks and Christine Stocks (Robert Strathearn's sister). Isabella Strathearn and Alexander Stocks would later become early California Christadelphians.

A Christadelphian in Scotland

About the time Robert Strathearn was getting married, he was also reading a brand new book by John Thomas that would alter the course of his life. Bro. Thomas had traveled to Scotland in 1848 on a lecture tour that resulted in the publication of *Elpis Israel*. One of the cities where John Thomas lectured was Edinburgh. In the audience one night was a 27-year-old farmer's wife named Helen Shiells. Helen was so moved by what she heard that she was soon baptized into Christ. While Sis. Shiells would have a large impact on California Christadelphian history herself, she also impacted Robert's life by getting him to read *Elpis Israel*.⁴ This effort on her part led to Robert becoming a Christadelphian.

Robert Strathearn is first recorded as a brother in Christ in 1867, when the Christadelphian Magazine notes that he gave a lecture on resurrection at the Edinburgh gathering on July 14 of that year.⁵ A member of the Tranent ecclesia, Bro. Strathearn knew both John Thomas and Robert Roberts.⁶ In 1867, Bro. Robert Roberts had the following to say about Robert Strathearn: "The brethren in Tranent, principally through the intelligence and zeal of Bro. R. Strathearn, are very active in spreading the truth."⁷ The Christadelphians in Tranent were a powerful preaching force at this time and attracted the ire of local ministers, who began to attack Christadelphian beliefs in public discourse and written word.

John Thomas visited Tranent in December of 1870. While there, he gave three lectures, each attended by 200 to 250. At this time there were 41 members in the Tranent ecclesia.⁸ In 1873 Robert Roberts visited Tranent and found the ecclesia strong but losing members due to transfer.⁹ In the 1870s, California's warm Mediterranean climate was touted around the world as a cure for numerous illnesses. A number of Scottish brothers and sisters would eventually make their way to California for that reason, and they were very important in establishing several of the 21 ecclesias that exist in California today.

In 1872, Bro. Strathearn's son, R.P. Strathearn, was warned by his doctor that his poor health demanded a sunnier climate like that of Australia or California. Robert P. took his doctor's advice and moved to Santa Barbara, California, because he had friends there.¹⁰ Those friends may have included Sis. Shiells, who also moved there in 1872, following the death of her husband and son. In 1874 Bro. Strathearn, who was also in poor health, sold his wholesale tea business in Scotland and followed his son to California. He brought R.P.'s fiancé, Mary Grey Lamb, with him on the arduous journey.¹¹ The brothers and sisters of the



Tranent ecclesia sent Bro. Strathearn off to California with a tangible token of their love for him: a beautiful mantle clock inscribed with their well wishes for his new life in America.

**Mantle clock
given by the Tranent ecclesia
to Robert Strathearn in 1874**

Coming to America



Santa Barbara, California, in the 1870s

Bro. Strathearn's first home in California was in Carpinteria, eight miles from Santa Barbara. He purchased 80 acres by the ocean with his son, R.P. Strathearn. R.P.'s physical health had improved, but Bro. Robert Strathearn was down spiritually. He had left a thriving ecclesia in Scotland to come to virtual isolation in an "uncivilized" environment. An idea of how Bro. Strathearn felt about California in these frontier-like days can be gathered from what he wrote to the Christadelphian Magazine in 1875:

"The change has done us all great good in health of body, but we feel our separation from those who are fellow heirs of the exceedingly great and precious promises. It would greatly add to our comfort if any of that peculiar people who are zealous of good works were to come to this quarter. But the field is far from being fruitful, but in that of evil. It is in some such country as this where you have what is called civilization, without the fear of God, that human nature is seen in its true character... My impression is that this is an unfruitful land in the things of the spirit. Even when the seed has taken root, it seems difficult to keep it alive. The love of truth (not to speak of the love of the truth as it is in Jesus) is almost a thing unknown in the land."

Despite his poor opinion of the spiritual soil in this area, Bro. Strathearn baptized

two new brothers within two years of his arrival here. On October 21, 1877, Bro. Edward Green and Bro. D. Whitaker were added to the small Santa Barbara flock that numbered about ten. Bro. Strathearn was greatly encouraged by this as he proclaimed in the Christadelphian magazine, “The event has filled our hearts with joy and gladness; for our hope was nigh gone of seeing any fruit of the truth in these parts.”

The year 1879 saw the addition of another believer with the baptism of Mary Rutherford. Bro. Strathearn had moved to Saticoy by this time and had to make a 70-mile trip to Mary Rutherford’s home to baptize her. Following the baptism, the brothers and sisters broke bread, and then Bro. Strathearn addressed those who had come to the baptism, a number of whom were not in the truth.

There had been a fire at Bro. Strathearn’s home just before he left to attend Sis. Rutherford’s baptism. His faith remained strong and his perspective true however, as he stated that he carried out *“this little service in behalf of the glorious name of the Lord of Hosts. All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose, so we were enabled to return to the scene of destruction with more joy than we had left with sorrow.”*¹²

While there were never more than a dozen Christadelphians in Ventura County, California, in the late 1800s, they were a tight-knit group. The Ventura County “ecclesia” included Robert Strathearn, Helen Shiells, Edward Greene, J.K. Magill, Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff, John and Elizabeth Reith, and Robert and Marian Stocks. Even today, over 100 years later, there are Christadelphian Brinkerhoffs, Stocks, and Magills living in Southern California.

In the 1880s, Robert Strathearn moved in with his son and daughter-in-law on an orange grove in Piru, California. In 1889, after selling their 750-acre orange grove in Piru, Bro. Strathearn and his son R.P. purchased the 15,000-acre Simi Ranch. The ranch they established in Simi Valley included 800 head of cattle, 35 horses, and a large home for the growing family.

Today there is a thriving ecclesia of 100 members in the city where Robert Strathearn lived out the last few years of his life. The home that he built with his son, and where he died in 1896, has been preserved. Because of the prominence of Bro. Strathearn’s son, who sadly never became a Christadelphian, the home has become part of a six-acre historical park run by the city of Simi Valley.



Bro. Strathearn’s home has been beautifully restored by the Simi Valley Historical Society, and is open for tours on Saturdays and Sundays. Evidences that a brother in Christ lived there long ago are numerous. The handsome clock that was given to Robert Strathearn when he left Scotland is sitting on the fireplace mantle in the living room. A painting of Bro. Strathearn hangs on the wall

nearby. On a bookshelf in the office just down the hall are a number of Bro. Strathearn's books, including a well-worn set of *Eureka*, an 1890 edition of *Christendom Astray*, a number of books on the Greek language, and several of his Bibles. A large box filled with various early Christadelphian magazines (dating right up to his death in 1896), which were kept by his family, are also stored in the home. They have remained in the house for over 100 years as a silent witness to the faith of a true Christadelphian. There are even multiple copies of tracts that Bro. Strathearn had ready to share with anyone who showed an interest in the truth of the Gospel.



In the only known photograph taken of him (in 1895, a year before his death), Robert Strathearn can be seen sitting on the porch of his Simi Valley home while three of his grandchildren pose in the yard. Note the barn in the background to the left. This barn no longer exists, but the house is still standing.¹³

Robert Strathearn didn't have the opportunity to share his love for God with many other Christadelphians, but in 1895, just a few months before Bro. Strathearn died, Bro. Cyrus Lewis visited him for six weeks in his Simi Valley home. Bro. Lewis and Bro. Strathearn broke bread for six Sundays, making this home the first place in Simi Valley where Christ was memorialized. One hundred and twelve years later, at the other end of ten-mile long Simi Valley, Christ is remembered each Sunday by the brothers and sisters of the Simi Hills ecclesia.

At Rest

Around 1892, Bro. Strathearn struck up a friendship with Bro. Henry Moore of the Pomona, California, Ecclesia. Bro. Moore was one of the founders of the Pomona

ecclesia, and one of the true giants in the history of California Christadelphians. Henry Moore reported Robert Strathearn's death in 1896 to the readers of the Christadelphian Magazine. His words tell the story of a good and faithful brother who like all of us looked for the return of his master:

"For the last four years I have enjoyed an intimate acquaintance with this good brother, and can speak of him from knowledge. He was possessed of more than ordinary intellect. Careful, conscientious, unassuming, and discerning in matters regarding the truth as in business, he was too sympathetic not to overlook the faults of enemies, [and] generous in great degree toward brethren in need. May the Lord reward him for his many good deeds."



Robert Strathearn fell asleep in Christ in Simi Valley on January 3, 1896. Our brother's resting place is the Bardsdale Cemetery near Fillmore, California, where a large headstone marks the grave that he shares with his sister Isabella. His epitaph simply reads:

Robert Strathearn
Native of Scotland
Died
January 3, 1896
Age 71 years
At Rest

There he awaits his Lord from heaven, and the day when he, through God's mercy, will enter the true rest.

Gordon Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

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13. Picture courtesy of Simi Valley Historical Society

Reflections

Kindness or Christianity?

It was an ordinary workingman giving his philosophy of life: “I’ve not much use for religion, really. I don’t go to church, I never read the Bible, I don’t say my prayers. My religion is to live a quiet, decent sort of life. I pay my debts; I’m always ready to do the other fellow a good turn when he needs it. And if I do that, then I can’t see any harm in having an odd pint of beer, putting a bet on a horse, or getting a bit of entertainment from the *News of the World* [a rather risqué English tabloid].”

Christianity in action?

There, with suitable variations to meet individual cases, you have the lives of millions of people today — people who would be horrified and insulted if anyone were to suggest that they were not really Christians. For them, ‘Christianity’ is another way of talking about honesty, respectability and kindness to others.

Of course, the law of kindness has always been an important element in the creed and practice of the Christian. In fact, one of their earliest nicknames in the first century was ‘Christians’, which might perhaps be Anglicized as *‘the kind people’*.

But merely to be kind is not to be Christian. There are millions of good-natured pagans in the world. Is there a possibility that, without ever having stopped to think about it, you are one of the sort that is always ready to give to Oxfam or Christian Aid [*something like our United Fund: Editor*]; is first to lend a hand when sickness hits the people next door; yet somehow you never find time for any direct deliberate religious involvement?

Misapprehensions?

In this respect our generation is suffering from the mistaken notions of its fathers. The beginning of the twentieth century saw a great vogue in Christian humanism, expressed in such sentiments as these:

*“For forms and creeds let senseless bigots fight —
He can’t be wrong whose life is in the right!”*

At school you may have painfully learned a poem beginning: “*Abu ben Adam, may his tribe increase...*”

There the poet, Leigh Hunt, pictures a worthy philosopher who has a vision of an angel writing down “*the names of those who love the Lord*”. Alas! Abu’s name is not there. “*Then,*” he says, undaunted, “*write me as one who loves his fellow men.*” It is done. And when next the angel appears, remarkably: “*Ben Adam’s name led all the rest!*”

Leigh Hunt wrote lovely poetry, but poor philosophy, and downright bad theol-

ogy — for how can such philosophy stand against the greatest Authority of all? Jesus said:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matt 22:37-39, KJV).

Christian beliefs

Christianity is much more than kindness or love. The Apostle John is rightly thought of as the Apostle of Love, because he was *“the disciple Jesus loved”*, and because he wrote so profoundly about Christian love. Yet how often is it overlooked that John uses the word *“believe”* more than all the rest of the New Testament writers put together? And it is John, too, who puts so much emphasis on Truth — not on telling the truth, but on believing it.

So, away with these rather sloppy and sentimental perversions of Christianity. To be the vigorous disciple of a virile Master, every follower of his must have a creed, must hold it with conviction, and must make his or her life a testimony to its truth. This approach to life is worth trying. If it is something that you, reader, are unused to, you will be surprised what a difference it makes to your practical outlook on life. You will be just as ready, just as eager, to do a kindness in your own humble way. But you will also find in yourself more stability and much more contentment — in fact, you will have done yourself the greatest possible kindness!

Harry Whittaker

Bread of Deceit

*“Bread of deceit is sweet to a man;
but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel”
(Prov 20:17).*

We are tempted to think that a deed done is done with, and to grasp at momentary pleasure, and ignore its abiding consequences. But of all the delusions by which men are blinded to the true solemnity of life none is more fatal than that which ignores the solemn *“afterwards”* that has to be taken into account. For, whatever issues in outward life our actions may have, they have all a very real influence on their doers. Each action tends to modify character, to form habits, to drag after itself a whole train of consequences. Each strikes inwards and works outwards.

The whole of a life may be set forth in the powerful figure, *“A sower went forth to sow”*, and *“Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”* The seed may lie long dormant, but the green shoots will appear in due time, and pass through all the stages of *“first the blade, and then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear.”* The sower has to become the reaper, and the reaper has to eat the bread made from the product of the long past sowing.

Shall we have to reap a harvest of poisonous tares, or of wholesome wheat? A

momentary pause to ask ourselves, when tempted to evil, “And what then?” would burst not a few of the painted bubbles after which we often chase.

Is there any reason to suppose that these permanent consequences of our transient actions are confined in their operation to this life? Does not such a present, that is mainly the continuous result of the whole past, seem at least to prophesy and guarantee a similar future?

Such sweetness in its very essence is momentary, and even, whilst being [chewed], “bread of deceit” turns into gravel. A mouthful of it breaks the teeth, [tears] the gums, interferes with breathing, and ministers no nourishment. The metaphor has all too familiar illustrations in the experience of us all. How often have we flattered ourselves with the thought, ‘If I could but get this or that, how happy I should be’? How often, when we got it, have we been as happy as we expected? We had forgotten the voice of conscience that may be overborne for a moment, but begins to speak more threateningly when its prohibitions have been neglected. We had forgotten that there is no satisfying our hungry desires with “bread of deceit”, but that those desires grow much faster than the “bread” can be presented to them. We had forgotten that evil is strengthened in us when it has been fed. We had forgotten that remembrance of past delights often becomes a present sorrow and shame. We had forgotten avenging consequences of many sorts that follow surely in the train of sweet satisfactions that are wrong.

So, even in this life nothing that is wrong keeps its sweetness, and nothing that is sweet and wrong avoids an aftertaste of most intense bitterness. And all that bitterness will be increased in another world, when God gives us to read the book of our lives that we ourselves have written. Many a page that records past sweetness will then be felt to be written, “within and without”, with lamentation and woe.

All bitterness of what is sweet and wrong makes it certain that sin is the most stupid, as well as the most wicked, thing that a man can do.

*Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910),
Scottish Baptist preacher*

“Bitter was Achan’s sweet, deceitfully hid in the tent, which brought ruin upon himself and his family (Josh 7:21-26).

“What profit had [Gehazi] from his talents of silver and changes of garments? Bitter indeed was the bread of deceit to him (2Ki 5:20-27).

“Look even at Jacob, a true servant of God; and yet chastened heavily almost to the end of his days with the bitter fruits of deceit (Gen 27; 42:36-38).

“Charmed we may be with the present sweetness; but bitter indeed will be the after-fruits... Let the man of doctrine exhibit the holiness of doctrine. Never let our religion be one thing, and our business another. But let the image and glory of the Lord give the pervading expression to our whole history” (Charles Bridges).

IF YOU WANT A BETTER
WORLD

COMPOSED OF BETTER

NATIONS

INHABITED BY BETTER

STATES

FILLED WITH BETTER

COUNTIES

MADE UP OF BETTER

CITIES

COMPRISED OF BETTER

NEIGHBORHOODS

POPULATED WITH BETTER

FAMILIES,

THEN YOU HAVE

TO START

BY BECOMING

**A BETTER
PERSON.**

Book Review

Design vs. Chance

*“Bible and Science — Design vs. Chance” by John C. Bilello,
published by Christadelphian Tidings, 2006, available from www.tidings.org*

How was our earth created? How were you and I created? Better yet, how was the universe itself created? These are all questions where it is difficult to find a definite answer. People tend to take two very opposite sides, either saying that time is the solution for everything, or accepting the idea of a greater creator who set everything the way it is for a reason. John Bilello analyzes these two *completely* opposing views in his book entitled *Bible and Science — Design vs. Chance*.

The author is a scientist as well as an active Bible student. He currently works as the Professor Emeritus of Materials Science and Engineering at the University of Michigan, and devotes his time to studying the Bible thoughtfully, searching for the many deeper insights. By possessing a strong foothold in both scientific and religious fields, he has composed his book comparing and contrasting the evidence and ideas of scientific and creationistic views concerning the creation of the universe and its inhabitants.

When was the universe put in place?

One of the big questions of our time is when, and how, the universe was put in place. Of course there is no clear evidence as to how the original “dark abyss” (from which all things arose) came about in the first place; there are only many unconfirmed theories. This book goes into detail as to how both science and the Bible can relate to this dilemma, tying some loose ends together and clarifying many misunderstandings.

The author, as a fellow believer, sides with the idea of creation by a Creator, and goes into the many fallacies included in the scientific theories opposing the idea of creation by a divine maker. Bilello points out the misconception that the universe has always existed. He proves his point with Hubble’s observation of the spectrum of distant galaxies appearing in a reddish color, showing that these other galaxies are moving away from the earth. Thus it may be concluded that the universe is still expanding away from its original creation. The color red might seem irrelevant to the status of the universe, but the “Doppler Shift”, that Hubble noticed, is much like the Doppler Effect with sound waves. If a light is moving toward you, then the light wave appears blue. If a light is moving away from you, then the light wave appears red. Taking away this conclusion — the “always has been” universe — nullifies the easy answer that scientists like to use when discussing the universe’s beginning.

This book rejects the answer of an infinite universe. The author moves to establish

the idea of the universe being created according to the Book of Genesis, with the creation of the earth in seven days. This reference to the Bible is not all about “alakazam and bam” — and the earth is created! It just so happens, the first chapter of Genesis holds evidence alluding to our earth’s past. Even in the second line of the Bible, the book shows proof of our past:

“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Gen 1:2, NIV).

This verse refers to earth’s early birth stages. We can look at our neighboring planets, Venus and Mars, to see the vacancy and the complete canopy of clouds, that some could interpret as the *Spirit of God*, which covers the planets.

The Genesis account also states:

“Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water” (Gen 1:6, NIV).

This verse can easily be matched up with the theory that the great landmass, called “Pangaea” by some scientists, separated into different continents, thus creating different bodies of water.

How did life come into being?

Another Bible-assuring point of creation, demonstrated by the author, deals with intelligent design and the creation of human beings. He begins by asking readers how the first living cell came about. Science’s answer to the question is the Primal Soup Model, which in theory states that lightning struck water, causing amino acids and other chemicals to bind and create the first “living” cell. But Bilello points out that, even if a cell was created, the question remains: How did it “learn” to differentiate into more cells, and even begin to form the complex DNA that makes up all life forms.

Scientists have tried to recreate the conditions of the Primal Soup Model to see what would happen. But beginning in 1953, scientists such as Miller and Urey of the University of Chicago — even given the ideal conditions of a spark and the right chemical compounds — have not been able to create a single cell. Even in today’s high-tech world, we are not able to produce a living cell as the theory proposes. The only other possible explanation of this model is “time and chance”. And even in the case of chance, the author figures the odds of putting together human DNA at random, and the probability is a number eons beyond a billion! One in a million is a big enough chance as it is!

Where did humans come from?

The next main question is: Where did man come from? It is hard to believe that humans could have “evolved” from such beasts as the apes. The Bible student turns to Genesis to show the creation of man:

“The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gen 2:7).

It only seems legitimate that, once we die, our bodies turn back into the dust of the earth. The author supports his argument by explaining that the human

body is made up of the same minerals as the earth. My personal favorite food for thought is the notion that, even down to the smallest atom of the body, the tiniest fractional change probably would not allow us to survive.

The constant theme of a perfect balance is shown again and again in this book. The author puts our ability to survive in perspective, making it hard to believe that it is all because of chance that we have made it this far. An example of this perfect balance is the exact positioning of the earth. Our neighboring planets, Venus and Mars, are uninhabited. Venus is too close to the sun, and Mars is too far away, to be able to sustain our precious human life. Our earth is perfectly placed so that we receive the sunlight and have the gravitational forces necessary for our survival. It is hard to believe that our earth and our lives are only sustainable under ideal conditions, *and* that this is all the product of time and chance.

Conclusion

As for me, this collection of essays has strengthened my faith and helped me to understand many things about the creation of the universe in general. The book discusses a hard subject, but the author makes it an easy read for everyone, by keeping it conversational, and providing footnotes for all the complicated scientific theories and ideas that he presents. John Bilello doesn't just present the scientific ideas explaining creation; he entwines them with God, explaining that God created the world and the physical laws of science that came with it.

Matt Drabenstott (Kansas City, MO)

***Note:** Matt is a senior at Park Hill High School in Kansas City. He presented this paper as a book report to his class in composition and reading, and received a grade of A.*

*"Every one hears and sees all day long, so perpetually that we never think about our hearing and our sight, unless we find them fail us. And yet, how wonderful are hearing and sight. How we hear, how we see, no man knows, nor perhaps ever will know. [It is true that science knows more now than was known over 100 years ago, when these words were first written... but no matter what advances in knowledge have occurred, the point is still valid. And every advance in such knowledge serves to remind us what we do not **yet** know!...] It is wonderful that our brains should hear through our ears, and see through our eyes; but it is more wonderful still, that they should be able to recollect what they have heard and seen. Most people think much of signs and wonders, but the commonest things are as wonderful, more wonderful, than the uncommon. It is not faith only to see God in what is strange and rare. It is faith to see God in what is most common and simple; not so much in those strange sights in which God seems to break His laws, as in those common ones in which He fulfills His laws... The greatness of God is manifest in that He has ordained laws that work by themselves, and with which He need never interfere. The universe is continually going right, because of God" (Charles Kingsley, **Biblical Illustrator**).*

Letters

Scenes in a Country Cemetery

Dear Bro. George,

I really enjoyed “Scenes in a Country Cemetery” in the August Tidings. The connection between the Christadelphians and President Johnson is a very interesting one, and I’m old enough to remember the expectations of many that “LBJ” would be in office when Christ returned.

Another reason I enjoyed the article was the reference to your grandmother, Jessie Hatcher. My father and his mother had spent a good deal of time on the Johnson ranch before coming to California in 1937. My grandmother had a fondness for “Sister Hatcher” and I remember her often speaking about her when I was a child. She once showed me a postcard with Lyndon Johnson’s picture on it that Jessie had sent to her, and it made a large impression on me that Christadelphians were somehow connected with the President. I believe I met your grandmother when she visited California in the 1960s.

Thank you for your hard work on a very important magazine for the brotherhood here in America.

Gordon Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

Dear Bro. Gordon,

I remember very well the trip my grandmother made to California, when I was a youngster. She came back with all sorts of stories about sights she had seen, but especially about meeting so many wonderful brothers and sisters there.

And thank you, Bro. Gordon, for your article about Bro. Strathearn, a California pioneer of the Truth.

George

Did David deliberately “reason out” his sin?

Dear Bro. George,

Warmest greetings in Christ.

Much as I admire his writings, I’m afraid I must differ with the reasoning of Bro. Islip Collyer in his quotation from *Conviction and Conduct* [November issue, p. 518]. It’s true that David seemed to be swept up in the emotions of the moment when he sinned with Bathsheba, but his calculated cold-blooded scheme to get rid of Uriah is quite a different matter. He *did* “deliberately reason the matter out”, and he was rebuked accordingly. Nathan in 2 Samuel 12:9 says, “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight?... because

thou has despised me [God]... I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house"... and we know the rest.

The beauty of the example of David is that God was gracious and willing to accept his deep repentance, and was still willing to call him a man after his own heart. Through David's humiliating exposure we can understand more fully the "sure mercies of David" and the words of Paul in Romans 5:6,7: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

Sincerely your sister,
Lois Webster (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON)

Dear Sis. Lois,

I believe you are right in your main point: even if, as seems quite reasonable, David did not "reason the matter out" before his sin with Bathsheba, it is plain that he did, later, reason out "cold-bloodedly" how to remove the difficult Uriah. And even for this, God could forgive — which is of course the true wonder of it all.

But to be fair to Bro. Collyer, let me quote the full sentence to which you referred. He wrote: "If David, previous to his transgression, had deliberately reasoned the matter out and concluded that since God had shown mercy in other cases, it might be worthwhile to undertake the risk of sinning, we should never have heard of him as an example of rectitude." It seems to me that a key point in that rather lengthy sentence is at the beginning: "If David, previous to his transgression..." That suggests to me that Bro. Collyer had in mind the mental state of David before he fell into the first sin with Bathsheba, and not necessarily the other grievous sin midway through the whole process, i.e., the sin of murder for the purposes of covering up the first sin.

Still, God might forgive even some of the most deliberate sins, if there is the right sort of repentance (which God knows, but which we cannot determine for certain). So I say again, I do believe your main point is correct.

George

What is ours to know

Dear Bro. George,

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deu 29:29).

We don't *have* to know about any previous worlds, cavemen's bones, the timeline of the reordering of the earth, dinosaurs, origin of angels, etc. and etc. Nor the time and order of the Return of Christ. That he will reveal to his servants in due course, as promised.

Jean Wilson (Columbus, Gahanna, OH)

Letter from Jamaica

Dear brothers and sisters,
Greetings in Jesus' Name.

A few weeks ago I received a letter from a brother in the UK, and I want to share some of the things he showed me. I know these are surely signs of the times. We are nearing the end of time, when God will send His Son to claim His own. These are the days when men's hearts will fail them in fear, for looking at the signs around us. For the elect's sake these days will be shortened. Such things will not be strange to those who look for them, but they will be a big surprise to those who think otherwise. May the God of our fathers help us walk worthy of His calling, always.

I hope you can make out my writing, but I have been sick and my hand is not so steady. Pray for me. God be with us all and keep us in His care.

Mellie James (Port Antonio, Jamaica)

Sis. Mellie was a founding member of the Port Antonio Ecclesia. The paragraph she enclosed is as follows:

"We heard on the news yesterday that there are terrible floods in Africa, and millions of people are now homeless. There seem to be disasters everywhere. In Greece there are terrible fires raging. In Africa there have been severe fires too. In England there were floods during July, and many homes were seriously damaged. The climate seems to be changing. We don't have winters like we used to any more: when I was a child, every winter there was snow and frost for several weeks. But for several years we have had almost no snow at all. Even in Russia, where snow is usually three feet deep, there was no snow last winter."

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.

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

(Continued)

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

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

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 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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

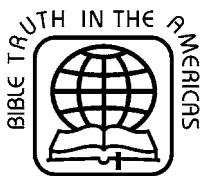
Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L4V7, Canada.

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

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

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

Anderson Family Support Fund provides help for Bro. Grant Anderson's family after Grant's serious car accident. Mail checks payable to Christadelphians to: P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. www.milfordroad.net/Andersons.html



Bible Mission News

Thisisyourbible.com Website

November numbers were down from the previous highs experienced in the past two months, which we might expect. Many folks traveled during the month, the world starts concentrating on the holidays, and people's attention wanders a bit. Our feature question was: "Do Christians need to care for the environment?" There were almost **450** people who downloaded the pamphlet "Hope for a Hopeless World", associated with that question last month. The average times this pamphlet *alone* was downloaded this year is about **65** per month. Were you able to hand out 65 pamphlets in your ecclesia last month?

Minute Meditations readings continued at a good level: **698**. Eight new recordings were added. In November, Bre. Mike LeDuke and Peter Forbes were again kept busy answering **162** direct questions, over 70% about Bible Study and Life Issues.

The best news of all, though, is — once again — we saw an increase in Bible Correspondence Course students (**over 351**). Furthermore, another **14** tutors signed up. That's a lot of students for those new tutors, so we can still use some more tutors. (Just kidding. We wouldn't start them off with 25 each!)

This is truly an exciting way to reach people — whether they are checking out the website for the first time, asking a question, downloading a pamphlet, listening to a Minute Meditation, or taking a correspondence course. One of our tutors reports that we just got our first contact from Tajikistan recently. Tajikistan is one of the breakaway states of the former Soviet Union — a separate Muslim country. How else but by the website would we be able to reach someone like that?

Next month we'll try and report on the Toronto West Ecclesia, and how their students are coming along. They are responsible for handling most of the 200 students that signed up from the newspaper advertisement placed earlier in the year in the Bahamas.

Want to help?

- Visit the website and 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

- Advertise the website in your local newspaper or as a link on your ecclesia's website
- Continue your CBMA / CBMC financial support either individually or as an ecclesia

“I Don’t Think I Could...”

I want to tell you about something that could easily become an addiction — in my life and maybe in yours too. I think it's under control at the moment. It's not something that might spring to mind when you think of addictions. I don't think it could damage my health, although sitting for long periods does leave one stiff. It doesn't give me a hangover the next morning... in fact, I'm usually up with the birds and rarin' to go. It doesn't hinder my breathing... but I do experience short gasps at times, and the occasional whoop of joy!

When I discuss my “condition” with other brothers and sisters, I sometimes receive a glazed look in return. Others say, “No, thanks, it's just not for me.” I used to think the same thing.

I guess it all started out of a growing frustration that, even though we have been commanded to tell others about Jesus Christ, there just didn't seem to be anyone who was the least bit interested. In the last nine months or so, my ecclesia has had just one man drop by on a Sunday morning looking for a local church; so we're not exactly inundated! Having face-to-face discussions about the Bible with workmates or even strangers can be quite intimidating. It's pretty easy to be stumped by a Bible passage plucked out of context, sometimes leading to a religious argument. One often walks away from these discussions feeling humiliated, and perhaps even outraged at the other person's views of Christadelphians.

But that's the beauty of the internet, isn't it? One can “meet” and have discussions with absolute strangers and feel perfectly comfortable! Of course, there's a slight danger. Usually I don't ask the people I “meet” through the website any questions about themselves, and vice versa. As rapport is established, we might trade a little information about each other, but the main focus is on learning from the Bible. If someone asks a tough Bible question, that's no problem! There's time to go away and consider it, and even to ask others if I'm not sure. Bro. Ron Abel's *Wrested Scriptures* is laying right by the chair here, within easy reach. His detailed research on the difficult passages is brilliant.

Let me share with you a few of the messages I've received that have produced the short intakes of breath and gleeful cries. I've changed the names of the writers, since I haven't asked them if they mind me sharing with you. Most of my online students from the website live in Russia, but you'll deduce from some of their messages that they come from places much further afield.

[Editor's note: we have left the spelling, grammar, and punctuation just as it came to Sis. Kathryn — to give something of the feel and flavor of this sort of communication.]

From Rosa:

"I read Lesson 1 last night at home, and it was interesting reading. I already have my answers, however, may I just clarify a point or two before I send you my answers. May I ask what is expected of me while doing the lessons and after I completed the first course? Is there any cost or price involved so that I may be able to prepare for any eventuality? May I know your expectations from me for all this work? I just want all things clear before I embark on this course, which I initiated, anyway by registering with you on line. I have printed the Bible Companion table guide you sent me, and it will really require me to sit down and read my Bible every day! I will try my best! Thanks for this guide. God bless you..."

From Svetlana:

"Thank you very much for your detailed answer, it really helped me to remove the contradiction between what I feel is right and that literal statement in the Bible. Indeed, my grandmother is an Adventist, so I was brought up 'in the spirit' of Adventism - as is well known they teach there is no hell and immortal soul..."

From Ivan:

"I've got some questions concerning Lesson 2.

1. First of all, after death, will a person rise from the dead in the same body? I mean, if a person, for example, wants to be cremated, how will he/she rise again? Or it happens in some other way?
2. What will happen to all non-Christians, when the righteous people rise?

And one more question not on the topic of Lesson 2. Why should I accept Jesus Christ as my Saviour? I mean, why can't I myself be responsible for my sins and have the hope of eternal life? This question is really important for me. I'm looking forward with interest to your answer...."

"I've got a question to you. We will have a lesson concerning baptism later, but I want to ask about it now. When a person should be baptised? I mean, is it right to baptise an infant or a person should make a choice by himself, at the age when he is able to be responsible for his actions?"

From Sergei:

"I have received your letter. My mail address is working. And i want to study in your bible courses, but I'm russian and my english is very bad. I want to know about God but I dont know what I can do:..."

"Wow!!! Hello!!! You answer me very very fast. Sorry, I have one question for you. What confession and denomination your church?"

From Edward:

“Hallo, I am very glad to hear that I was excepted by your organisation and I thank you so much for this opportunity I was given. It’s my prayer that I stick to my desire to explore the bible fully. Please inform me how I should send my answers how and when. Also after checking your website I found so many books such that I couldn’t know which ones were good for my standard. Please also specify for me.”

From Padma:

“thank you for your mail. Actually im not in Moscow now, ive come back to India for 2 months vacation. is there any way that we can continue our lessons by e-mail? i never seem to get time to mail those lessons back to u. praying for you....”

“thank you for answering my questions, although it is a bit frightening to think that all those who have died and didn’t have enough understanding of the bible will just perish. also i do believe that we dont need any body to recomend us to our GOD and that we can directly tell him all our problems but then what of the church and priests? In our modern world does the church have any role? in olden times we read of Aaron and other priest offering sacrifice for the people but since we dont need it anymore what function does the church have in our lives? by the way do u attend any church? pls send me the next two lessons. waiting for ur answer....”

From Julia:

“Thanks so much for your letter to me and thanks a lot for the brochures, that I have received from Elena. I know Elena very good, because we were working together in a private language school. I would be absolutely happy to receive from you the Bible course by post. Nowadays I study English and it will be absolutely great present to me from you and God.”

“I know from Elena that you have been in Russia last summer. What did you do here? In my heart I wish to work as a preacher or evangelist and to tell people about God and his love. Could you please give to me some recommendations where to start? I know that I need wisdom and good knowledge about God and his words. Do I need good theological education for that? I go to the church and I do glorify (we sing songs) to God with our musicians. Could you tell me please about your career in God? I will be really grateful to you if you reply to me.”

“As for the lessons I am so thankful for it. I read the lessons. It was so interesting. Yes I know that I have to organised myself for studying Bible. You are right!!!! And thanks that you remind me about this. I really need to change my relationship to the Bible. Your thought really helpful. You let me start to think in a different way. You woke me up!!! You prompt me to read it regulary and study your lessons. I will write to you back later. Thanks for your patience to me.”

From Natasha:

“Thank you so much for your kind and encouraging letter. And I am

especially thankful for the Bible Study. I can't wait to begin :) I think you are so right in suggesting that I need to give all my cares to the Lord in prayer. I keep struggling with this problem in my mind, and I completely forget that the Lord is so perfectly aware of the problems we face each day. So I've decided that I will give my fears and troubles to the Lord and ask Him to give me wisdom and His guidance. I don't want to bother you with the details, since you have so much work, and I really appreciate that you can help me as my tutor. I thank God for you. I only would like to ask you to pray that God will give me wisdom in the decisions that I have to make. And thank you for all the passages from the Bible — I will read all of them when I come back home tonight..."

"I deeply appreciate your willingness to help me and to pray for me. And my difficult situation has truly improved since I started to pray about it. And thank you for your prayers as well. It might be that I will return to the course once I find a bit more free time, and I will send you the answers to the lesson 4. I have your email address, so I will not lose touch with you..."

"Thank you for your caring letter. It is wonderful to know that you still remember me. I quit my job in the middle of April because there was a moral issue involved and I decided that my relationship with the Lord is more important to me than my job. The Lord has provided a job for me at home and I translate Christian literature. I think I do have some free time that I could spend on doing the Bible Study that I started. Could you please send me a study number 4 again?"

"As I mentioned in my previous letter, I do have some questions regarding the doctrines that are taught in those lessons, and I wonder if I can discuss them with you. I was hesitant to continue with the lessons because it seemed to me that I had to write the "right" answers even if they contradict what I believe in. It would be wonderful if we could discuss controversial points. Thank you for your care. I hope you had a wonderful missionary trip in April..."

From Charles:

"thank you for encouragement God bless you am so grateful you people because am learning new things about the bible. am having examination this time thats why am a bit slow..."

"hi am so greatful for your invitation and i would have wished to meet you as you will be coming but am sorry am currently in kenya for holiday up to the end of next month. am not able to access internet everyday partly due to money but now i have come up with a method where i use a flash disk then go do the bible study at home this making the delay, but i hope now with these i will be consistent with the bible study. thank you so much for your support in these bible study you are an encouragement to me and

may God bless your family greatly..."

"hi thanks so much for your encouragement and your care, from my heart i enjoyed to be with the ecclesia in Nairobi. i learned a alot and not until that day i learned about the sabbath, how sunday came to being. the only single sunday i managed to attend there the people were friendly and they were happy to have me worship with them... the songs were so encouraging that some of the songs are always in the mind. am a member of delivrance church in kenya but one thing i have come to learn is there is one saviour. so i have always wanted to have the right material to pass to people without misleading them at all. am so grateful to you thanks for treating me with so much love yet am a stranger to you i thank God for you and i promise you i will finish the course. have a blessed moments. you are a blessing to my heart..."

"i have read this chapter in detail does it mean there is not this supernatural being i had always known he is the devil or satan? its true that we are tempted by our evil desires but what about the challenges that i face? its like a person working to see i dont progress and no one behind it ? please help me out of this..."

From Julius:

"I have received The Bible and Lessons that you sent to me. Thank you! It is very interesting. At that time I learn them You wrote to me that The Bible is a second-hand one. It is really in very good condition but I would ask you was its former owner a good man? Is this book yours? I am writing with mistakes but I hope you understand me. I am a little superstitious man Dont mind please. Thank you for your attention Friendly greetings May God bless you..."

"I have just came back from business trip I was in the tawn of Kislovodsk. Thank you very much I have received the book you sent It is very interesting and useful book. I shall learn it for making my knowledge about the Bible more profound. Bye. God bless..."

"I have some questions. Why does an evil exist? I would tell you a story happened in our town. One woman went to the church in the Palm Sunday. She sanctified a branch of Pussy willow and went out. When she was crossing the road she was knocked down by the car and was killed. I don't understand why did the kindly woman die? Why the other people who don't believe in God and was sinning and that day have survived? It is an injustice. Why does an evil exist? God bless..."

From Tobi:

"I sent the answers to questions 5 - 8 already so you should recieve them by this week or latest next week. I have a question. How come the churches in some places are different from others but they call on the same God? Is it God's plan or the pastors? If you have any article concerning this particular question you can send it with the next

questions. thanks and I will be expecting your reply..."

"how are you today? i hope that you are still sound in God and still waiting for His second coming, Because now is not the time to relax. Jesus is coming sooner than we expect. I posted the answers to lessons 9 - 11 today so you should receive it by next week. please pray for me that God should show me the way. I need His divine wisdom in some areas of my life."

"I got your mail today and in it were lessons 16-19 and also included was "Sunday and the Sabbath" which I unfortunately finished reading already, so I should start answering the questions and maybe i will send the answers by next week. I also downloaded the invitation for the Christadelphian Bible School in Kazan in August from 5th - 11th. I will be very glad to attend."

* * * * *

Dear reader, wouldn't you like to receive messages such as these on a regular basis? Become an online tutor now, by visiting www.thisisyourbible.com

Click on "Tutors" on the bottom right hand corner and complete the online application. You can request to tutor people in any country you choose. Your in-box will never be the same again!

Kathryn Pearce (Northampton, UK)
muirkathryn@hotmail.com

"What shall I do then with Jesus?" (Matt 27:22)

*Jesus is standing in Pilate's hall,
Friendless, forsaken, betrayed by all.
Hearken, what meaneth the sudden call:
"What will you do with **Jesus**?"*

*Jesus is standing on trial still.
You can be false to him, if you will,
Or you can be faithful through good or ill.
"What will **you** do with Jesus?"*

*"What will you do with Jesus?"
Neutral you cannot be.
Someday your heart will be asking,
"What will **He** do with me?"*

(A.B. Simpson)

News & Notices

DOUBLE SPRINGS, AL

The brothers and sisters who formerly met as the Moulton, AL, Ecclesia would like to express their deep gratitude and love to Bro. Wesley Booker (now returned to Austin, TX) for his ministrations on their behalf, as well as to others in this area who benefited from his help. In addition to his care for the ecclesia, his travels carried him to many and varied places as he did his very best to bring the Truth to those who had not heard it, and to those who needed help in understanding the complexities of living in the world we live in today.

Sis. Annette and I have relocated to this area to do our best to continue in Bro. Wesley's wonderful work. Our new address is 586 County Road 195, Danville, AL 35619. Our telephone number is 256-462-3979. My cell phone number is 256-318-5715. We welcome any brothers and sisters who would like to visit our ecclesia.

We moved from our location in Moulton, AL, and are currently meeting at the home of Bro. Wesley and Sis. Margaret Jones, of Double Springs. We meet there most Sundays and for mid-week classes. Occasionally we will meet at our home while we continue to look for a somewhat more permanent location in this area. The address for Wesley and Margaret is 7583 County Road 25, Double Springs, AL 35553. If you are in need of maps to either our home, or Wesley and Margaret's home, please contact me.

Future communications will be sent under the name of the Double Springs, AL, Ecclesia. It has a nice spiritual connotation. "And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not" (Isa 58:11).

We are in the process of firming up our preaching efforts for the coming year, 2008 (Lord willing), and we would appreciate the prayers of our brethren and sisters. Specific dates and times for these activities will be forthcoming.

Troy Haltom

ECHO LAKE, NJ

With great pleasure we announce the baptism on October 21, 2007, of one of our Sunday school scholars, TABITHA SHIVKUMAR, daughter of Sis. Marge Shivkumar and Yudy Shivkumar. We pray for God's blessing on our new sister's walk to the kingdom.

We are happy to report the birth of a healthy daughter, Jaelle Phillips, on August 31, 2007, to Bro. Ben and Sis. Cadi Phillips. May their young family be overshadowed by our Heavenly Father's blessings.

We are very happy to announce the marriage of Bro. Daniel Jorgensen and Sis. Sylvia Song on November 26, 2007. We pray that their life together will be richly blessed.

In October, our ecclesia hosted a prophecy study weekend, "From Eden Lost to Eden Restored: The Amazing Framework of God's Prophetic Purpose", given by Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch, NZ). We thank our Bro. Lewis for his enlightening and encouraging study and for the fellowship we enjoyed with our visiting brothers and sisters.

Since our last reporting, we have been blessed with the following visitors: Bro. Andrew and Sis. Abby Aitkenhead (Bishops Stortford, UK) and their children; Bro. Brent Freeman (San Diego, CA); Bro. Warren and Sis. Dorothy Phillips (Meriden, CT); Bro. Paul and Sis. Dorothy Zawadzki (Boston, MA); Bro. Matthew Link and Bro. Alexander and Sis. Janice Piskura (Washington, DC); Bro. David and Sis. Louise Cooper, Bro. Jonathan Cooper and Bro. Tom and Sis. Sally Davis (Pomona, CA); Bro. Brad and Sis. Deborah Styles (Simi Hills, CA); Sis. Ruth Anne Jorgensen (Worcester, MA); and Bro. David Corbin (Brooklyn, NY). In addition, we thank many brothers and sisters who supported our study weekend from Toronto West, ON; Moorestown, NJ; Union, NJ; Brooklyn, NY; and South Ozone Park, NY.

We thank the following brothers for their uplifting words of exhortation and fellowship: Bre. Andrew Aitkenhead, Warren Phillips, David Cooper and David Corbin.

God willing, we are planning a study weekend for March 22-23, 2008. The speaker is to be Bro. John Hellawell (Peterborough, UK) and his proposed subject is entitled "David — Shepherd, Soldier, Sinner, Sovereign, Statesman". The topic planned for the CYC is "Creation or Evolution?" Contact Bro. David Link at dlink44131@aol.com, or at 973-696-3316.

Jonathan Link

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CA

Thankfully, the Lord spared all of our ecclesial members from the devastation of the recent wild fires in San Diego County. Over 1,000 homes were burned to the ground. Although many of our members were evacuated, there were no injuries or loss of homes.

San Diego County Emergency Services enacted its reverse 911 system to notify residents of the need to evacuate. It came suddenly, and when the call came it was an enlightening experience to ponder what should be taken with you as you leave your home. Worldly possessions have much less value, and the transient nature of the world becomes even more evident.

How similar it will be when the Lord Jesus comes to call his own to judgment. We were exhorted the following Sunday by our brother to use the events as a wake-up call and to be watching for another unexpected call, the call by the angel of the Lord.

We wish to thank all the brethren for the prayers on behalf of the members of our ecclesia.

Kent Ellis

SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR

With great sadness we inform all our brothers and sisters in the faith that on Friday, October 19, 2007, our Sis. Alejandra Mate, who was 48 years old, fell asleep in Christ. Our sister always stood out during her whole life for her constant preaching both to her family and others, and for her work in strengthening the ecclesia. We trust that at the return of our Lord she will awake to receive the reward of life eternal in the glorious kingdom that will be established on the earth.

Manuel and Silvia Fernandez

Our Sis. Alejandra was baptized in 1984, after attending meetings for more than five years. She told us that her family was the "slow, but steady" type, and that was demonstrated during the rest of her life. So far 11 members of her family have been

baptized, and, until shortly before her death, she was giving classes to two others. She fought a long battle with cancer, and it is our prayer that we will see her again soon in the resurrection.

Jim and Jean Hunter

SASKATOON, SK

The brothers and sisters here have been blessed with growth in our ecclesia by the addition of Bro. James and Sis. Sherri Wiens and their family, Bro. Colton, Lisa, and Jenna, through transfer from North Battleford Ecclesia. We also gained DARREL and MELISSA WIENS, who were baptized in North Battleford on April 7, 2007. With support from members of the North Battleford Ecclesia, and others, our new members were heartily welcomed into our meeting on Sunday, July 1, 2007.

We rejoice in being able to announce that LISA WIENS was subsequently baptized on Saturday, October 13, 2007, after providing a good confession of faith. She was then welcomed into fellowship on the following Sunday. Our prayers are with Sis. Lisa as she embarks on a life in the household of God, through the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Since last writing we are pleased to have been able to welcome a number of guests at our table. We thank all those who have ministered to us over the last year, and look forward to welcoming those who can visit and fellowship with us in the future. We pray that our little ecclesia can experience continued growth in numbers in and to the glory of God.

L. Berry Punter

TORONTO EAST, ON

For the Toronto East Ecclesia, the past year has been a year full of rich experiences and blessings from our Heavenly Father. The ecclesia has been pleased to support and facilitate the baptism of three new members.

Mrs. GLADYS CASTRO was baptized on June 3, 2007. Gladys was an interested friend of one of our members and after seven years attending various meetings and classes she was baptized. Instruction was helped enormously by the assistance and translation services of Spanish-speaking Dan and Maribel Archibald.

ANDREA WEIR, daughter of Livia and Bill Weir, was baptized on September 16, 2007. Andrea was brought up through the Sunday school program and has been a regular participant in the Toronto area CYC and other young peoples activities. All these programs, along with instruction and encouragement from her parents, led Andrea to a strong desire to be baptized.

JO ANN CAMERON was baptized October 21, 2007. Jo Ann first contacted the Christadelphians on the thisisyourbible.com website. After completing several online Bible correspondence courses, Jo Ann was invited by Bro. Russ and Sis. Muriel Dawes to their home for personal instruction classes that ultimately led to her baptism. Jo Ann is an avid reader and has an enquiring mind, both of which helped her in her search for Bible truth.

Sis. Nishla Neblett (nee Sobers) transferred from the Orlando, FL, Ecclesia following her marriage to Bro. Ian Neblett (Toronto East) July 21, 2007, in the Gamboa Rainforest, Panama, Central America. We are delighted to welcome Nishla to the ecclesia, and we wish her and Ian much happiness in their service together in the Lord.

Bro. Dan and Sis. Maribel Archibald (and their two children Carolina, age 12, and Naomi, age 2) transferred from the Mississauga West Ecclesia to the Toronto East Ecclesia in October. Dan and Maribel join a growing number of Spanish-speaking members in the Toronto East Ecclesia. They and their family are most welcome as new members of the ecclesia.

The Wednesday evening ecclesial Bible class is a source of helpful instruction. Each week a Scriptural topic is presented and discussed. In 2007 we continued our practice of holding Bible classes periodically throughout the year in three different suburban regions closer to where members live. These classes are held in homes and generally have an aggregate attendance that exceeds the number who attend Bible class held at the ecclesial hall. The regional classes also allow members, and sometimes their children, who may be unable to attend the central Bible class to hear some classes during the year. This has been a worthwhile innovation to our ecclesial program.

Ken Curry

VERDUGO HILLS, CA

It has been a long time since we last reported to the *Tidings*. Last year brought a number of changes in our membership. Riley Ellen Blanchard was born on March 12, 2007, to parents Bro. Nathan and Sis. Janee Blanchard.

We were blessed with a number of baptisms last year: PAUL DEPACE on April 30, 2007; NASSIB SHANKOUR on July 15, 2007; and GRANT and RENE LARSEN, the son and daughter-in-law of Bro. and Sis. Harold Larsen, on August 5, 2007. The Larsens have a young son and are now expecting another child.

We also welcomed by transfer Sis. Norma Alvarado, who was married to Bro. Nassib Shankour at the end of July. Sis. Joy Wilson transferred to the Pomona Ecclesia, which is closer to where she is attending college.

We hosted the Truth Corps team this summer. They, along with some of our members, visited 304 contacts. In conjunction with the visits we also held an Open House for which we had 15 visitors. We thank the Truth Corps for their efforts on our behalf.

We have been blessed with visitors too numerous to mention, almost every Sunday, and especially thank those who provided encouraging exhortations.

Dennis Paggi

Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School Shippensburg, PA June 28 through July 6, 2008

Our theme this year is “Ye Are My Witnesses...” (Isa 43:10). Our youth program theme will be “Kings of Israel and Judah”. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK) will speak on “A Holy Nation” to the adults and “We Have Found the Messiah” to the teens. Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON) will speak on “The Fate of the Dead” to the adults and “Resurrection of the Dead, Who and When?” to the teens. Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA) will speak on “The Servant and His Songs (Isaiah)” to the adults and “How Readest Thou?” to the teens.

Rates for 2008 are still to be determined. God willing they will be sent out in January along with our registration forms. This information will also be available on our website in mid-January: www.christadelphians.net/MACBS

Minute Meditation

Love never grows old

This issue of *The Tidings*, January 2008, marks the 51st year of the series of little articles that have come to be known as Minute Meditations. The first one appeared in the January 1958 edition of this magazine, when I first became the editor.

Now, just think about how much has changed since then. Those who were alive then are now 50 years older or have fallen asleep, and there are literally billions of people who have been born in the last 50 years. A loaf of bread cost 19 cents then, and a gallon of gas was 24 cents. A first class postage stamp was four cents, and the average annual income was \$4,650. Nikita Khrushchev was the Soviet leader, and Ike Eisenhower was the president and Richard Nixon the vice president of the United States.

That first minute meditation dealt with the subject of love. It is a subject that never grows old even though we all do. We quoted from the book, *The Greatest Thing in the World*, by Henry Drummond. There the author lists the nine ingredients of love as outlined by Paul in the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. Understanding the components of love is still just as relevant today as it was 50 years ago, and also nearly 2,000 years ago when Paul first penned those words.

Everyone wants to be loved. Brian Tracey has said, “The only thing that you can never have too much of, is love.” How do we get more love? By giving love. How? By putting into practice the ingredients of love as outlined by Paul. Henry Drummond explains that the nine ingredients of love are patience, kindness, generosity, humility, courtesy, unselfishness, good temper, guilelessness, and sincerity. We need to remember and practice all nine of these if we are to show the godly type of love that Paul was preaching. Paul explains, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

If all of us were to show love to everyone else by practicing the nine ingredients, we would all feel loved. But is it possible to love everyone? Suppose we don't feel like loving certain people. Jesus explained to his disciples, “But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.” In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says we must love our enemies and do good to those who hate us. It can be very difficult at times to love.

Love is not an option. It is a command. Jesus told a lawyer that the first commandment in the law is to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls and minds, and the second is to love our neighbor as ourselves. The apostle John helps us to understand why love is so important when he explains, “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born

of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

Talk is cheap. Many people say they love God and yet do some of the most unloving things to others. This is not love. The apostle John tells us, “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

John emphasizes that love is not just something to talk about but something to live out in actions. “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.” We cannot claim we love unless we are doing loving things. To say we love and then do nothing is meaningless — we are simply mouthing empty words. We must show our love for God by performing loving actions to our fellows, by being patient and kind to them, generously forgiving and protecting them, seeking their well being.

We concluded our first meditation with these words and we will do so again. “The task before us is to put these nine ingredients to work in our everyday lives. Love is not a thing of enthusiastic emotion; it is a rich, strong, manly, vigorous expression of the true brother and sister of Christ. ‘Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God.’ ”

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

JANUARY 2008

19,20 San Francisco Peninsula, CA Annual Study Day. Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): “Jacob”. Belmont Senior Center, 1:30, dinner served. Contact Sis. Dolores Sleeper desleeper@astound.net or Bro. John Warner 510-582-7225 for more information or accommodations

26 San Diego County Ecclesia Annual Study Day. Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI): “Little Words that Mean a Lot”. 9:30 am Ecclesial Hall, lunch served. Contact Bro. Kent Ellis ellisk@san.rr.com 858-674-5645

FEBRUARY

1-3 Camp Ladore, PA Young people’s study weekend. Bro Frank Abel: “Nehemiah — Lessons in Leadership”. Held near Scranton, PA, for all those 13 and older. Contact Bro Ryan Mutter championvegetable@hotmail.com or go to www.cyccamp.org to register online

3-8 Palm Springs Bible School. Bre. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD) and Michael Owen (Seaton, UK). Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau register@christadelphianbibleschool.org. Or visit website www.californiabibleschool.org

9 Brantford, ON Junior CYC and Little Disciples “Apps Mills” Gathering

16 Brantford, ON Senior CYC Gathering

16,17 Saanich Peninsula, BC Study weekend. Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): Subject TBD. Contact Bro. Richard Morgan richie.morgan@gmail.com

MARCH

8,9 Victoria, BC Study weekend. Bro. Mike LeDuke (Kitchener-Waterloo): “With Christ in Mind — Paul’s Letter to the Colossians”. Contact Sis. Pat Williamson (250-721-4938) pwilliamson@telus.net

15,16 Lompoc Valley, CA Annual study weekend. Bre. Don Pearce (Rugby, UK) and Paul Billington (Brantford, ON): “An Up Close Look at Bible Prophecy Being Fulfilled in Our Time”. Registration: contact Bro. Ron Stewart ronandshirley777@aol.com or call 805-733-5577. Seating limited; we suggest an early response

21,22 Simi Valley, CA Bible study and sports challenge. Bro. Allen Laben (Norfolk, VA): “Parables in Luke”. Contact Bro. Jason Hensley Jason@speakingofhisglory.com 805-202-6063

22,23 Echo Lake, NJ Study weekend. Bro. John Hellawell (Peterborough, UK): “David — Shepherd, Soldier, Sinner, Sovereign, Statesman”. For CYC: “Creation or Evolution?” Contact Bro. David Link dlink44131@aol.com 973-696-3316

29 Worcester, MA Study day. Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA). Contact Bro. Aaron MacAdams, (978) 502 9690, aaronmacadams@hotmail.com

29 April 5 Florida Bible School Christian Retreat, Bradenton, FL. Adult / teen classes. Bro. Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON): “Bumps along the Road of Discipleship”; Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD): “First Principles of Prayer”; Bro. Martin Webster (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON): “The Fifteen-Minute Exhortation”. Contact Bro. Walt Dodrill 727-528-1197 waltoddrill@msn.com. Registration: Sis. Diane Jennings 727-528-1886 diane@dianej.net

APRIL

5 Boston, MA Study day. Bro. David Levin (Baltimore, MD): “Becoming a Spiritual Person”. 9:00 am, lunch served. Contact Bro. Jeff Wallace jeff@tecbs.org 508-763-2981

MAY

2-4 Vancouver Island Sisters’ Weekend Nanaimo, BC. “Becoming a Handmaid of the Lord”. Sisters Linda Reding and Beth MacAdams (Worcester, MA). For registration information contact Sis. Iris Brown rayandirisbrown@shaw.ca 250-758-4284

3,4 Pittsburgh, PA Study weekend. Bro. Ken Styles (Royal Oak, MI): “Godly Love”. Contact Bro. David Pommer thepommers@verizon.net 724-224-7363

JUNE

28-July 6 Mid-Atlantic Bible School Shippensburg, PA. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK): “A Holy Nation”; teens: “We Have Found the Messiah”; Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON): “The Fate of the Dead”; teens: “Resurrection of the Dead, Who and When?”; Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA): “The Servant and His Songs (Isaiah)”; teens: “How Readest Thou?”. Information at www.christadelphians.net/MACBS

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JULY

26-August 3 Midwest Bible School Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "Malachi: A Question of Innocence"; Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON): "The Fate of the Dead"; Bro. James Mansfield (AU): "How the Lord Treated People". Contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 44943 Yorkshire Drive, Novi, MI 48375 248-462-5740 mike.live@gmail.com

AUGUST

9-15 Niagara Falls Bible School St. Catherines, ON. Bre. Nigel Patterson (Cornwall, UK) and John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). For information contact Bro. David Brierley david.brierly@simpatico.ca 416-236-5295

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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No. 2

Exhortation — An Eighty-Year Journey, <i>Joseph Banta</i>	55
Editorial — Only Sixty Years	59
Apologetics — The Hard Questions:	
(27) Where is God? How Can I Sense His Presence?, <i>David Levin</i>	62
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:	
(13) Paul's appeal for total unity, <i>Tom Barling</i>	72
Bible Study — Little Words that Mean a Lot:	
(6) Watchman, <i>John C. Bilello</i>	77
Music in Worship:	
Bro. C. C. Walker and his Hymns	82
Our Purpose in Singing Hymns, <i>Ken Curry</i>	83
The Design and Purpose of our Hymns	84
"Then The Seven Angels ... Seven Trumpets...", <i>Bob Burr</i>	85
"Shine! Biblical Songs for Kids"	86
Bible Mission News — Ecuador; Jamaica; Bolivia; Thisisyourbible.com ;	
An Urgent Appeal for Resident Missionaries	87
News & Notices	96
Minute Meditation — She Did What She Could, <i>Robert J. Lloyd</i>	100
Coming Events	102

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Editor: George Booker

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"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing" (1Co 13:1,2).

Men are wonderfully scarce now; and men with hearts are rare. If preachers had larger hearts, they would move more people to hear them. A sermon preached without love falls flat and dead. We have heard sermons, admirable in composition, and excellent in doctrine, but like that palace the Empress of Russia built upon the Neva River with blocks of ice. Nothing more lustrous, nothing more sharply cut, nothing more charming; but oh, so cold, so very cold! Its very beauty a frost to the soul!

Charles Spurgeon

Exhortation

An Eighty-Year Journey

An article in a health magazine caught my attention recently, not so much for its content as for its title, *The Eighty-Year Journey*. It had a special relevance to me as I was approaching, all too rapidly, my eightieth birthday. The subject of the article was the common lifespan of today, when more people live to the age of 80 than has been the case in past years. A lot of things, mental and physical, happen to us as we travel this span of life. And certainly a lot of things happen in our world during this period of time, many things that affect us profoundly.

My first impression, approaching this age, was one of disbelief: how could 80 years have gone by so fast! As long as health is relatively good, we don't really notice the changes taking place in our lives and in ourselves. We are jarred sometimes to realize how many family members and acquaintances, how many beloved brothers and sisters in the ecclesia, are no longer with us. Maybe one good thing that happens after this length of time is that the return of our Savior begins to seem closer and more real.

Looking back over an 80-year period, we realize that much has occurred in the world that has served to strengthen our faith, although there have sometimes been disappointments. But many things have transpired on the world scene to verify our hope in the promises of God and their coming fulfillment.

I was born between the world wars. I remember uncles and other acquaintances telling of their experiences in France in 1918, only ten years before I was born, although ten years to a child seemed much longer than it does now. I was told there was a depression during that time, although I had little knowledge of what that meant. My Dad was gainfully employed; only later did I learn that, for many people, times had been really bad. I would come to learn also of the effect those conditions were having on other parts of the world, and how our placid world would be changed as a result.

Sometime in my preschool years, our family life changed dramatically. My Dad had been raised by Christadelphian parents, whereas my mother had joined the Baptist Church as a young woman. Neither was particularly interested in religion until my grandfather's death seemed to awaken something in my father. He took his Dad's books home and began to study the Bible with some diligence. He also contacted the Christadelphians in Houston.

As a result of study and personal discussions, my parents and other family members came to be baptized. Thus I grew up in an ecclesial environment. By the time I started to school, Sunday school and Bible readings were important parts of my life. That, I believe, has been the biggest blessing of my life; it would certainly shape my outlook on everything that would happen in my world.

As it turned out, my Dad would not have the luxury of an 80-year journey. He had been physically strong, but there was a problem with his heart. When he became aware of this, he realized his life would not be a long one. As a result he felt urgency in his service to the Lord, an urgency that he tried to impart to others, especially his family. When I was nine years old, I was listening to my father debating a minister on a public platform. He had so looked forward to the opportunity to proclaim the truth about God's promises, the nature of man, and the coming Kingdom of God on earth. But at that very moment his life abruptly ended. Needless to say, that would have an effect — not only on me, but on everyone who knew him.

My mother's family was not Christadelphian. Although we were very close to my grandparents and the family, there was a special bond with the ecclesial family. This led my mother to marry again, to a brother in the faith. So we children were blessed to have this part of our lives continue relatively unchanged.

By the time I reached junior high school, everyone was very aware there was something ominous in our world. The depression years had been in many ways carefree, and people didn't seem to worry much about world politics. That changed when we started hearing that Europe was again being plunged into war. The radio was our ears to the world, and we began to hear speeches by President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill of England. And we would hear so often the raging, excited voice of Adolf Hitler. Even as children, we knew our world was changing.

Of course, the brethren talked a lot about the fact that all this was leading us toward the coming of Christ and the Kingdom of God. Christadelphians have always been interested in, and have followed closely, everything relating to the Jews and the land of Palestine. From earliest childhood, we were taught that there would be significant developments relating to the Jewish people. We had always been told to watch for the sign of the Jews returning to the Land of Promise before the coming of God's Kingdom.

Of course, Christadelphians talked a lot about world events and their relation to prophecy. I was always impressed by the fact that, in our magazines and other literature, Christadelphians had always spoken of such signs as fulfilling Bible prophecy — not just when these things began to happen, but in earlier years as well.

When World War II came to an end, and we first learned of the terrible extent of the Holocaust, we were profoundly affected. How thrilled we were to see how the spirit of return to the Land came upon the children of Israel. It seemed that every surviving Jew in Europe was making his or her way back to Palestine. Then in 1947 and 1948 our country supported, and the United Nations approved, an independent State of Israel.

The birth of Israel was, in world affairs, the most thrilling and significant event of my lifetime; I felt privileged to have seen it. Of course, everything did not go as we had hoped; again and again, the time of our Lord's return seemed to have

been delayed. But we hold to our assurance that Christ is coming, and the Kingdom of God with him.

I sometimes miss the obvious fervor of past generations of Christadelphians, but I also take pleasure in the coming of new generations in the service of our Lord. I feel that our God has blessed us greatly and I pray, as surely we all do, that our youth will appreciate the Truth and carry on the work of the Lord.

Eighty years seems a very long time when we are starting out, but the years pass by with incredible speed. You younger ones will begin to realize just how fast as you grow older. The greatest lesson to be taken from the idea of the “80-year journey” is that we should make the time count. We should use our allotted time to serve our Lord, to learn from His Word, making it the guide of our lives, to build up the ecclesia in these last days, and to pass on the true gospel to others.

We have been made aware of the work of past generations in bringing the Truth to this part of the world. But that work has not been limited to past generations. It is still going on, and we can and should be a part of it.

There is a lot of evidence around us today to assure us that the Kingdom of God is coming, that indeed it *must* come.

Every generation of believers, from the time of the apostles until now, has many things in common, the most important of which is the Word of God. Anyone with wisdom can see human history must have a beginning and an end. The Bible explains this to us and, in the process, gives us the only true hope for the future.

In the meantime, the trials and tribulations of every generation of believers have a purpose:

“And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed” (Dan 11:35).

Every generation will, one day soon, enjoy the fruits of salvation together, at the “time of the end”.

The Bible is the Word of God, and it alone — and no other “sacred book” — reveals the truth about salvation and the future. The LORD has said,

“I am God, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure” (Isa 46:10).

There shall be a rest with God in “the end”, and we are counseled to “labour to enter into that rest” (Heb 4:11).

God has declared often in His Word that His purpose is to fill the earth with His glory (Num 14:21; Isa 11:9; Hab 2:13,14). There will be a “time of trouble such as never was” (Dan 12:1), but then it will give way to a time of righteousness and peace such as never has been.

One last thing has not changed from generation to generation since apostolic times. We have been commanded to come together to remember and celebrate our Savior’s sacrifice. To celebrate his example of obedience to the Father’s will.

Every generation has gained spiritual strength from this, and all generations have enjoyed fellowship together in our Lord. Each time we meet in this way, we are reminded that, if we follow him, we will sit down with him to eat and drink in his Father's kingdom.

Joseph Banta (Austin Leander, TX)

The Measure of Our Lives

When the Lord God told Adam what the inevitable consequences of sin would be, namely "Thou shalt surely die"; or, as the Hebrew has, "Dying thou shalt die"; he instituted the greatest fact of life as we know it. We are all born to die — and that certainty, consciously or subconsciously, dominates the whole of our lives.

As the Apostle Paul says, "All our lifetime", from cradle to grave, "we are subject to bondage, through fear of death." And so we measure out our lives in periods which conform to the set pattern of mortal span: childhood for growth and training, youth for the beginning of toil and experience; manhood and womanhood to make our mark, for good or ill; and age for decline until the inevitable end.

But death, as many of us have sorrowfully known, does not conform to pattern. Threescore years and ten of life are not for all, and only the fool will count upon them. This very night his soul may be required of him. Some are stricken in childhood, some in the flower of their age, and some with that "crown of thorns", old age, resting upon their wrinkled brow. We know not when — but how bitter is the loss for those who are left! Jesus, with that great sensitivity which he had for the sufferings of men and women, was touched by the feeling of their infirmity in this also.

John Mitchell, People Jesus Knew

*Lord, I am glad for the great gift of living,
Glad for Thy days of sun and of rain;
Grateful for joy, with an endless thanksgiving,
Grateful for laughter — and grateful for pain.*

*Lord, I am glad for the young April's wonder,
Glad for the fullness of long summer days;
And now when the spring and my heart are asunder,
Lord, I give thanks for the dark autumn ways.*

*Sun, bloom, and blossom, O Lord, I remember,
The dream of the spring and its joy I recall;
But now in the silence and pain of November,
Lord, I give thanks to Thee, Giver of all!*

Charles Towne

Editorial

Only Sixty Years

Set against eighty years, sixty years may seem short. But I daresay that, to some, sixty years may seem like several lifetimes. I was born in 1948, the same year that the modern State of Israel was born, and I have just seen my sixtieth birthday, in the very same month, as a matter of fact, in which Bro. Joe Banta turned eighty.

I can echo Bro. Joe's words: "How could ____ years have gone by so fast!" But the Bible tells us why:

"Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. You turn men back to dust, saying, 'Return to dust, O sons of men.' For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night" (Psa 90:2-4).

It is a sobering thought: even the mountains are not necessarily "everlasting". They have had beginnings, and growth and change. If enough time passes — or if they are the subject of some cataclysm, like a great flood or earthquake — then they will have endings as well. But the LORD God Himself *is* everlasting. Seen from His perspective (and that *is* the perspective of the Bible), nothing of God's created world is assured of an eternal existence, at least in its present form.

The Bible tells us that man, especially, is created out of the "dust" of the earth (Gen 2:7), and that, one day, he will return to that very same "dust" (Gen 3:19; Eccl 3:20; 12:7). When we are in the midst of that journey, somewhere between the womb and the tomb, the road may seem so long, stretching out endlessly in front of us, with so many paths to explore, and so many possibilities. But to the LORD, who knows eternity — in fact, who lives in and "inhabits" "eternity" (Isa 57:15) — the longest human life must surely appear no longer than the short dash engraved on the cemetery marker: "Here lies," let us say, "Mr. X (1839 — 1898)." A whole lifetime lies there, in the confines of that little dash carved in stone: growth, childhood, education, career, love, marriage, family, sorrow, suffering, joy, accomplishment, longing, frustration, failure, disappointment, old age, decline, regret, and satisfaction. But it comes so quickly to its end, and then the curtain falls.

Never mind sixty or eighty years, or even a hundred. The psalmist says that even "a thousand years", *in God's sight*, is no more than a single day. And what is one day to us, one out of thousands? But suppose we had *only* one day? One day in which to do everything that we will ever do — like the little mayfly, that must pack a full adult life into a single 24-hour period, or two at most. How our perceptions change!

Then again, the psalmist says that "a thousand years" may seem like a mere "watch

in the night”, a few hours gazing through the darkness, squinting to make out shape and meaning. Then the long, long sleep comes.

“You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning — though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered” (Psa 90:5,6).

The hot, dry winds of the desert and the relentless rays of the sun may, in one day, turn green grass into brown straw. “All men are like grass,” says Isaiah; “the people are grass”, and “grass withers” (Isa 40:6-8a). On the other hand, “the Word of our God,” he adds — that alone “stands forever” (v 8b).

There is but one meaningful conclusion to such sobering thoughts:

“Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psa 90:12).

If the Word of God (including the Eternal Purpose embodied in that Word) is truly the one thing that “stands forever”, then what else can we do that is even remotely as important as gaining wisdom from that Word? How else should we spend our days — our brief span of time — than in seeking and acquiring that wisdom, and molding our hearts by it? It is a tragedy of the highest order that so few realize this. We may think that we can with little or no effort position ourselves to glide effortlessly into God’s eternal Kingdom, like pampered passengers on a luxury cruise. Let us all grow up and put away such foolish thoughts. Let us wake up to the magnitude of our opportunities and responsibilities. Let us earnestly seek the true wisdom, like the pearl of great price.

This advice is the same, for the child as well as the adult. However, it is in the nature of things that older ones may more readily grasp its truth, and its absolute importance, as they progress further along their all-too-brief journeys.

Our perceptions of time do change as we grow older. I well remember Bro. Joe, along with Sis. Marie, visiting our ecclesia occasionally when I was a youngster. And finally, when I was about to go off to college in Austin, where they lived, they especially invited me to Bible classes — often preceded by dinner — in their home. These visits became regular occurrences, and were most welcome to a young, and generally hungry, student.

I can recall that, as a teenager, I thought, ‘What a pleasant **older** couple.’ The measure of my perception of time, and relative age, is this: only twenty years later it dawned on me, with a shock, that they had been no older, at that earlier time, than I had so quickly become! And that I didn’t feel, at the age of 38 or 39, anything like an **older** brother, pleasant or otherwise! Just a few years thereafter, it occurred to me that they had by then grown only a very little older than I. And my perception remains to this day as regards Joe, although Marie has passed away. I fully expect that, one day soon, Joe and I will be the same age! So it goes.

So, perhaps, it should be with those who are siblings, children of the same Father. Each believer’s personal experiences will be somewhat different. Those of diverse ages may see some aspects of their world differently. But regardless of such minor differences, they share with one another, but with no others, the special experi-

ence of being a child of God, in its uniqueness and its blessing, its privilege and its comfort. It may be said that, in some hard-to-define way, children of God may begin to develop a sense of the eternal life that is uniquely God's life — even while still shackled with mortality. They may begin intuitively to see the outlines of a life measured not in months and years, but in faith and hope.

There is scarcely anything more gratifying than seeing younger saints and older saints in sweet fellowship with one another, grandparents and grandchildren sharing their lives in love. The young interested in the memories of the old, and the old interested in the plans of the young. The young displaying wisdom more often associated with gray heads. The old showing a joy in life, and a hope for the future that belies their “calendar age.” A “Naomi” and a “Ruth” supporting and encouraging one another. A “Paul” and a “Timothy” working side by side, as true yokefellows. It is then that we see how pointless it is to worry about getting older (what's the alternative?), or thinking of a “generation gap”.

In the sight of our heavenly Father, we are all young children. In the shadow of His everlasting “wings”, and in the embrace of His everlasting “arms” (Deut 33:27), we can be nothing but His children. In the light of eternity, we are all the same age: we are all “little ones” who belong to their Father.

One day, “age” will truly be only a meaningless number. One day, by the grace of God, we will all be the same age absolutely — for we will all be thankfully, joyfully, eternally young!

“Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” (Isa 40:30,31).

George Booker

“The young Jordan — type of that strange life of ours! Bright and beautiful in its cradle, laughing its merry morning away through the flowery fields of the Huleh; plunging with the recklessness of youth into the tangled breaks and muddy marshes of Merom; hurrying thence, full-grown, like earnest manhood with its noisy and bustling activities, it subsides at length into life's sober mid-day in the placid lake of Gennesaret [the Sea of Galilee]. When it goes forth again, it is down the inevitable proclivity of old age, sinking deeper and deeper, in spite of doublings and windings innumerable, until lost in the bitter sea of death [the Dead Sea] — that melancholy destination from which there is neither escape nor return” (W.M. Thomson, The Land and the Book).

Yet, in the Age to come, the righteous will escape from death, and the Dead Sea will be “healed” by the waters that flow from under the altar of Yahweh (Ezek 47:8-10).

Apologetics

*This is a further article in the series by Bro. David Levin. The previous article appeared in **The Tidings** for June 2007. Future articles will appear (probably at intervals) until the series is complete. These articles will discuss various aspects of living the faith.*

The Hard Questions: (27) Where is God? How Can I Sense His Presence?

*Some people run into trouble with their faith not because of intellectual matters such as the existence of God or the exclusivity problem (these we addressed in previous articles), but because of personal issues such as not sensing the presence of God in their lives. Prayer and providence are the two ways we connect with God in any personal, experiential way [i.e., **related to experience as opposed to other methods of acquiring knowledge**]. Prayer can strengthen our faith, but it can also lead to disillusionment and despair if prayers seem to remain unanswered and the believer does not sense that a real, personal God is actually listening to any request made in prayer. Although answered prayers, especially those that arise from immense distress and desperation, can lead one to sense the presence of God in a powerful fashion, there is also a huge caveat with such prayers: God has no obligation to affirm any prayer that requests a specific outcome for a specific situation. Expectations and hopes unfulfilled from prayers for specific outcomes have become a snare for the faith of many.*

Until this series took a leave of absence several months ago, the articles focused on two general issues: (1) The existence of God, and (2) belief in a single Truth concerning God. We might summarize these two areas of apologetics as first demonstrating **a** God, and then demonstrating **the** God.

The former we could call the issue of theism [*the belief that one God created and rules the world*]; those articles focused on topics such as:

- a. theodicy [*the argument in defense of God's goodness despite the existence of evil*],
- b. classical teleological arguments [*relating to the study of ultimate causes in nature*], and
- c. classical cosmological arguments [*relating to the proof of God's existence from experimental information about the universe*].

This led us at last to consider various aspects of what we can call the exclusivity issue. Overall, the articles argued that the existence of God is more likely than not, and thus it is rational to accept theism. Further questions and inquiries, especially concerning the historical matter of the resurrection of Jesus, lead us to determine what we can know about God, moving our thoughts forward, from theism in general to the particular worship of our Heavenly Father, YHWH, the

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

There is no more important question or problem in life than the question of belief.

As Blaise Pascal observed, if you are convinced of God's existence, you must set your heart on serving Him. If you are not convinced of God's existence, you must set your heart on finding Him.¹ However, there is more to belief than knowing the intellectual arguments; belief has an equally large experiential component. We can know the arguments and reasons for what we believe, but still find ourselves coming up empty when we attempt to catalogue our actual personal experience with God.

Most *Tidings* readers have no significant problem with the existence of God issue or the exclusivity issue. We are comfortable, at least at the catechismic [*pertaining to simple question-and-answer instruction*] level, with our answers to such questions as "Does God exist?" and "Does it make a difference what we believe?" If asked about what we believe, we can come up with some sort of theological verbiage. Some of us, however, encounter problems with our faith at another level, when we attempt personally to encounter that very God whose existence we can passionately affirm. Herein we find the impetus for the next articles in this series. We want to shift from the academic questions about God's existence to personal questions about our ability to sense the presence of that same God. We turn our attention to this topic because the question "How can I really sense the presence of God?" is a "Hard Question" of prime importance. (Of course, all the hard questions are of prime importance, or they would not be hard questions!)

This question takes us into new and dangerous territory that is seldom trod or mapped. When we inquire about our personal experience with God, we are no longer dealing with knowledge resources, logic, reason, or evidence. We are talking about experience with the Divine. We can know much but experience little, leaving us with an empty, unsure feeling.

- Do I *really* believe what I know is true? Is my heart in tune with my head?
- If I *know* God exists and is a personal God, why can't I have any experience of Him?

When we explore these questions, we are dealing with other forms of evidence and knowledge, and our approach now must take into account these different forms of knowledge.

Two levels of knowledge

To illustrate the difference between these two forms of knowledge of God, think about parachuting from an airplane or bungee-jumping over the Grand Canyon. You know that a parachute allows a person to descend safely while falling thousands of feet. You can read the technical specifications of the bungee cord and learn that it is easily capable of preventing your headlong plunge ending in the Colorado River. You've even seen people perform such feats on TV or at an air show. At an informational level, you know that the simple technologies of a parachute or a bungee cord provide for a safe descent.

However, people who have actually skydived or bungee-jumped will have this knowledge at a much deeper level. I can easily say, “I know that a parachute allows a person to descend safely after jumping out of an airplane in flight.” But that might not at all translate into my being willing to give skydiving a go. And no matter how much I “know” that a bungee cord would support my weight after so many feet of free fall, I have zero interest in putting my life on the line to test the truth of this knowledge.

Experiential learning involves people testing in practice what they know in theory. I will never really know about how parachutes work, and I don’t think that the lack of that particular experience will, in any serious way, be detrimental to my life. But what of experience with God? In some sort of analogous way, we can believe that God exists, but still lack an experiential knowledge of God. The gap between the statement, “I know God exists,” and the experience, “I *know* God exists,” can lead to doubt of even the academic knowledge claim.

If our truest persuasion of God’s existence arises from experience, not “book knowledge,” what can another article possibly contribute? Certainly reading this article, or even the entire series, or all the articles in the *Tidings*, won’t provide any experience of the living God. We don’t experience God through words, written or oral; we experience God primarily through a relationship with the Lord Jesus (Heb 1:1). However, we can write about some of the topics and issues regarding that experience so that we can move our spiritual insight toward that end. We want to know what a genuine experience of the Divine presence would be — if and when we do experience it. And it has to be so that we must *know about* the Lord Jesus before we can *know* the Lord Jesus.

Our task for the present, therefore, will be to examine various points of discussion that bear upon the issue of knowing God in a personal, experiential way. Two topics stand out as especially suitable to this discussion: prayer and providence. These are popular areas of discussion, teaching, and writing in our community, and I don’t intend to make any comprehensive approach to these. I only want to point out certain features of them that bear directly on the matter of sensing God’s presence.

What does it mean to experience God?

Many times I’ve heard believers express sentiments on the order of “I really felt God’s presence with me,” or “I know this was an answered prayer.” Experience with God and/or Jesus seems to come in two manifestations, one being some sort of exceptional peace, comfort, or calmness — that is, an emotional response. The other type of experience is more thoughtful than emotional, but still falls under the heading of personal experience. This occurs when a believer concludes that a particular unusual circumstance, such as a deliverance from certain calamity, could only have come about via Providence. In both types of encounters, the key issue is that the experience provides affirmation of God’s love and care, and that God is indeed present and active in the lives of at least some humans.²

Both types of experience — (a) the emotional/sense-of-presence experience and

(b) the reckoning of circumstances as Divine — are subjective and unverifiable. No one except the individual herself or himself could in any way assert that the person did or did not experience such and so. However, we are not addressing at present the use of personal experience as an apologetic tool. We do want to look at the lack of experience, or the inability to achieve such experience, as a difficulty that can lead to dissolution of faith.

We will first take up the issue of prayer and later explore aspects of providence. Remember, I will confine my inquiries to those aspects of these topics that relate to the maintenance of our faith. We are asking one of the “Hard Questions”: *“Where is God? If God exists and does care about me, why don’t I experience him in my life?”* This is a major issue of faith.

When prayer fails

Proper prayer never fails, but praying people can fail. We fail when we don’t find our prayers answered in the fashion we desire, and then ask where God went, not where we went amiss. We fail in prayer because we request the wrong things. We know that from James 4:3, but James also says that fervent prayer does avail much (5:16). We can ask “amiss”, but “amiss” can include more than the obvious. The following categories will cover most of what we generally reckon as “wrong” praying that won’t move God on our behalf:

- (1) Asking for selfish goals or ends,
- (2) Not really believing the prayer will be answered, and
- (3) Failing to be in the proper spiritual frame of mind to communicate with God.

Obviously, there’s some overlap among my hastily-thought-out analysis here, but the idea is that praying “amiss” doesn’t necessarily mean asking for a pay raise or parking space. It isn’t confined to the evangelical “send us fifty dollars and we’ll pray for your kidneys.” Neither is it limited to the shallowness of the modern form of the “prayer of the just”: “Lord, we just want to thank you and we just want to praise you...” (as if boasting that nothing else could possibly be on our minds). The fact is that prayer that makes *any* specific request (I’ll clarify that phrase shortly) is asking for trouble. God will only answer two prayers always in the affirmative; anything else must be understood as auxiliary to the main intent of prayer.

Prayers that are ALWAYS answered “Yes”

As I just provocatively wrote, God will regard only two types of prayer *always* in the affirmative. Heartfelt prayers for *forgiveness* and for *spiritual growth* will always receive a “Yes”. Any other prayer request is “maybe, conditional, and not necessarily”. These others prayers are prayers for *specific outcomes*, and even though we can offer them with great passion, goodwill, and faith in their positive outcome, God cannot regard them as necessary directives.³ We pray for the safety of those we know who are traveling; we pray for the repentance of our loved ones who have left the fold; we pray for God’s healing hand to bless the sick and infirm; and we pray for the success of our preaching efforts and Bible seminars. We pray for the welfare of those at Bible school and those attending weekend

gatherings. We pray for unity, and we pray for our brothers and sisters who live in lands impoverished by war and natural disasters.

There can be no question that we can be fervent in prayer on behalf of others, and we would certainly not think for a moment that such prayers could qualify as “amiss”. Probably in the strict sense and context of James 4:3, they aren’t. However, the outcomes are not always as prayed for. Our sick members don’t always recover. Generations of believers have prayed for unity in North America, but it seems as evasive as ever. The afflictions of the world befall our members just as surely as they do the population in general, even with massive prayer on their behalf. We can prepare dutifully for a preaching effort, and organize specific ecclesial prayer for God to give the increase, but the seats in the seminar room remain empty. All these examples aim to promote causes the Almighty surely endorses: the welfare, increase, and unity of the Body of Christ, causes for which we are specifically enjoined to pray (e.g., Rom 15:30,31; Eph 6:19; Matt 9:38). How then could such prayers fall short or fall into the “amiss” column? Because two other significant and weighty implications bear on these types of prayers. One of these has to do with God’s sovereignty, and the other with our own spiritual welfare.

Before I detail these, however, let me back up and conclude the brief discussion about the two prayers to which God *always* answers “Yes”. These are prayers for *forgiveness* and *spiritual growth*. How can we be so bold as to assert that God will always answer these prayers affirmatively? If we asked the question from the negative side, it might be more obvious: “Will God ever refuse anyone’s prayer for forgiveness or spiritual growth?” Aside from the objection that such prayer must be sincere, the answer to these requests clearly differs from a materially specific request or for a specific outcome of some trial. As for the “sincerity” of the prayer, that’s always an issue, and a subjective matter between the disciple and God. Sincerity is an issue for any type of prayer, so we needn’t place any special caveats on prayers for forgiveness or spiritual growth. Instead, consider the following Scriptures:

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him” (James 1:5).

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jo 1:9).

These clear “if-then” declarations tell us that God *will* answer these prayers with a “Yes”. God is the only true source of forgiveness and spiritual wisdom. Not only is Scripture clear here, but it is also obvious that God will always be in concord with our desires for forgiveness and spiritual growth. As for specific outcomes (such as physical healing), we have no such guarantee or assurance. In our current situation (this “mortal dispensation”), God will not always grant physical healing, but will always grant the spiritual resources we need to keep our faith during any calamity. If we focus ourselves on gaining the spiritual resources needed to deal with problems, we will receive strength, we will experience God, and we will endure the trials of life.

Praying for a favorable outcome as the main focus — while neglecting or minimizing God's hand in those areas where He will surely bless — will limit our contact with God and hence our sense of personal experience. For instance, if you are looking for a job and pray fervently for God to help, you could become discouraged if God's purpose for you at that time is best suited by your failing to get the job. However, if your prayer is that God will help you to use the situation to grow spiritually, regardless of the outcome of the job search, then you have the certainty of God's presence and the opportunity truly to experience God as a personal being in your life.

What about Jesus' own words?

You might be thinking of a few places that state otherwise. The words of Jesus recorded in these Scriptures seem to give a carte blanche to our prayer requests:

"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will" (Mark 11:24).

"Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13,14).

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7).

"Truly, truly I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name" (John 16:23).

What might we want to include or exclude when Jesus says "whatever" and "anything"? Do we have any warrant to limit what the Lord repeatedly asserts? Yes, we do, on the grounds of experience, context, and other Scriptures. We have experience to the contrary, for it is plain that we do **not** always receive whatever we ask. James' provisos of "asking in faith" (1:6) and not "asking amiss, to spend it on your passions" (4:3), apply in a general sense, but they hardly make sense as limiting Jesus' open-ended invitation. It is still plain that when we pray on behalf of others, we are asking in deep faith and certainly not indulging our passions, yet we still don't have assurance of an affirmative answer.

The context of the passages in Mark is that of forgiveness, as you will note by reading the next verse. Forgiveness is also the context in John, although it is less obvious.⁴In brief, the passages in John are all in Jesus' final exhortation and appeal to the disciples. The entire context has to do with his continuing work and the disciples abiding in him. His continuing work comes under the heading of "the Counselor" (KJV "Comforter"; Greek *parakletos*), who turns out to be his risen self, the resurrected Jesus. John himself identifies the *parakletos* and interprets the breadth of "whatever" and "anything":

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate (*parakletos*) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1Jo 1:9-2:1, RSV).*

When John writes that Jesus will cleanse us of all sin, he is clarifying the Lord's apparently open-ended statement made just before the offering of himself for sin. In context, "anything" and "whatever" mean "any sin". There is no sin that is so great that we can't find forgiveness in Jesus. These Scriptures are not just general spiritual encouragement; they assure us of the certainty of forgiveness despite whatever mess we might make of our lives.

Spiritual growth and trial

Forgiveness and spiritual growth are closely related concepts, but they differ "as far as east is from west" in their emotional and practical dimensions. Forgiveness brings the breath of life, the touch of Divine healing, the burden lifted and the restoration of our spirit (e.g., Psa 51:7-10). Spiritual growth, on the other hand, entails trials and despairs of life, as attested many places in the Bible (e.g., James 1:2-4; Heb 12:5-11). In short, the prayer for spiritual growth is very likely a prayer for pain and suffering. Is it possible to follow Jesus any other way? Yet, this is the prayer that God will always answer "Yes", and we must remember that James 1:5 comes directly after James 1:2-4.

***Note:** There is the specific caveat regarding the following section, "Connecting with God". Prayer is one of the two dimensions of faith (the other being providence) that experientially connect us with God. If the focus of our prayer life is on specific requests that are either likely to remain unfilled, or worse, telling God what we expect Him to do, we run a high risk of disillusionment. Expectations unfulfilled is half of the issue; the other half would be that when we reduce prayer to evangelical tokenism, we are missing a good part of what our prayer life should involve. And if this dimension is missing from one of the two avenues in which we can experience God's presence, we will obviously suffer from some sort of disengagement. Prayer is a far too spiritual venture to have it focus on the temporal circumstances of life, no matter how much they present their urgency upon us. If we come to think of God as primarily one to go to in the day of physical troubles, the snare is set for the trap of disillusionment — a spiritual sickness for which I have yet to see a prayer request sent out for anyone. It's almost paradoxical at one level, but thinking a bit further, it makes sense. If we get a skewed perception of how God answers prayer, we have a skewed perception of God and His overall purpose, and that will unquestionably tax our faith when we most need it.*

Connecting with God in prayer

I still endorse the practice of our widespread communal prayer on behalf of our hurting members, exactly the same way as we do. But I endorse it with a wider perspective on the meaning and purpose of prayer. Remember, **any** prayer that requests a specific outcome (whether it be the healing of a sick brother or sister, or to get a job, or anything else) — no matter how beneficial the outcome might be on the temporal scale — is problematic. It places us in uncertain waters and

emphasizes an aspect of providence that may or may not be realized. However, the very same prayer can offer ***absolutely certain*** spiritual benefits both for the people praying and for the person for whom the prayer is offered.

When we pray, we are talking to ourselves as much as we are talking to God, and we are telling ourselves what is important to us. When we find ourselves highly focused and emotionally involved in praying for another's welfare, we know that this is an act of love, and we feel connected to that person and to the God of comfort. We have tested our hearts, and found ourselves moved with compassion. Further, there is hardly anything more encouraging to a recipient of prayer than to know that your brothers and sisters are appealing to our Heavenly Father on your behalf. That will always have a positive effect; it depends not on any outcome. Even if the person might be unconscious or otherwise unaware of the prayers taken to the highest altar on his or her behalf, the person's support system will know that, and convey that encouragement and hope to the suffering person. We recognize the power of prayer, and we ought also to recognize the avenue of prayer's efficacy. It is in the act of prayer that we find focus, connection with God, the sifting of our values, and the encouragement of the faithful. When we pray in this vein, we cannot fail to comprehend the presence of a living God who has a personal concern for our welfare.

When our prayers remain focused on seeking spiritual strength to cope with the problem, regardless of the outcome, we are requesting what God will surely bestow, spiritual growth. In doing so, we will most assuredly experience God, and know God in the manner that comes only through real life learning. If our prayers, however, are based primarily (or solely) on asking for a specific outcome, we will find the presence of God only if the petition comes to pass. If not, discouragement and ultimate disillusionment ensue, in many cases leading to damaged faith.

If we pray that God grant the afflicted individual and his or her support system the strength to bear up to whatever the situation demands, then we will feel connected to God; and the afflicted person(s) will have spiritual support no matter what the temporal outcome. The ultimate recipient in petition for another's welfare is, in fact, our own sense of nearness with God. God will support the afflicted party in his or her own prayers to understand and endure trial, and our prayers will be in concert with theirs and with God's will. We cannot fail to draw closer to God with this attitude, regardless of what temporal outcome God might direct for that individual, or what that individual's free will choice has determined for his or her life.

Community petitional prayer

We have a well-developed aspect of our spiritual community that keeps us informed as to the welfare of our brothers and sisters. Should any of us encounter a major health, financial, or other crisis, we know that our spiritual family will be solicited for prayers on our behalf. We have a wonderful and supportive network, and I wouldn't want my comments here to be taken as critical of those who disseminate information and pray for the sick and distressed among us. In our home we regularly pray for the temporal welfare of our afflicted brothers and sisters. I

do want to point out, however, the perspective we ought to have so as best to use the resource of prayer. Some basics to keep in mind include:

1. The only prayers to which God will *always* answer “Yes” are those for spiritual growth and forgiveness. Asking God for any specific blessing or outcome exceeds our knowledge as to what is in our eternal best interest.
2. Anytime we pray for a specific outcome, such as someone’s recovery, *we don’t know God’s will* for that person. Asking for a specific outcome (usually the recovery of the person) is telling God what He ought to do. This may not accord with His intentions in the matter, and thus we could be praying for an outcome contrary to God’s will.
3. Even when we append “If it be your will” to such prayers, we are still praying for a person’s recovery, and thus we are setting our hearts on that outcome. We want the person to recover, and we are hoping to align God on our side.
4. Everyone is going to die of something, and there is absolutely no guarantee of that being of natural causes in our dotage (see earlier articles in this series on theodicy and the fairness of God).
5. What distinguishes God’s children from the rest of humanity is that we have an understanding of human nature and our suffering, not of any protection or expectation of relief from suffering.
6. The greatest need of a person enduring a crisis (and of that person’s close family and support system) is that of God’s grace and peace. The suffering need to understand the meaning of their anguish and pain, and to be comforted during the trial. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?” (Prov 18:14). *God is more interested in how we spiritually cope with the trial than in the physical outcome.* If this is God’s perspective, should ours be any different?
7. Setting our hopes on the “cure” can lead to disillusionment and even greater despair if physical restoration is not God’s will for that person. This is a major concern. If we lose perspective of our position before God and expect that we can alter the course of life by prevailing upon enough believers only to pray hard enough, then we are setting ourselves up for serious despair.

In summary, let us return to the reason I put a discussion of petitional prayer into the agenda of our Hard Questions. We have a contextual issue. We do pray appropriately, but I’m not so sure the context of our prayers is often well understood. Many people do connect with God in prayer, and many others find this a vain exercise that leaves them empty and void. It is to these that I address my remarks. We *can* experience God through prayer, regardless of any specific outcome, when we pray in the context of what God has already taught us about mortal life before our Lord’s advent.

David Levin (Baltimore, MD)

(Next: *Experiencing God’s Providence*)

Notes:

1. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, #194.
2. These types of evidence for and of a personal God fall into a category other than the academically oriented arguments we have previously employed. Typically, personal experiences have

- very little apologetic value; they might serve to bolster the faith of the individual with the experience, but very few people would come to be believers based on others' account of God's activity in their lives. The use of personal testimony in apologetics or preaching work has very limited utility; their value isolates upon the individual who has had the experience.
3. A contemporary comedian, Emo Phillips, has humorously lighted upon this principle: "When I was a kid I used to pray every night for a new bicycle. Then I realized that the Lord doesn't work that way, so I stole one and asked for forgiveness."
 4. For a more extensive analysis of these passages, see my *Tidings* articles, "The Comforter", August and September, 1995.

Prayer

"Do not pray for easy lives; pray to be stronger. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers; pray for powers equal to your tasks. Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle, but you shall be a miracle. Every day you shall wonder at yourself, at the richness of life which has come to you by the grace of God" (Phillip Brooks).

"Never pray for more than you can put to use" (Scottish proverb).

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

"Prayer is far more than uttering words. I can pray when I do not think I am praying. We can pray without any words at all. Prayer, in the last analysis, is the urge of the life towards God, and spiritual things; the setting of the mind upon things above, as Paul has it. Every detail of every day can be mastered by that urge" (G. Campbell Morgan).

"Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but beseeching His willingness" (Nigel Patterson).

"Don't pray to escape trouble. Don't pray to be more comfortable. Pray to do the will of God in every situation" (Samuel Shoemaker).

"The last and highest result of prayer is not the securing of this or that gift, the avoiding of this or that danger. The last and highest result of prayer is the knowledge of God — the knowledge which is eternal life — and by that knowledge, the transformation of human character, and of the world" (George John Blewett).

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (13) Paul's appeal for total unity

We shall now begin to consider Ephesians 4. But first, we must recall how, in Ephesians 2, Paul stressed the great concept of the unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ Jesus.

Through the Lord's work, Jew and Gentile had become one. Paul had shown this by using the "with" prefixes — "syn" and "sym". These prefixes have passed into English in such words as "sympathy" and "synthesis".

The prefix we now have in mind is "huper", or "hyper", which appears in many English words: "hypersensitive", "hyperactive", etc. The Greek word can have two meanings. The one of interest at present is "over and above, beyond, more than"; this is brought out admirably in Ephesians 3:20:

"Now to him who by the power at work in us is able to do far more abundantly than we ask or think" (RSV).

In the previous v 19, the love of Christ "surpasses knowledge" (RSV). This love is a transcendent love, and the use of "hyper" brought this home to Paul's readers in the first century.

The prisoner in the Lord

Having thus brought before his readers the inestimable privileges they enjoy in the Lord Jesus, Paul — whose mind can move on the highest level — is also fully conscious of the obligations placed upon every believer. This he does by the simple expedient of using the word "therefore":

"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called" (Eph 4:1).

It is the force of this word "therefore" that counts. Another well-known instance is at the beginning of Romans 12:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren... to present your bodies a living sacrifice" (v 1).

When we reflect upon the aspects of faith in the Lord that have been covered in this great Roman letter, we begin to appreciate the force of "therefore". In the instance of his appeal in Ephesians 3:1, Paul had been a prisoner in Rome because of his special mission to the Gentiles. This explains his lengthy digression on the status of Gentile disciples in the Lord. Now he addresses himself to all his readers, Jew and Gentile. It is as a prisoner of the **Lord** that he speaks. Jesus himself had stressed in the upper room:

"Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am" (John 13:13).

As the result of his submission to his Father's will in Gethsemane and Calvary, he had been given the name that is above every name (Phi 2:9). Now all Paul's

readers shared in the unique privileges available only to those who respond to the offer of salvation in Jesus.

“Walk worthy...”

Their walk, or conduct, is to be worthy of their calling, and the way this is to be exhibited is in keeping with the teaching of the Master: “with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Eph 4:2). As is generally recognized, this insistence on lowliness and meekness is not in keeping with the philosophy of the Greeks and Romans; they were more often associated with the domination and subjection of slavery. But in Christ Jesus, God had called into existence a new society. For members of this society, there was a phenomenon at Colosse which would be incomprehensible to the Greco-Roman world: a master (Philemon) and his runaway slave (Onesimus) could sit in the same assembly on the first day of the week and break bread together in memory of the Lord who had died for them both. This completely new situation is described in Colossians 3:11:

“There cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman: but Christ is all, and in all.”

It is doubtful whether the quality of meekness will advance one’s cause in our contemporary world. But the Lord in his teaching makes its importance fundamentally clear:

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5)...

“Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven; whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (18:3,4).

The Lord himself is the supreme example of humility:

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt 11:29).

The subject of the Lord’s own humility is indeed important: we can learn from him, and especially from his example. Passages commonly invoked in this connection are Philippians 2:5-11 and John 13:3-15. These are examples of humility displayed by our Lord during his earthly life, but the one we are now to consider speaks of the time when, as the Lord of all mankind, he will return with irresistible power, attended by the angels (see 2Th 1:7-10). It will be then that the glorified Lord will show his gratitude to his faithful servants. They will not be told to bow before him, which would be their spontaneous reaction. Rather, the emphasis is upon what the Lord himself will do:

“Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself [as in John 13:4], and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them” (Luke 12:37).

What a joyful assembly that will be, far beyond anything we can experience now. But what is so unique about this event is the example of gracious appreciation shown by the Lord to those who, despite their weaknesses and failings, have endeavored to love and serve him. Now he treats them, not as servants, but as

his honored “guests”. Thus we understand that, when Paul spoke of the Second Coming, the great prospect for him was simply to be with his Lord (1Th 4:17).

A call to unity

In Ephesians 4:3 there is a call to unity: they are to give “diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”. We recall once again the divisive action of the Judaizers in the Lycus valley. One of the sad features of human behavior is the ease and frequency with which a community can break up into factions. It is likely that Paul was reminded of the difficulties of the Corinth ecclesia when he wrote these words to the Ephesians:

“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought” (1Co 1:10).

When we consult the Book of Acts, with its honest record of the earliest days, we do not have to proceed far before we read of the discontent about the distribution of assistance. The Greek-speaking Jewish believers felt the widows of those disciples who spoke Hebrew (i.e., Aramaic) were being favored at the expense of their own widows (Acts 6:1). Earlier there had been the dark episode when Ananias and Sapphira had sought to deceive the Holy Spirit, with tragic consequences (Acts 5:1-10). The sorcerer Simon, after his baptism, thought he could bribe Peter and John to give him the power to bestow the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-23).

The great and vexing problem of the relationship of uncircumcised disciples to the Law of Moses has already received ample notice in this series of studies. It was, as we have seen repeatedly, the source of the problems among the Colossians. Paul’s letters are constantly concerned with difficulties that had arisen in the early ecclesias he had founded, and he had no illusions about the problems that would later arise. In his moving address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, he declared:

“I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29).

Even the apostle John was to encounter opposition: in his third letter he brings to our attention a certain Diotrephes. This believer loved to have the pre-eminence in his assembly, prating against John “with wicked words” (3Jo 1:9,10).

Personal ambition has no place in the life of true disciples. After baptism, the “old man” is still very much alive. Even Paul did not regard himself as an exception in this respect; he wrote to the Corinthians, whom he was seeking to correct:

“But I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected” (1Co 9:27).

There can be little doubt of his success, for among his final recorded words, there is this great assurance:

“Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day: and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved his appearing” (2Ti 4:8).

Schism and problems of various kinds have characterized the history of the faith from the earliest days. This reflection enables us to see our personal weaknesses

and the problems that have beset our community in a proper and sobering perspective. Finally, as will be revealed in the great day, “there is one body, and one spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all” (Eph 4:4-6).

The quality of love

There could be no more sobering message than this. The apostle, in Ephesians and Colossians, helps us wonderfully to understand how that unity can be achieved. What will matter finally is the quality of *love*. After rehearsing, in Colossians 3, the attributes essential in a follower of the Lord — and these should be our preoccupation! — the apostle adds, significantly:

“And above all these things... love, which is the bond of perfectness” (v 14).

The NIV helps us here:

“And over all these virtues put on love which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

Paul is constantly speaking of love: in Ephesians alone it appears ten times. His awareness of what the Lord said in the upper room (see John 13:34; 15:12,17) is demonstrated in Ephesians 5:2:

“Walk in love, even as Christ also loved you.”

There is nothing vague about love: it is a fragrant compound, and Paul indicates the constituents that together give it fragrance in the celebrated chapter 1 Corinthians 13:

“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends...” (vv 4-8, NRSV).

There may be variations in the rendering of the Greek, but the way love reveals itself is clear in all versions.

In this same chapter the apostle makes crystal clear that any record of discipleship that is not a manifestation of love is not acceptable. An individual's record may be spectacular but, if it is not a manifestation of love, it carries no weight. This had to be understood by the readers of Paul's letter: it is love (v 2) that gives real unity to the body, and so ensures peace (v 3). For there is only one body (v 4), to which life is communicated by one spirit — the spirit of love, the spirit of Christ:

“If any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom 8:9).

Paul continues to pursue the theme of unity: “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all, and in all” (vv. 5, 6). That there is but one God, the Creator, the sovereign of the universe, is a concept that need not detain us; the whole of Scripture testifies to this fundamental truth.

One faith and one baptism

However, when we consider the notion of one faith and one baptism, and look back over the history of Christianity, and indeed of any distinct community, we are faced with difficulty. What we have already considered is nevertheless a

guide. Where doubtful issues have been debated — in a spirit of acrimony and self-righteousness, with a total absence of love, and failure or even refusal to understand what others are saying — the outcome is scarcely likely to receive the seal of divine approval.

But can we even hope to arrive at an understanding of what is a faith acceptable to our God and to the Lord Jesus? Paul must evidently have possessed this conviction; otherwise, how could he honestly speak of the unity of the faith?

What better can we do than look once more at Luke's record in the Acts. On the day of Pentecost, in fulfillment of the Lord's own promise, the Twelve received the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. They too were to bear their personal witness (see John 15:26,27). Then when Peter (for the first time after the Lord's ascension) preached the gospel of salvation in Jerusalem, he was invested with divine authority. There were 3,000 converts that day, Jews and proselytes, some living in Jerusalem, others from all over the Roman empire and beyond — who responded by being baptized (Acts 2:41). We can understand that after their baptism, they would want to know a great deal more about the Lord Jesus, the promised Messiah crucified by his own people. First we note Peter elaborated at some length on what is preserved of his discourse ("with many other words": v 40). Then we take note of verse 42, referring to the apostles' teaching and fellowship. This testimony would be the basis and substance of what is preserved in the four gospel records. The contents of the latter had to be in harmony with what those earliest converts learned on the day of Pentecost — otherwise there would have been confusion among the earliest believers.

We do well, therefore, to give special attention to Acts 2 and 3, if we desire to arrive at the unity of the faith.

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

Henry Alford

On a day in 1827, sixteen-year-old Henry Alford wrote in his Bible: "I do this day, as in the presence of God and my own soul, renew my covenant with God, and solemnly determine henceforth to become His, and to do His work as far as in me lies."

The young man grew up to be a preacher, minister, and teacher. He wrote hymns, the most notable of which is: "Come, ye thankful people, come..."

Among scholars, he is best known for his commentary on the Greek New Testament, on which he labored for eighteen years.

It was said that in his preaching Henry Alford was considered something of a radical by the more conservative of his church leaders, but that his good humor and friendliness won him their affection nonetheless. He was noted for being able to see the best points in different Christian positions, however much he might disagree with them.

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (6) Watchman

*“Watchman, what of the night?
Watchman, what of the night?”
(Isa 21:11).*

In the year 117 AD, Publius Aelius Hadrianus, known simply to us as Hadrian, became emperor of the Roman Empire. Upon ascending the throne he took the radical step of visiting firsthand every territory and frontier ruled by Rome — something no other emperor had ever done. It is said that, on visiting Britannia, the northernmost outpost of the empire, he decided that the Celtic tribes inhabiting what we now call Scotland could not be civilized, and therefore the best policy was to contain them. He ordered his legions to build a great wall 80 miles long across the narrowest part of the country, from the Irish Sea on the west to the North Sea on the east, to keep out the Pict warriors.¹ Remnants of this wall can still be seen today.

In its original form Hadrian's Wall was built mostly of stone and was eight to ten feet wide at its base, and 15 feet in height, with a path at the top for the watchman to patrol. At every one-third of a mile a raised watchtower for signaling was constructed, and for each mile along the wall a more substantial castle-like structure was built housing some 60 legionnaires. These mile-castles guarded a portal gate through the wall that was intended for trade and commerce. It is thought to have taken six to eight years to complete the wall, and that the construction occupied three full legions (comprising approximately 15,000 men). Once the edifice was in place, watchmen patrolled it day and night. Any attempt to scale or breach the wall caused them to relay signals to arouse the encamped legions; these were billeted in 16 larger forts each holding up to 1,000 men. For the next three centuries this wall protected Roman Britannia from the savage Celtic tribes to the north.

The job of the watchman

The job of the watchman was of extreme importance, and the code of the Roman legions enacted severe punishment on any sentry who failed in his duty. The penalty for sleeping on watch was public clubbing to death by his fellow legionnaires, in front of the whole cohort.² We do not know in detail what the military code was for watch duty for those sentries who guarded the walls of Israelite and Judean cities in the time of the Kings, but the Scriptures hint at equal severity — for the lives of many were in the hands of the watchman. So important did the King James translators regard the concept of “watchfulness” that they used thirteen different variants on the word “watch” to translate the various Hebrew and Greek equivalents.³ With this in mind we have the means of appreciating the parallels that are drawn between watch duty and spiritual vigilance in our Scriptures.

We get some insight into the responsibilities of a watchman in 2 Kings 9:17 (NKJV):

“Now a watchman stood on the tower in Jezreel, and he saw the company of Jehu as he came, and said, ‘I see a company of men.’”

Here the Hebrew word “watchman” means “to peer out into the distance”; it comes from a primitive root having the sense of “leaning forward”.^{4, 5} We may think here of one who gazes out into the distance, trying to anticipate danger. The watchman in Biblical times had no binoculars or telescope; he had to rely on his keen senses, and maintain due diligence — being alert to any danger — so he could sound the alarm before it was too late.

Foreseeing spiritual danger

Our Lord Jesus Christ alludes to the ability to sense spiritual danger before it occurs:

“But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up” (Matt 24:43).

If we don’t foresee spiritual danger it will take us unawares, and we will be ensnared in the consequences. We can relate to this at many levels in our daily walk. For example, parents have a responsibility to guide their children and see that they avoid bad companions. It is important for parents to have an open relationship with their children, especially in the teenage years when the temptation to emulate their peers may not always lead to good consequences. If the parent-child relationship is close and loving, then virtually all the evils that prevail in this world can be avoided. The apostle Paul exhorts parents not to discourage their children and thus, by implication, to bring them up in a loving way (Col 3:21).

The same sense of anticipation applies to choosing a mate, sorting out challenges in our marriages, and dealing with problems on the job, to cite a few examples. In this age we can get wrapped up in the concept of success, which in the world’s sense of values is best described by the bumper sticker I once saw on a luxurious sport car; it read: “The one with the most toys wins.” If we fall into this mode of life, brothers and sisters can work such long hours and devote so much time to their careers that their children, family and ecclesial relationships suffer. One might have the best home and the most elegant automobiles, and vacation in the most exotic places — and yet lose the greatest treasure of all: our eternal inheritance. Failure to anticipate the spiritual consequences of a life that places God second would make one a very poor watchman indeed.

Guarding and protecting

There is another aspect of being a good watchman that is embodied in the Hebrew word used in the passage in Ezekiel 3:17 (NKJV):

“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me” (see also Ezek 33:2,7).

Here the word has a sense of guarding or protecting.⁶ It is not enough to anticipate

danger; we also have to do something about it. The legionnaires on sentry duty patrolling Hadrian's Wall not only needed to signal the cohorts of an impending attack, but they also had to be prepared to draw their own swords and be the first to defend the barricade.

We live in an age of non-involvement; the sense of community and of mutual dependence that once existed has largely disappeared. The hectic nature of modern life has a way of swamping us. We must put our own needs aside when it comes to aiding others. Many of our brothers and sisters desperately require our time, energy and resources to cope. If we are diligent watchmen, we will be aware of that need. We must go beyond awareness: we ought to be willing to guard and protect them.

Ezekiel 33 is a primer in what the Lord God expects of a spiritual "watchman". The following points should be noted in that chapter:

- (a) Verse 1: The watchman's weapon is the "word of God" (cp. also Isa 55:11). The apostle Paul styles this as "the sword of the spirit" (Eph 6:17).
- (b) Verse 3: Warnings must be loud and clear. The Judean sentries would have sounded the alarm using a shofar, an instrument made from the bent horn of a ram. It makes a blaring sound that is as irritating as it is hard to ignore.
- (c) Verses 4,5: The responsibility for acting upon the watchman's warning is upon the individual who hears the shofar (cp. also James 4:17). If one ignores the alarm, because one is preoccupied with other affairs, then blood would be upon that person's own head.
- (d) Verses 8,9: If the watchman failed to warn of danger, then the blood of the victims would be upon the watchman's head. In placing this sentence upon a spiritual watchman who was derelict in his duty, the conclusion in these verses is perfectly in line with the death sentence that probably would have been passed upon a sentry who failed in his responsibilities while guarding the walls of Jerusalem. From Roman to modern times, a sentry who fails in his obligations has been subject to court-martial under the Uniform Code of Military Justice; the guilty could expect the severest penalty.

The spiritual "watchman"

Given the awesome responsibilities of a spiritual watchman, how can we prepare ourselves to do the job to the best of our abilities? In the Roman legions not all were assigned watch duty. The task generally fell to the younger legionnaires, who were more apt to have the energy and clear eyesight that often falters with age. The converse, however, may be the case for a spiritual watchman. Our ability to be proactive in sensing the needs of others, and having the wherewithal to do something about it, should increase with age and experience. Unfortunately, we don't necessarily grow older and wiser. That will not occur naturally. We need to work at it. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, gives us a vivid exhortation on how we can become the very best spiritual watchman. The apostle uses the imagery of the completely outfitted Roman legionnaire as a metaphor

for the preparation necessary for a well-armed spiritual warrior. In Ephesians 6, we are told to:

- (a) “Put on the whole armor of God” (v 13). Incomplete outfitting for a soldier could have disastrous consequences: the enemy would then seek to strike at the weakest point. It is equally true of the spiritual warrior. If organizing our time is our weak point, we will never find time to serve God properly. Each of us is given the same 168 hours per week in which to live. How we organize that time is simply a matter of priorities. Why is it that obstacles seldom interfere with us making a buck, but become insurmountable in making sure we are supporting the meeting, or finding time to help our brothers and sisters in need?
- (b) ... “With the belt of truth buckled around your waist” (v 14, NIV). Truth needs to encircle the watchman completely. If we are not enveloped in Truth, any warning we may give others is probably going to go unheeded. Saying ‘Do as I say, not as I do’ is unacceptable; it only makes us seem hypocritical.
- (c) ...And “the breastplate of righteousness” (v 14). The breastplate protects the most vulnerable part of the body. The ancients believed that the heart was not only the seat of life, but also of the intellect. Our heart has to be in the right before we dare tell anyone else how to live.
- (d) ...Having the “feet shod with the preparation of the gospel” (v 15). If properly fitted with these “shoes”, we are prepared to go anywhere to aid others. The Roman legionnaires marched everywhere; they didn’t have motorized transport to carry them.⁷ It is said that the only thing that limited their mobility was how far and how fast they could move on their feet. The metaphor here applies to us having the same dedication for spiritual mobility.
- (e) The “shield of faith” (v 16). The soldier’s shield protected him from objects hurled from afar, whether it was arrows, darts, javelins, or stones. Likewise the shield of faith protects from all the evils of the world that can be heaved at us.
- (f) The “helmet of salvation” (v 17). A blow to the head is a fatal blow (Gen 3:15). A legionnaire would never have thought of going into battle without his head protected. The soldier of Christ must keep his wits about him at all times. Filling our minds with the Word of God puts upon us the helmet of salvation.
- (g) And finally, the “sword of the Spirit” (v 17). This is the only offensive weapon given to the Christian soldier. The apostle Paul tells us: “...Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Gal 5:16; see also Rom 8:14, 1Co 3:16; 12:8, among others). If the Word of God is in all our thoughts, then we have the “sword of the Spirit” that can be used to ward off any temptation, defeat any sorrow, and aid any brother or sister in their battles with life.

Watching for the coming of Christ

The true purpose of putting on this “whole armor of God” is spelled out in verse

18: i.e., so that we are prepared for “watching”. Here the Greek word means literally to “be sleepless, or to keep awake”. It is the same form of the Greek word used by our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 25:13; Luke 21:36) in warning us always to be prepared for the day of his coming. No one knows the day, the hour or even the second that one’s life may be snatched away. But this we can be assured of: the very next thing we will be aware of after our death will be the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our required presence at his judgment seat. Thus the admonition that Jesus gives to “watch therefore” is the same that any diligent commander would give his watchmen. We need to stay awake and be vigilant, for we “know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh”.

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. The Roman mile is used here, which was 1,000 paces of a legionnaire, approximately equivalent to 4,854 feet.
2. A cohort was the basic fighting unit of the Roman Army. It was composed of 480 men and six centurion officers and was commanded by a Tribune. Ten cohorts would comprise one legion.
3. Watch, watched, watcher, watchers, watches, watcheth, watchful, watching, watchings, watchman, watchman’s, watchmen, and watchtower.
4. Strong’s number 6822.
5. See also Isaiah 21:6,11,12.
6. Strong’s number 8104.
7. Typically 24 miles in a day with a backpack weighing approximately 70 pounds.

The Roads of Rome

*“All roads lead to Rome, it was said. They spread out from Rome too and ran to the remotest frontiers: they were the veins that kept the blood in circulation. They ran through deserts and over mountains; they crossed the passes of the Alps and the snow-clad mountains of Asia Minor. Strategic considerations and care for trade communications determined their direction. Impressive engineering skill was employed in making them. They lay so deeply and solidly fixed in the earth that they resembled more than anything a wall with a road on the top. They can still be found in all the countries over which Rome ruled: they seem to have been built for all eternity. They were long and even, with gently rounded curves. Where modern roads in England have been made over them motorists enjoy driving: their straightness allows car to run at their top speed. When, in 1850, a French general climbed with his troops over a pass in the Atlas Mountains, he held it for a tremendous achievement and thought he was the first who had dared to cross those impassable heights. But then he found an inscription on a rock showing that the Third Legion had made a road there!” (Poul Borchsenius, *History of the Jews: The Son of a Star*, p. 80).*

Music in Worship

Bro. C.C. Walker and his Hymns

Charles Curwen Walker (“C.C.”, as he came to be known in Christadelphian circles) was born in 1856 in Norfolk, England. When he was 13 he went with his father to Australia. In 1880 he returned to England to deal with the estate of a deceased relative. While he was in London, he was sent copies of the “Declaration” and the “Bible Companion” by a relative. He was also given a copy of Robert Roberts’ “Town Hall Lectures”. Before he left London to return to Australia, he bought various publications to read on his voyage.

While traveling back to Australia, he made a close study of *Twelve Lectures* (now known as *Christendom Astray*). All this led him to make a solemn declaration: “If it shall please God to bring me to Melbourne and allow me to be baptised into the name of Jesus Christ, I will thereafter devote myself entirely and exclusively to His service. Amen.” At this point in his life he had grasped the truth concerning the mortality of man and the relationship between God and His Son Jesus, before he ever met with any Australian Christadelphians. So he was baptized without delay in Melbourne in 1882, at the age of 25.

He proposed marriage to Sis. Edith Sutcliffe of England, and she sailed to Australia with her sister Ellen. When Bro. Roberts invited him to Birmingham to help with the production of the Christadelphian Magazine, he accepted.

Bro. Robert Roberts put C.C. Walker in charge of a section of the magazine called “The Jews and their Affairs”. In 1891 C.C. Walker became assistant editor of the Christadelphian Magazine. In 1897 he became joint editor with Bro. Frank Shuttleworth when the Roberts family sailed to Australia.

The following year Robert Roberts died in San Francisco. C.C. Walker left Frank Shuttleworth in charge while he went to New York to superintend the funeral and the settlement of the estate. On his return he took over as sole editor and publisher of the writings of Bre. Thomas and Roberts.

The publishing business was located in his own house at No. 21 Hendon Road, Sparkhill. He completed the writing of *The Ministry of the Prophets: Isaiah*, which had been begun by Bro. Roberts. He also produced a number of books and booklets, including:

- *The Old Testament Doctrine of Eternal Life* (1906)
- *Theophany* (1929)
- *Jeremiah* (1934)
- *Rome and the Christadelphians* (1923)
- *Thoughts on Inspiration* (1934)
- *Job* (1935)

- *Christ and War* (1939)
- *Notes on the Apocalypse*

C.C. Walker wrote three hymns that first appeared in the 1932 hymnbook. One is Hymn 228 in the current (2002) hymnbook entitled “Deck thyself, my soul, with gladness”. This hymn is based on some of the words written by Johann Frank, a German hymn writer, words that were subsequently translated into English by Catherine Winkworth. Following are the words of the first stanza of this hymn written by Johann Frank, of which some lines were used by C.C. Walker:

*Deck thyself, my soul, with gladness,
Leave the gloomy haunts of sadness,
Come into the daylight's splendour.
There with joy thy praises render
Unto Him whose grace unbounded
Hath this wondrous banquet founded,
High o'er all the heav'ns He reigneth,
Yet to dwell with thee He deigneth.*

Johann Cruger wrote the hymn music for “Deck thyself, my soul, with gladness” in 1649. This chorale was adopted by J.S. Bach and used in his cantata “Deck yourself, my soul, with gladness”.

C.C. Walker also wrote the words for Hymn 382 in our current hymnbook, “The evening and morning we see the Lord making”. This is set to music by his friend Bro. Harold M. Williams, using a tune from a Mendelssohn sonata.

A third hymn for which C.C. Walker wrote the words is Hymn 303, “See the Lamb upon Mount Zion”. These words are set to a Mendelssohn tune from the cantata “Lord, how long wilt Thou forget me?”

*(Taken from **Some Past Christadelphian Hymn Writers and Composers**, pp. 26,27, Stuart Cowlshaw, with revisions by Joan and Ken Curry)*

Our Purpose in Singing Hymns

Many hymns and religious songs are sung for commercial purposes, in ignorance of the one true God. To hear *The Hallelujah Chorus* played over the public address system in a shopping mall borders on blasphemy. Likewise, to hear it used in television to promote discovery of a new product is sacrilege.

As disciples of the Lord, we need to consider carefully why we sing our hymns — what is our purpose, what is the intent of the words we sing. Hymns are an opportunity for worship, praise and meditation. There is no room for carelessness.

In our hymns:

- It is the great God of heaven we are addressing;

- It is the Son of God we are remembering;
- It is our fellow disciples we are encouraging; and
- It is ourselves we are dedicating to the Lord.

May God be pleased with our meditations and our music.

The chart below gives an outline of the design and purpose of some of our hymns.

Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON)

THE DESIGN AND PURPOSE OF OUR HYMNS

Hymns sung to GOD:

Adoration - Hymn 117 "Praise, O praise our God and King"

Praise - Hymn 75 "O Praise ye the Lord"

Thanksgiving - Hymn 105 "Now thank we all our God"

Worship - Hymn 159 "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness"

Petition - Hymn 152 "Lord, when we bend before Thy throne"

Hymns sung to JESUS:

Acknowledgement - Hymn 218 "Loving Shepherd of thy sheep"

Thanksgiving - Hymn 240 "Saviour, we meet in thy dear name"

Remembrance - Hymn 224 "According to thy gracious word"

Praise - Hymn 291 "Crown him with many crowns"

His Return - Hymn 265 "How long, O Lord our Saviour"

Hymns sung to Fellow Disciples:

Encouragement - Hymn 355 "Soldiers of Christ, arise"

Exhortation - Hymn 361 "Ye saints in Christ, his brethren"

Reminders - Hymn 62 "All they who in the Lord confide"

Hymns sung to encourage Ourselves:

Meditation - Hymn 146 "Hushed was the evening hymn"

Dedication - Hymn 163 "Take my life and let it be"

Reflection - Hymn 330 "I heard the voice of Jesus say"

Confession - Hymn 36 "If I regard iniquity in my heart"

“Then The Seven Angels Who Had The Seven Trumpets Prepared To Sound Them” (Revelation 8:6)

The book of Revelation is an extremely complex book to understand, full of symbols that may seem difficult to interpret. Yet it is a book that richly repays careful study and that can become fascinating and very absorbing. Take the seven trumpets for instance.

In Old Testament prophecy, trumpets warn of God's judgments about to fall on nations that have rejected or that oppose Him. For example, Jeremiah 4:5 warns,

“Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defended cities.”

Also in Joel 2:1:

“Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand...” (see also Zeph 1:16).

Notably similar language is used of the fall of Babylon in Jeremiah 51:27:

“Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her...”

As for Israel, if they would only repent, they might avert disaster from the sword of the enemy. But the warnings were generally unheeded:

“If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning... But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul” (Ezek 33:3-5).

The prophet's pleadings did not usually bring about repentance in the nation of Israel:

“Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken” (Jer 6:17).

Trumpets were used by Israel during times of invasion and destruction of their enemies' territory. When the nation of Israel entered the land of Canaan and the city of Jericho was about to be destroyed by the Lord, seven priests blowing seven trumpets (accompanied by the ark of the Lord) made a loud noise while circling the city. The people of Jericho must have wondered what the significance of this procession was. When they found out, it was too late for their deliverance.

Trumpets were also used in times of rejoicing. During the time of King David, when the ark of the covenant was brought to the city of David from the house of Obed-Edom, “priests did blow with the trumpets before the ark of God...” (1Ch 15:24). After the exiles had returned to Jerusalem and were celebrating the dedication of the wall, “the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres... as well as the

priests... with their trumpets” (Neh 12:27,41).

In the Book of Psalms, trumpets were used as instruments to praise God for His sovereign majesty:

“Shout for joy to the Lord all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram’s horn” (Psa 98:4-6).

With this background in the Old Testament, the Book of Revelation proclaims judgment on the enemies of God and ultimate deliverance of His people. This gives hope and encouragement to the followers of Jesus when they are suffering persecution at the hands of wicked and powerful men. The first six trumpets in Revelation introduce calamities falling on various regions of the earth or groups of people. The sounding of the seventh trumpet is followed by the proclamation of God’s Kingdom, and the worship of God as Sovereign.

Thus the “last trump” heralds the return of the Lord Jesus and the resurrection of the dead (exactly what is described in connection with the seventh trumpet in Revelation):

“And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds... we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised... For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God...” (Matt 24:31; 1Co 15:51,52; 1Th 4:16).

There is a rich and varied Scriptural background to the use of trumpets: they are used to warn of judgment, to summon to repentance, to escort the ark, to proclaim Divine sovereignty, and to give thanks to God. The promise of participating in God’s Kingdom and glory, and all that is implied in the events surrounding “the last trump”, is a very great source of strength for God’s people.

Bob Burr (Barnt Green, Birmingham, UK)

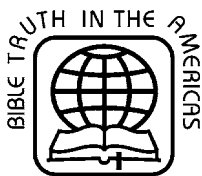
“Shine! Biblical Songs for Kids”

A new CD album specifically produced for Christadelphian children is now available. This double CD set is entitled **“Shine! Biblical Songs for Kids”**. It has been produced by Sis. Alison Creighton (Castle Hill, AU) and Bro. Daniel Stewart (Shaftsbury Road, AU). **“Shine!”** includes 21 original Biblical children’s songs (written by Alison and Daniel) on CD 1; instrumental / sing-a-long versions of selected songs on CD 2; and a CD ROM Music and Activity Book on CD 2.

“Shine!” was produced to:

- Provide children with music that is fun to sing **and** has a Biblical content.
- Provide new Sunday school songs with easy-to-understand lyrics.
- Provide Sunday schools with recorded songs that only require a CD player.

Further information about **“Shine!”** (with audio samples of the songs) is available from ***www.shinecd.com***



Bible Mission News

Four Months in Quito, Ecuador

Since returning to Ecuador after our one-year break in Canada, four months have already flashed by. Where did that time go?

Over these months we have gotten ourselves settled back into our ecclesial routines here. As December moves into January, we are in the process of reactivating the postal work with a year-end advertising blitz. The big difference between this time and previous times is that one of our local brethren is helping in dealing with the newspapers, negotiating the best rates, fielding the calls coming in from correspondence students, and then hand-delivering the first lessons to people with obscure addresses. Also, once we have the first group ready to get going, we plan to train one of our recently baptized (but long-attending) sisters to take on the new postal students for the country, working with our online contact database. This is as exciting for us as it is for the ecclesia itself, since it should help them become more hands-on with the local preaching.

During the year we were away, we had to put the postal course work on hold, because no one was ready to take it on. Consequently we're rather thin on new visitors right now. The way we've always worked here is by advertising regularly for new students, which in turn provides a steady stream of ecclesial attendees. (It seems to take a few years for the momentum for normal ecclesial growth, through friends, family, and acquaintances, to develop.) So far (writing in the first days of January) the ads we have placed haven't produced the results that we had when we first came to Ecuador. However, this might be a blessing in disguise, in that the volunteers are not being overwhelmed. December has always been a tough time to advertise, people's minds being on other matters.

In the ecclesia we currently have two midweek classes:

1. a first principles class (currently considering the promises to David) in the home of Sis. Ana, in the south, on Tuesday evenings; and
2. a Genesis class (currently at chapter 4) in the home of Sis. Lucia, in the north, on Friday evenings.

The midweek Bible class at the hall continues, with the regular attendance of a group of retired brothers and sisters, who make up the majority of our ecclesial group. In Bible Class we are wrapping up a multi-week series on the role of sisters in the ecclesia. In January we hope to begin a series of first principles debates, with the goal of helping the brothers and sisters develop more confidence and skill to witness effectively to their beliefs.

On Sundays we continue to have solid attendance from the brothers and sisters and several long-term contacts, both at the breaking of bread and the public lecture/Sunday school that follows. This last Sunday our exhortation was about Cain and Abel, and how we may not be so very different from Cain. If God asked us about *our* brother or sister, would we truly know where they are, in a spiritual and personal, not geographical, sense? Or do we merely go about our business and expect that someone else will take care of that aspect of ecclesial life? In new ecclesias, where all our members come from unrelated backgrounds, it takes constant work and reminders to help everyone see the importance of strong relationships with their brothers and sisters.

In the public lectures we finished a lengthy study of Acts a few weeks ago. During the last five weeks of the year we have been doing an exciting study of Esther; this has everyone caught up in the drama of Haman and his nefarious plots. It's a wonderful privilege to lead a group of relative neophytes through a study such as Esther, in an environment where many people are still captured by the wonders of good literature and great storytelling. Esther is truly a masterpiece in that sense; when we ended one lecture just as Haman was being called to the second banquet, the collective groan of the audience, sitting on the edge of their seats, was music to my ears.

We have lots of ongoing pastoral work to keep us occupied. One of our older brothers (Augusto Echeverría, about 85 years old) has had some issues with his vision but is otherwise strong as an ox. He is beginning "Mutual Improvement" classes to work himself into the exhortation schedule. He's eager to participate, after having spent decades wandering from church to church until he found us. It will be wonderful to have his contributions on Sundays, since the brothers are maxed out with presiding, exhorting, and lecturing, and we can always use more help. Recently we have had a few brothers out due to sickness and work schedules, and we have been hurting for replacements. It is often Kevin who has to fill in due to the sheer lack of numbers.

The women's class seems to be doing well with our new study of Philippians. We have been doing independent study and discussing in group-style workshops, using the Manitoulin Youth Conference workbook on Philippians (translated into Spanish). It has been hugely beneficial already in encouraging independent study and sharing of ideas. The material focuses on fostering a healthy ecclesial atmosphere and spiritual growth, exactly what we all need at the moment. Philippians is such an excellent book for that purpose.

On November 25, we all participated in the annual Run for the Everlasting Cure. We had a great turnout early Saturday morning — meeting in the local version of Central Park, Parque Carolina, where we've held the run in past years. It was a cool morning with huge black rain clouds, but the rain held off for us. By the end, the sun was out and warming us all up. We began with a special prayer, for everyone we knew here locally who was suffering from cancer — along with all those for whom we were praying collectively, worldwide, with other ecclesias. It was sad to think that last year we had been praying for the recovery of Sis. Alejandra (from El

Salvador), and this year we were praying that her family continue to find strength in our hope now that she has passed away. However, we were heartened to hear about Sis. Sarah Culver's excellent status. We continued with prayers for her and her family, as well as several other brothers and sisters, both locally and abroad. We also prayed for the soon return of Jesus, and the fulfillment of our hope. Following the prayer, we ran our five kilometers — with the kids all winning prizes, and shared in a picnic together under the trees. This year we managed to get the T-shirts done at the last minute, so we all proudly wore our run T-shirts with the RFTEC logo and the verse from Isaiah in Spanish! As our baptized are mostly older, hopefully they won't be growing any more, and can continue to use their shirts for the runs to come, if Jesus remains away.

In other exciting news, we also had our biannual fall hall clean. The place that we rent for a hall is quite old and falling apart, so it makes for an all-day affair. We have been keeping an eye out for something smaller to rent, but so far haven't had anything come up in the area.

And finally, a couple of weeks ago our Bro. Jorge and Sis. Carmen (husband and wife) left to attend the El Salvador year-end gathering. Each year two members of this ecclesia go up to El Salvador to fellowship with a mature ecclesia that shares their language and culture, and each year whoever goes comes back completely energized by the experience. It is a great infusion of positive spiritual energy for everyone. Jorge and Carmen are both retired and have time to spare. They took advantage of the fact their flight goes through Costa Rica, by stopping off there to attend Costa Rica's year-end fraternal as well, before returning.

May God richly bless our brothers and sisters around the world as we patiently wait for our Lord's return.

Bro. Kevin and Sis. Rebekah Hunter (Quito, Ecuador)

Jamaica, December 2007

The Christadelphian Bible Mission of Jamaica has been encouraging and supporting the activities of ecclesias in Jamaica for a number of years. Every three months the CBMJ gathers to plan and review ecclesial life in Jamaica. One such meeting was held on October 6. Members from twelve ecclesias attended. The year-end Bible school was planned. A fraternal in October was discussed. Exciting news of the four baptisms at the Round Hill Ecclesia was shared. After the meeting, we learned there have now been ten baptisms in Jamaica in 2007, for which we thank God.

Jamaica is a land where willing workers have been preaching the Truth for many years. Teams of young people have visited and spread the Good News of the Kingdom to eager listeners. God willing, those activities will continue in 2008 with visits already planned for parts of the country.

The CBMJ and the CBMA and CBMC of North America have tried to provide care and encouragement as needed. In the attached photo three of those willing

workers are shown. Bre. Martin Shirley, Mark Patterson and Ray Arthurs (right) have been zealous helpers in Jamaica. Bro. Martin travels far and wide throughout Jamaica to help those of our ecclesial family in their times of need. Bro. Ray, the CBMJ Treasurer, facilitates the support agreed upon with Bro. Martin. Beside the pastoral support, the brothers are among those in Jamaica who rightly divide the Word of Truth to all who will hear and respond. Bro. Mark has been the Link Brother for Jamaica for a number of years, tirelessly encouraging the CBMJ brethren and all ecclesias and young people in the Truth. As Bro. Mark has retired from these duties, we thank him on behalf of all in Jamaica who have come to know and love their brother for his care of them.



The second photo is the memorial meeting at Harvey River held in October. This ecclesia of seven members is perched on the side of a hill at the northwest end of the country. It has been a lampstand for the Truth over many years. We pray that the efforts of our brothers and sisters at Harvey River and throughout Jamaica will bring glory to God in all they do.

Rod Ghent (Toronto West, ON)

Wedding in Bolivia

In the very heart of this predominantly Catholic country is the predominantly Catholic capital. Not long ago, in this city, a young brother and a young sister, both from Catholic families, united their hearts in marriage before God. It was the first Christadelphian wedding the country has ever witnessed, and they became in fact the first South American couple to be married as Christadelphians.

La Paz, Bolivia — December 15, 2007. It is 7 pm. The light is beginning to fade outside, and the lightstand within the hired non-denominational church is beginning to burn brightly. As requested by the bride, the pianist is playing Christadelphian hymns. Wedding programs, not customary here, have been specially prepared by the bride and groom as a way of witnessing to their shared faith; brothers and friends from the small ecclesia are handing them out. Bro. Jacob Styles is preparing to perform his first marriage service in Spanish.

How does one go about preparing for a Christadelphian wedding in a country where every mother's dream is to see her daughter walk down the aisle to the notes of "Ave Maria"? The courage and faith of Bro. Martín and Sis. Laura in preparing for their marriage, in the midst of many pressures, has been heartening. The journey has not been an easy one.

Gradually the church fills and tension grows among the guests, who are mostly Catholic. Jacob and Bro. Hugo Petrilli, who has come especially from Argentina to take part in this service, take their places on the stage. The moment has arrived. Martín walks down the aisle with his mother, followed by his father and Laura's mother. Next come the bridesmaids, pageboy and flower girls. The music changes to "O God Beyond All Praising", and the bride appears, radiant in white. Laura and her father begin their walk down the aisle.

Some eight years before this day, Martín and Laura had been introduced by a mutual friend at a Catholic youth camp. They began dating not long afterwards and continued with their circle of Catholic friends, even attending Catholic marriage preparation classes. However, their lives were soon to be set on a very different course. First, Laura met Bro. Mark and Sis. Anne McKenzie (Sydney, AU) when they adopted Lizzy, a child from Laura's workplace. She visited them in Australia and was impressed with their lives of faith as Christadelphians. Back in Bolivia, just when she needed it, she saw a newspaper ad offering Bible study, from the very same "strange" group. She and Martín took the correspondence course, and then

continued their studies with a Christadelphian missionary couple, Bro. Steve and Sis. Sally Jefferies (Pershore, UK). This led to their baptisms, together, on February 18, 2006. All these events had brought them at last to this moment.

Martín receives Laura from her father, and the marriage ceremony begins. Jacob speaks on the principles of godly marriage, its meaning for the husband and wife, and its practical importance. During the ceremony Hugo reads 1 Corinthians 13, as well as a letter from Bro. Don Luff on behalf of the CBMA and Christadelphians worldwide. Sis. Fiona Styles sings a traditional wedding hymn, “Maker of All Things”, translated into Spanish, as well as a song prepared especially for the bride and groom. Hugo and Jacob offer prayers. All witness the vows made by Martín and Laura in the hearing of Almighty God.

Then the service is finished. It is completely dark outside. The bride and groom leave the church, but they are not walking in darkness. Already betrothed to Christ in their respective baptisms, they are now united in marriage, the lovely symbol of Christ’s spiritual union with his Bride. They face their future together, placing themselves in the hands of God, who has already blessed them so greatly. Though surrounded by darkness both literal and spiritual, they walk in light — their hearts knit together in love, and bound together with their spiritual family throughout the world.

Our hearts and prayers are with Martín and Laura as they walk together to the Kingdom of God. May the time come soon when we all meet at the marriage supper of the Lamb:

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Rev 7:9,10).

Jacob and Fiona Styles



A Note of Thanks

Dear brothers and sisters, our spiritual family all over the world!

We want to take this opportunity to thank you all for the kind words, letters, cards, and prayers!

It was wonderful to be surprised in such an amazing way by so many cards and good wishes from people we don't know, from friends we met a while ago, and from the big spiritual family we realize we have, who made us feel so loved in such a special way. We really appreciate your kindness.

As Paul said to the Ephesian Ecclesia (Eph 2:19), we feel no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.

*Sincerely yours,
Martin and Laura*

Thisisyourbible.com Website

December numbers were again down in most categories, as we might expect for this time of the year. The number of new students continues to stay relatively constant at **451** in December, and the total for the year at **6,181** is about **25%** higher than we predicted at the beginning of the year.

Our feature question was: "Is it possible to communicate with the dead?" The question was answered by **924** people — the second highest number of respondents we've ever had. Below you can see the various choices for response, and how the question was answered:

Is it possible to communicate with the dead?

- Yes. The spirit lives on after death and is conscious. It is okay to talk to the dead. 105
- No. The soul goes to heaven or hell at death and cannot communicate with the living. 263
- No. The dead are unconscious in the grave until the resurrection. 312
- Yes, it is possible, but it is wrong to try to do so. 116
- Don't know. 128
- **Total Responses** 924

In addition, the pamphlet associated with the question of "Spiritualism", that normally draws about 56 readers per month, drew **654** in December.

We are in the final stages of revamping the TIYB website; so keep checking the site to see the new look and to find out more about what's going on there.

Want to help?

- Visit the website and find out what it's all about (www.thisisyourbible.com)
- Become an on-line tutor; you can see from above that we need your help!
- Hand out the business cards available in your ecclesia — let us know if you need more

- Advertise the website in your local newspaper or as a link on your ecclesia's website
- Continue your CBMA / CBMC financial support either individually or as an ecclesia

An Urgent Appeal for Resident Missionaries

The CBMA has an immediate need for missionary couples in Latin America. The response to the Truth in several countries is extremely encouraging. There have been a number of baptisms in recent years — 28 in 2006 and 11 in 2007 — with contacts in various countries currently preparing for baptism. There are over 9,000 contacts on the database and 1,500 of these are active. Other than correspondence work (postal or internet), regular visits and short-term preaching efforts, one of the essential components of establishing strong ecclesias is the presence of resident missionaries.

There are current needs in the following two areas:

Mexico

Bro. Carl and Sis. Cynthia Paiva have been working in Guadalajara since 2003; their labors have resulted in 12 baptisms. There are also a number of interested friends who attend on a regular basis. The Paivas are coming to the end of their commitment, although there is still a need for continued support and guidance as the ecclesia matures. The potential for future growth is also very encouraging, with God's blessing.

South America

The pace of preaching activities has increased considerably in South America in recent years, in such countries as Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru. However, by the middle of 2007 there will only be one missionary couple in South America. There is an immediate need for at least one missionary couple to prepare to serve in one of these countries.

Some requirements: Spanish language abilities would be an asset, but not essential: training would be provided. A commitment of up to three years would be preferred. The CBMA provides many forms of assistance for full-time, resident missionaries.

More information needed? For more information about these opportunities to serve, please contact the following brethren:

Ken Sommerville, Chairman
 CBMA Council
 19111 Kinzie St.
 Northridge, CA 91324
 USA
 1-818-341-3932
kenandbonnie@simihills.org
ksommerville@unitedagencies.com

Don Luff, Chairman
 CBMA Latin American Comm.
 11 Vera Court
 Brantford, ON N3R 3B5
 Canada
 1-519-756-2682
luffs@sympatico.ca

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

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

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 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.

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

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Anderson Family Support Fund provides help for Bro. Grant Anderson's family after Grant's serious car accident. Mail checks payable to Christadelphians to: P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Website: www.milfordroad.net/Andersons.html

News & Notices

BRANTFORD, ON

We are happy to extend a warm welcome to Sis. Hadassah Mindorff by way of transfer from the Niagara Ecclesia as of December 23, 2007. We look forward to continued fellowship with her as we labor together in the truth.

God willing, our Senior CYC Gathering is to be held on February 16, 2007. Bro. Ken Styles (Royal Oak, MI) is to speak on the theme of “Be ye Holy, for I am Holy.”

Daniel Billington

GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA

With sadness we report the falling asleep of Bro. Carlos Hernandez on November 8, 2007. Bro. Carlos was baptized in 1999, becoming one of the first members of the small ecclesia in Guatemala. Despite losing his sight in later years, he maintained an enthusiastic attitude and was a strong example to others in his desire to preach the truth. Turning a handicap into a strength, Bro. Carlos handed out leaflets to others while riding the public transportation system for free. He now awaits that great day when “the eyes of the blind shall be opened.” In a small meeting with only six active members, this loss is especially difficult. We ask for the brotherhood’s prayers for the brethren in Guatemala, for comfort in their loss and for strength in their continued efforts to shine forth the light of the gospel.

Dan Robinson, Linkman

HONESDALE, PA

It is with heavy hearts we must report the falling asleep of two members of the Honesdale Ecclesia: Sis. Betty Garing on November 20, 2007, and Bro. Kenneth Dunn on December 5, 2007. They will be greatly missed but the families feel a sense of relief, because both had been in a nursing home for several years. We take comfort that we will see them soon when our Lord returns to establish the Kingdom.

Gerald Frisbie

MISSISSAUGA WEST, ON

We rejoiced in the following marriages: Bro. Paul Cadieux to Sis. Jasmine Ortiz (Pomona, CA) in March 2007; Sis. Ashley Wilkins to Bro. Casey Caronna (Olympia, WA) in September 2007; Bro. Neil Carr to Sis. Sarah Luff (Hamilton MacNab, ON) in November 2007. We pray for God’s blessing on these couples as they walk together toward Zion.

We were blessed with the birth of two baby girls. Olivia Katelyn was born to Bro. Robert and Sis. Candice Cooper in April 2007; and Madison Gillian was born to Bro. Jason and Sis. Amanda Longley in September 2007.

We have had a number of transfers: Bro. Paul Cadieux to the Pomona, CA, Ecclesia; Bro. Dan and Sis. Maribel Archibald to the Toronto East Ecclesia; and Bro. Neil Carr to the Hamilton MacNab Ecclesia. We commend these members in love to the brothers and sisters in their new ecclesias.

Our ecclesia benefited from fellowship shared with Bro. Ian and Sis. Judy MacFarlane

(Hamilton Ewen Road, ON) in November 2007, at our annual study weekend. We thank Bro. Ian for his ministrations on the subject of "The Mind of the Spirit".

We enjoy the fellowship of a number of brothers and sisters who are visiting our ecclesia from abroad for an extended period: Sis. Sarah Luxmore (Pakuranga, NZ) visiting for a year; Bro. Paul and Sis. Mary Jane Styles (Livonia, MI) who are in the area for a number of months; and Bro. Ben and Sis. Rosemary Saxon and family (Adelaide, Aust.) who have transferred their membership for the two years that they are here.

It is our collective prayer that 2008 will be the year in which our absent Lord returns.

Doug Jackson

RALEIGH/CARY, NC

We are grateful for the many visiting brothers and sisters, whom have come to fellowship with us around our Lord's table this past year: Bro. Paul and Sis. Donna Gaitanis and two sons, Daniel and Steven, and Bro. Ryan King (Petersburg, VA); Bro. Bob and Sis. Norley Kling, and Bro. Andrew Fraser (Washington, DC); Sis. Jenny Berry (Austin Leander, TX); and Bro. Jack and Sis. Shirley Robinson (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON).

With great joy we announce the marriage of Bro. Stanley Gergle to Sis. Zensi Dakota from Hungary, in June 2007. They are presently residing as members at the South Florida (Pompano Beach) Ecclesia. We pray that God will bless them in their newly united walk to His Kingdom.

On November 3, 2007, our small ecclesia held a gathering for our members and visiting contacts. Bro. Ryan King was our speaker. We certainly appreciated his inspiring words, and we all had a wonderful time.

Two of our contacts have been with us now for about one and a half years. They are young students, are very enthusiastic about the word of God, and would love to have the support and inspiring words of believers who might be stopping by for a visit every now and then. We warmly invite all traveling through North Carolina, or who will be transferring for school or employment, to stop in and meet with the Raleigh/Cary Ecclesia. We are located just off I-40. Breaking of bread and Thursday classes are held in homes and coffee shops around town, so please contact Bro. Greg Gergle at 919-219-5907 for times and locations. A special thanks to Bro. Reuben Washington for the Hymn CDs. We indeed have found our voices.

We look forward to many future visits from our family in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Greg Gergle

SEATTLE, WA

With great joy we announce the weddings of Bro. Dave Jahns to Sis. Wendy Minchez on February 24, 2007; Bro. Robbie Posey to Sis. Elizabeth Jahns on March 3, 2007; and Bro. Dan Bleichner to Sis. Lindsay Buresh on May 12, 2007. We pray for our heavenly Father's richest blessing upon them as they walk together as one to His kingdom. Following their marriage, our Sis. Elizabeth Posey has transferred her membership to the Grants Pass, OR, Ecclesia. We miss her very much but commend her in love to the brothers and sisters in Grants Pass.

We rejoice also with our Bro. Kent and Sis. Lorraine Beeson in the baptism of their

daughter, ERIN BEESON, on September 9, 2007. May God bless her and keep her on her walk to His Kingdom.

We rejoice also with our Bro. Paul and Sis. Susan Skinner in the birth of their third child, Benjamin Michael Skinner, on July 15, 2007. We pray for God's blessing on Benjamin that he might grow up in the love and admonition of the Lord.

It is with sadness that we announce the falling asleep in Christ of our Bro. Kashindi Ikola. He passed away at age 77 after an extended illness. Bro. Kashindi moved to Seattle after a short stay in Spokane, WA, from the Lugufu Ecclesia, Tanzania, Africa. He brought with him his sister wife, Sifa, along with three sons, a daughter-in-law, and five grandchildren. It was source of great pleasure for him to see his family fully integrated into the Seattle Ecclesia before he fell asleep in Christ. Our faithful brother now sleeps, awaiting the call of our Lord at the resurrection.

We are also saddened to announce the passing of Ezekiel Timothy Bruce on October 21, 2007. Ezekiel was the infant son born to Bro. Tim and Sis. Tabea Bruce on September 24, 2007. We pray for a special portion of strength, courage and faith for our brother and sister from our heavenly Father as they mourn their loss. We long for that time when "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." "Even so come Lord Jesus."

Finally, due to the growth of our ecclesia in recent years, we now meet in a new location for Sunday memorial service. We now meet at 11:00 am at Edmonds Home School Resource Center, 23200 100th Avenue, Edmonds, WA 98020. Visitors should feel free to contact the undersigned for directions if needed.

Tony Ball

VERNON, BC

We are pleased to welcome, by transfer from the Okanagan Central Ecclesia, our Sis. Karen Erickson. She, along with her husband Monte and young son David, are welcome additions to our Sunday school and ecclesial activities. Both Sis. Karen and Monte have recently returned from Ethiopia where they were able to bring home their chosen daughter, Elshaday Makeda, who was born in October of 2006. We are thankful that our Father has seen fit to place this little girl in their home, where she might grow and learn of the things of God.

As mentioned in a previous issue of *The Tidings*, our Bro. Dean and Sis. Andrea Bailey and daughters moved to Ontario during the summer, and we commend them to the care of the Cambridge, ON, Ecclesia. We wish God's blessings for them in their new ecclesial home.

We are saddened to announce the falling asleep in Christ of our Bro. Al Green on November 28, 2007. Our brother, aged 85, had spent many years in the truth and now sleeps in the hope of the Kingdom that he so yearned for.

We have enjoyed the fellowship of many visitors over the past few months, and in particular, the frequent visits of Bro. David Barrett of the New Westminster Ecclesia. Bro. David's work brings him to our area every second weekend, and we appreciate his efforts to come and break bread with us.

David Zantingh

WICHITA FALLS, TX

Since last reporting our ecclesial news we have welcomed around the table of our absent Lord the following brothers and sisters: Sis. Judy Muniz (Livonia, MI); Bro. Bill and Sis. Kelli Ellison, and Bro. Andrew Ellison (Westerly, RI); Bro. Max and Sis. Linda Wickham (San Diego County, CA); Sis. Erin Rakich (Simi Hills, CA); Bro. Landon Wolfe, Bro. Levi Wolfe, Bro. Jeremy and Sis. Leah Wolfe (Abilene, TX); Sis. Michele Massip, Bro. Antonio and Sis. Marcia Howell, and Sis. Jeanna McLaughlin (Dallas, TX); Bro. Ralph and Sis. Elizabeth Hollenbeck (North Houston, TX); and Sis. Kerri Maier (East Texas). We thank Bre. A. Howell, R. Hollenbeck, A. Ellison, and M. Wickham for their encouraging words of exhortation. We also thank Bro. Wickham for his talk at the recent baptism.

In June 2007, Sis. DeLayne Beutel moved to Albuquerque, NM. In July 2007, Bro. Ben Beutel moved to Abilene, TX. In October 2007, Bro. David Clubb moved to Simi Hills, CA. We miss their support and fellowship and pray that our heavenly Father will continue to keep them in His loving care as they meet with those of like precious faith in their new locations.

Over the weekend of December 9, 2007, we were blessed with the opportunity to witness the confession of faith and baptism of LORETTA LINDSEY. She had been a student of the Bible for many years, but until a year ago she had not found a group with beliefs and practice consistent with God's Word. It was a joy to see her respond to God's call to the truth and put on Christ's saving name.

We are also pleased to announce that on December 29, 2007, Bro. Aaron Clubb and Sis. Loretta Lindsey were united as one in marriage. We seek God's blessing on their walk together to the kingdom. They will be living in Macon, Georgia, and meeting with the brothers and sisters in the Atlanta area.

John A. Clubb

2008 Southwest Christadelphian Bible School

Lord willing, we plan to conduct the 2008 Southwest Christadelphian Bible School July 6 through July 12. The school will be located at Schreiner University in Kerrville, Texas. The following brethren are scheduled to present the adult and teen classes:

- Bro. Roger Long (Coventry, UK): "Built Together in Him" (adults), "A Holy Nation" (teens).
- Bro. Maurie Beale (Wanganui, NZ): "Six Lessons from Olivet" (adults), "God's Faithful Young People" (teens).
- Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "Wonders of the Kingdom" (adults), "What Jesus Taught" (teens).

All forms and information are available on the PlanofGod.org website. Inquiries by phone, mail, or email should go to:

Bro. Joe Hill
512-288-0353
11110 South Bay Lane
Austin, TX 78739
joehill@io.com

Minute Meditation

She Did What She Could

There is a very old saying: “God helps those who help themselves.” My father called this type of advice “chimney corner scripture”, because it sounds like it might be in the Bible but is not. While not a Scriptural saying, it does have an element of truth in it. It agrees with a quote of Andrew Carnegie: “You can’t push anyone up the ladder unless he is willing to climb himself.”

One of the most frustrating things that school teachers face is students who have great potential but refuse to apply themselves. Coaches feel the same way when they have a talented athlete who simply will not try. God so loves us that He gave His Son so that we can have the opportunity to live forever. How do you think God feels when most people are not interested?

Many folks recognize that God exists and that He has a plan to reward those who seek him, but they choose not to respond. One of the reasons they give is because they don’t think they can live up to the high standards that God requires, so they would rather not try than risk trying and failing.

It is comforting to realize that God has never made a mistake. The Lord Jesus tells us that “no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” There are many who simply cannot accept that God exists, but for those of us who do, who can see God’s hand working in our lives and in the world around us, and who know God’s standards are the way we should be living our lives, we have been drawn to a higher purpose. God has especially chosen all who have responded to the call of the Gospel. What a great privilege is ours.

To know this high calling and then not try? Incredible. Each of us knows whether we are doing the best we can with what we have right where we are. We have no good excuse for not trying because God does not expect us to do more than we are capable of doing. God knows more about us than we even know about ourselves because Jesus has told us, “Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” This proves that God knows every detail about us. He knows if we are trying or not. God does know if we are doing what we could.

Remember what Jesus said of Mary when the disciples criticized her. “Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. She did what she could.”

These words would be good for us to live by. Jesus said, “She did what she could.” Are we doing what we can? Could we be doing more? If not, why not? We cannot use the excuse that we could not, because the real reason is: we will not. The Lord knows what we can do. We need to ask ourselves, Are we willing to do what we can? This very personal question we should not try to answer for someone else. But every so often, just like the school teacher who sees students coasting when

they should be pumping, and the coach who see stars fail for lack of effort, our lack of dedication is often apparent to those around us. We may or may not be fooling others, but this one thing we do know. We are not fooling the Lord. He knows if we are trying or not, and one day soon we will have to give him an accounting of our stewardship. Are we prepared to answer the question: 'Did you do what you could?'

Robert J. Lloyd

The Destruction of Sennacherib

*The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.*

*Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen.
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strewn.*

*For the Angel of Death went forth on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and forever grew still!*

*And there lay the steed with his nostrils all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray on the rock-beating surf.*

*And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.*

*And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmeared by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!*

Lord Byron

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

FEBRUARY

1-3 Camp Ladore, PA Young people's study weekend. Bro Frank Abel: "Nehemiah — Lessons in Leadership". Held near Scranton, PA, for all those 13 and older. Contact Bro Ryan Mutter championvegetable@hotmail.com or go to www.cyccamp.org to register online

3-8 Palm Springs Bible School. Bre. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD) and Michael Owen (Seaton, UK). Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau register@christadelphianbibleschool.org. Or visit website www.californiabibleschool.org

9 Brantford, ON Junior CYC and Little Disciples "Apps Mills" Gathering

16 Brantford, ON Senior CYC Gathering. Bro. Ken Styles (Royal Oak, MI): "Be Ye Holy, For I am Holy"

16,17 Saanich Peninsula, BC Study weekend. Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): Subject TBD. Contact Bro. Richard Morgan richie.morgan@gmail.com

MARCH

8,9 Victoria, BC Study weekend. Bro. Mike LeDuke (Kitchener/Waterloo): "With Christ in Mind — Paul's Letter to the Colossians". Contact Sis. Pat Williamson (250-721-4938) pwilliamson@telus.net

15,16 Lompoc Valley, CA Annual study weekend. Bre. Don Pearce (Rugby, UK) and Paul Billington (Brantford, ON): "An Up Close Look at Bible Prophecy Being Fulfilled in Our Time". Registration: contact Bro. Ron Stewart ronandshirley777@aol.com or call 805-733-5577. Seating limited; we suggest an early response

21,22 Simi Valley, CA Bible study and sports challenge. Bro. Allen Laben (Norfolk, VA): "Parables in Luke". Contact Bro. Jason Hensley Jason@speakingofhisglory.com 805-202-6063

21-23 Toronto Fraternal Gathering Silverthorn Collegiate, 291 Mill Road, Toronto, ON. Bro. Tecwyn Morgan (Birmingham, UK): "Jesus Fulfills the Feasts". Contact Bro. Stephen Wilton sdwilton@yahoo.com

21-23 Wichita Falls, TX Spring gathering, Texas Christadelphian Camp and Conference Center, Buffalo, TX. Bro. Roy Styles (Livonia, MI): "Marriage in the Lord". Contact Bro. Larry Beutel, 1900 NW Access Road, Iowa Park, TX 76367; or Bro. John Clubb jclubb4081@aol.com

22,23 Echo Lake, NJ Study weekend. Bro. John Hellawell (Peterborough, UK): "David — Shepherd, Soldier, Sinner, Sovereign, Saint". For CYC: "Creation or Evolution?" Contact Bro. David Link dlink44131@aol.com 973-696-3316

29 Worcester, MA Study day. Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA). Contact Bro. Aaron MacAdams, (978) 502 9690, aaronmacadams@hotmail.com

29 April 5 Florida Bible School Christian Retreat, Bradenton, FL. Adult / teen classes. Bro. Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON): "Bumps along the Road of Discipleship"; Bro. Mike LeDuke (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON): "With Christ in Mind — Paul's Letter to the Colossians"; Bro.

Martin Webster (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON): "The Fifteen-Minute Exhortation". Contact Bro. Walt Dodrill 727-528-1197 waltodrill@msn.com. Registration: Sis. Diane Jennings 727-528-1886 diane@dianej.net

APRIL

5 Boston, MA Study day. Bro. David Levin (Baltimore, MD): "Becoming a Spiritual Person". 9:00 am, lunch served. Contact Bro. Jeff Wallace jeff@tecbs.org 508-763-2981

MAY

2-4 Vancouver Island Sisters' Weekend Nanaimo, BC. "Becoming a Handmaid of the Lord". Sisters Linda Reding and Beth MacAdams (Worcester, MA). For registration information contact Sis. Iris Brown rayandirisbrown@shaw.ca 250-758-4284

2-4 Central Coast Women's Weekend Camp Ocean Pines, Cambria, CA. Sis. Kim Brinkerhoff (Pomona, CA): "God's Beautiful Garden"; Sis. Shirley Barratt (San Luis Obispo, CA): "Walking in God's Garden"; Sis. Helen Jennings (Pomona, CA): "The Garden Restored"; Sis. Ann Crouse (North County San Luis Obispo, CA): "The Secret Garden (John 15)". Exhortation by Bro. John Warner (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "The Garden Tomb". \$50 non-refundable deposit to secure registration. Contact Sis. Ann Crouse 805-239-3517 RoAnCrouse@aol.com

3,4 Pittsburgh, PA Study weekend. Bro. Ken Styles (Royal Oak, MI): "Godly Love". Contact Bro. David Pommer thepommers@verizon.net 724-224-7363

25,26 Sussex, NB Study weekend. Bro. Dale Crawford (Bedford, NS): "Portrait of the Perfect Man — Job, Jesus and the Saints"

16-18 Hartford City, IN Lake Placid Study Weekend, Lake Placid Conference Center. Bro. Jim Styles (Livonia, MI): "James". Anyone interested in teaching a class for the children please contact Bro. Jerry or Sis. Dorothy Asbury 27 Dogwood Terrace, Maryville, IL 62062 or phone 618-288-5023

JUNE

28 - July 6 Mid-Atlantic Bible School Shippensburg, PA. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK): "A Holy Nation"; teens: "We Have Found the Messiah"; Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON): "The Fate of the Dead"; teens: "Resurrection of the Dead, Who and When?"; Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA): "The Servant and His Songs (Isaiah 40-66)"; teens: "How Readest Thou?". Information at www.christadelphians.net/MACBS

JULY

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

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

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

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

26-August 3 Midwest Bible School Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "Prophetic Images"; Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON): "The Fate of the Dead"; Bro. James Mansfield (AU): "How the Lord Treated People". Contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 44943 Yorkshire Drive, Novi, MI 48375 248-462-5740 mike.live@gmail.com

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

AUGUST

9-15 Niagara Falls Bible School St. Catherines, ON. Bro. Nigel Patterson (Cornwall, UK): "Preparing for the Coming King" (adults), "Daring to Be Different" (teens); Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "Powerful Lessons from Mysterious Scenes in the Bible" (adults and teens). For information contact Bro. David Brierley david.brierly@simpatico.ca 416-236-5295

THE CRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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No. 3

Editorial — Times that Try Men's Souls	107
Exhortation — On a Scale of 1 to 10, <i>Don Styles</i>	112
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:	
(14) Christ extends his grace to his captives, <i>Tom Barling</i>	116
Bible Study — Little Words that Mean a Lot:	
(7) Steadfastness, <i>John C. Bilello</i>	120
Reflections:	
What Then?	125
My Journey, <i>Marieke Garner</i>	126
Seven Things the LORD Hates, <i>A sister</i>	127
Bible Mission News — <i>Thisisyourbible.com</i> ;	
Brother Francisco Gilardoni; Searching the Internet	131
Welfare in Africa and Beyond, <i>Andrew Walker</i>	135
Meeting in Bangladesh, <i>Ron Easson</i>	141
News & Notices	146
Minute Meditation — That's all I need to know, <i>Robert J. Lloyd</i>	152
Coming Events	153

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Keeping a Balance

The embarrassments of the truth are very great in this age of divine silence and human contradictions.

It is a work of difficulty to encourage the good while withstanding the encroachments of the evil. I suppose it is a training for the work that waits the accepted friends of Christ in the day of his appearing.

I feel great pity for men who are doing the best they are capable of in the midst of the reigning confusion, even if the line they pursue may not be geometrically straight. We shall all stand in need of the divine patience and magnanimity at the last.

Robert Roberts

Editorial

Times that Try Men's Souls

"These are times that try men's souls."

Thomas Paine, known as the pen of the American Revolution, wrote these words during a time of great trial and peril for the new nation.

So it has always been. As much as we dislike them, and as much as we would avoid them if we could — times of trouble are the best times for developing moral strength. Just as hard work and exercise develop physical muscles, so do mental and emotional struggles develop moral muscles.

Into our lives as believers, there will surely come times of strain, pressure, and difficulty. These may take many different forms. Sometimes these troubles may fall upon a community, collectively. At other times they may come upon any one of us individually. During such times, our souls (our hearts, minds, or inner beings) may feel besieged, buffeted, and in imminent danger of being crushed. We may desperately thrash about, like a wild animal caught in a trap, but to no avail. We may fall back upon a frantic search for the quick fix, the one action, the one form of words, or the one right answer — something, anything, that will make it all better.

Even comfortable, peaceful times require spiritual strength if we are to survive. But experience, indeed all history, teaches us an important lesson: when hard times come, we will surely need even more spiritual strength. The house must be built, not just for the fine weather, but also for the storm. The army must do more than look good on paper, or the parade ground; it must be ready for the day of battle. And faith must be ready for the time of testing, trial, and persecution. The spiritual life needs to be strong enough to hold on through terror, tempest, and turmoil. Otherwise, it is no more than a delusion, and all our religious exercises merely a pretense. Who are we fooling?

"Times that try men's souls" are surely coming. How can we prepare for them? By making our days, and evenings, count right now. The athlete rises early and trains in her sport — track and field, tennis, golf, whatever it may be — day after day, when no one is holding a stopwatch or keeping score. The soldier marches countless miles, and practices difficult drills, knowing that what he learns by exhaustive repetition, in every imaginable situation, may one day spell the difference between life and death. In such work of preparation there is, or should be, a fearful sense of urgency: 'Will I measure up when the moment of truth comes?'

"If you falter in times of trouble, how small is your strength!" (Prov 24:10).

Are we surprised at this idea? We should not be. Every character trait that we develop patiently and consistently, in good times, may well be put to the test when

bad times come. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). The gold of our faith will most certainly be tried one day in the furnace of affliction (1Pe 1:7). How well we do under adverse conditions will reveal how strong we are. The time of trouble is coming, as surely as sunrise tomorrow, even if we know not the precise day or hour.

A man never knows his strength until he is put in a situation that demands much from him. A woman never knows her courage until she is put in circumstances that call for all her reserves.

“Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!... it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest” (Prov 6:6,8).

“Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer” (Prov 30:25).

The classic example of such foresight and industry was Joseph, when he was elevated from slavery to a ruling position in Egypt (Gen 41). He knew by prophetic revelation that a terrible famine was coming upon his world, and that the only hope of survival was to lay up great stores of food for the hard times coming. With God’s help he carried out his plan, and in so doing saved countless lives.

There is, as far as I know, only one real source of spiritual strength: the Word of God. We must imitate the ant; we must imitate Joseph. We must lay up reserves of this Word by private study, and by attending and participating in ecclesial Bible classes. And we must do this all in “the good years”, so that when “the lean years” come, and they surely will, we may have a full storeroom (Matt 13:52).

We must put our spare time to profitable use, in every way we can possibly devise. We must pray about this. If our prayers are restricted to praying for, and giving thanks for, material needs, then how spiritually feeble we are. We are like the multitudes that marveled when Jesus multiplied the natural bread, but drifted away when he talked about spiritual bread. Our prayers must be not just for food and shelter and health, but especially for our spiritual needs. Then our heavenly Father will grant us the riches of His eternal Word, and build us up so that we might be strong in faith.

Furthermore, we must exercise our spiritual muscles by sharing what we know with others, by preaching to those outside and inside. There are so many different ways in which we may do this. We exercise ourselves spiritually so the Word of life may dwell in us richly, and so that we may be able instruct and encourage ourselves, and one another, in exhortations, Bible classes, hymns, and prayers. Indeed, we may help others by the example of our actions, every day.

Let us think again of Proverbs 24:10: “If you falter in times of trouble, how small is your strength!” At first glance, the sentiment of this verse seems very pessimistic, akin to Jeremiah 12:5:

“If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country [or, NIV mg: ‘If you put your trust in a land of safety’], how will you manage in the thickets by [or, NIV mg: ‘the flooding of’] the Jordan?”

Both verses strongly suggest that a coming time of testing will surely reveal all our shortcomings. If that is so, then what is the use? The little nagging voice inside our heads whispers, ‘Why bother? You might as well give up now.’

But both verses, though dark and foreboding on the surface, carry within themselves seeds of renewal and promise: ‘Don’t underestimate times of trouble,’ they say. ‘Out of these dark times there will arise new light, *if* you truly believe.’ It will come to the one who knows, when the time comes, how and where to find the great strength to help in his time of need (Heb 4:16).

In the proverb (24:10), the words “trouble” and “small” (“adversity” and “small” in the KJV) are closely related in the Hebrew. “Trouble” is “tsarah”, literally a narrow, confining, or pressure-packed space. It is derived from “tsar” (*small*), which has the same idea of being close or constrained. This suggests the question: ‘Will we let the constraints of the times constrain our strength? Or will we rise above, and expand beyond, the times to allow our strength and faith to grow, and overcome the constraints?’ To this Jesus supplies an answer:

“If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you” (Matt 17:20; cp Luke 17:6).

In the proverb, strength (*koach*) means not only physical endurance, but mental toughness and moral courage as well. Those whose reserves of strength are depleted by straitened circumstances — and whose reserves will **not** be depleted? — can appeal to God to be empowered again. Whether the strength has faded due to sorrow and affliction (Psa 31:10), serious illness (Psa 38:10), or old age (Psa 71:9), there is a ready help at hand in faithful prayer. The LORD will always be pleased to answer the prayer of faith, and to grant an increase in mental, moral, and spiritual strength to meet changing conditions. The apostle Paul assures us,

“God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1Co 10:13).

Restricted (*tsarah*) times and restricted (*tsar*) strength do not restrict God!

“O LORD, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress [‘tsarah’]” (Isa 33:2).

“I call on the LORD in my distress [‘tsarah’], and he answers me” (Psa 120:1).

When our resources are, humanly speaking, failing and about to be depleted, like the widow’s only jug of oil (1Ki 17:16), then is the special time when God’s resources may be most readily available:

“[The Lord] said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2Co 12:9,10).

The great 19th-century preacher Henry Ward Beecher discussed the benefits of times of trouble in a powerful analogy. “Some men,” he said, “seem to grow as the white pine grows, with straight grain.” But he added, ironically, “I notice that all

that grow easy, split easy.” (Surely this reminds us of the seed, in Jesus’ parable, that fell on rocky soil, with no depth of earth. It sprang up quickly, but just as quickly withered away: Matt 13:5,6.)

Beecher continued, “There are some men who grow as the mahogany grows, with knots and whirls and contortions of grain. The best timber of the forest has the most knots. Everybody seeks it, because, being hard to grow, it is hard to wear out. And when knots have been sawed and polished, how beautiful they are.”

He added, “There are many who are content to grow straight, like weeds on a dunghill; but there are many others who want to be stalwart and strong like the monarchs of the forest. Yet, when God sends winds of adversity to ‘sing a lullaby’ in their branches, they do not like to grow that way. They dread the treatment that is really giving toughness to their soul and strength to its fiber.”

Which is simply another way of saying what the writer to the Hebrews said:
“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees” (Heb 12:11,12).

This last phrase, about feeble arms and weak knees, recalls the example of Gideon and his men:

“Gideon and his three hundred men [were] exhausted [‘faint’: KJV] yet keeping up the pursuit” (Jdg 8:4).

It is quite possible (no matter how well-prepared one is) to come to the hour of the greatest trial, and to feel feeble of arm and weak of knee. It is quite possible to experience faintness and think yourself unable to cope, yet at the same to gird up the loins, in faith; to persevere through the faintness, as though it were (which it is) but one more element of the trial; and to continue to pursue righteousness. I tell you, the person who perseveres through faintness will find that his little faith will grow to mountain-moving size.

The mountain that we need most to move in our lives is the mountain of doubt, despair, and loss of hope, when the times come to try our souls. Let us pray, and prepare, now. Then we will be all the better prepared to pray again when the trial comes: “Lord, I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24).

How precisely will this wonderful promise be fulfilled? How will the Lord’s strength be completed, realizing its full maturity and potential, in our poor mortal weakness (2Co 12:9,10)? How, exactly, will our small faith grow until it measures up to the mountainous task before us (Matt 17:20; cp Luke 17:6) in times that try men’s souls? How will God work in and with and through us to achieve His eternal purpose? Answers to such questions as these are scarcely forthcoming now, for we see “but a poor reflection as in a [polished metal] mirror” (1Co 13:12). We must simply do our part, now, to prepare. And we must believe that “in all things” God will work “for the good of those who love him” (Rom 8:28), even if those “things” be “trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword” (v 35). As old William Cowper put it, in our Hymn 142:

*"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head..."*

*"His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower."*

George Booker

When men stand in the mouths of their caves and declare that they alone are fighting the battle of right, and distress the hearts and weaken the hands of their fellow-warriors by their self-centered declarations based upon ignorance of the true state of affairs, not seeing the faithful attitude of the 7,000... then surely is needed the earthquake, the fire, and the still small voice to purge them of their discouraging fantasies.

C.A. Ladson (son-in-law of Robert Roberts)

We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Therefore, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need, or in a time when the enticements and allurements of the world without, appealing to the desires of the flesh and the mind within, threaten to prove too strong for us, and cause the paths of our feet to wander out of the way of understanding and of life.

Yes, 'tis in moments of inward struggle -- such as these -- that our High Priest invites the prayer of faith, standing ever ready with bended ear and loving eye, to render aid, succor, and strength.

Let not the doubting heart disdain to approach the living fountain, and obey the injunctions laid down; the promise is sure, and the reward certain.

One promise especially is clear and unmistakable in 1Co 10:13: "For God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Eusebia Thomas (daughter of John Thomas)

Exhortation

On a Scale of 1 to 10

Many a time we've participated in a memorial service and reflected on the crucifixion of our Lord. Most of us have probably read or heard a detailed description of crucifixion.

The pain is awful. It's a terrible way to die, one of the worst that man has ever devised. On a scale of 1 to 10, the pain is a 10.

You've probably all had the experience, but when going to a doctor recently, I was asked, "Do you hurt?" "Yes" was the answer. "On a scale of 1 to 10, how much does it hurt?" Until we've experienced a 10, I don't suppose we can give a very accurate answer.

Well, Jesus Christ knows a 10.

That's not accidental; it's deliberate. On Jesus' part, he refused the pain deadeners. On his Father's part, it was the determinate plan of God that His Son would be crucified.

In the Lord's case, his crucifixion wasn't as bad as it could have been. Jesus was six hours on the cross. Normally it took some 72 hours for a victim of crucifixion to expire. Thus the Father was not into torturing His Son. But the Son knows what "10" feels like because of the brutal form of death he suffered.

Why this way?

Sometimes in our reflections we no doubt ask, 'Why, why is brutal crucifixion part of God's way of saving us?'

There is a commonly given reason that is very wrong, and even pagan: The blood of Christ does *not* pay, to some angry god, the debt for our sins. Instead, God forgives our sins. On the cross, God is the one *giving*, not the one *taking*. He gives His Son as a great act of divine love. There is nothing in the cross about appeasing His wrath.

A right reason for Jesus being crucified relates to his continuing role in regard to us. By knowing of his agony, we are convinced that when we are in great pain ourselves, we can cry out for divine help and be fully confident the Lord Jesus understands our agony. He understands because he himself has suffered a "10", for hours. We remember Hebrews 2:16-18:

"For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (NIV).

As the whole of Hebrews 2 elaborates, the Lord Jesus was and is one of the race — he was a human being. And as we know from our own reactions to the problems of others, humans can only enter into the sufferings of another when they have suffered in like manner themselves. Thus a key reason Christ suffered brutal crucifixion is to encourage us to earnest prayer, being assured that we can trust our Lord fully to empathize with our trials.

Rejection

There are other areas of Jesus' life where he came close to suffering a "10". Take rejection for example.

Jesus experienced rejection by his family. At first Mary and Joseph were wonderfully supportive, with Mary's great thanksgiving and joy at being mother of the Messiah, and Joseph's full cooperation even in moving to Egypt for a couple of years. Then there was a hint of difficulty when Jesus was 12 years old. When he was found in the temple, Mary and Joseph didn't have a full understanding of his early dedication to his Father's work. During the ministry, we're clearly told Jesus' brothers did not believe in him (John 7:3-8). Even though the brothers would later be converted, they were at this point in a different world. They rejected, even derided, the Lord and his work. There will be some of us who have had a similar rejection by our families because of our devotion to the Lord. When that happens, we are grateful the Lord can fully empathize with our situation.

No doubt some of us have been rejected by our neighbors and have cited the Lord's comment: "No prophet is accepted in his own country" (Luke 4:24). Jesus said this in Nazareth where he had been raised from a boy (v 16). When we are similarly rejected by folks at school, work, or in the neighborhood, Jesus knows how we feel and will help accordingly.

Jesus was also rejected by his nation. This is an experience that few of us will have. But the Lord was born king and spent three years going throughout the nation preaching the gospel of the kingdom. He agonized to save these people (Luke 13:34,35). From our perspective we know the attempt would fail. Yet the Lord yearned to save his nation, and we can sense his agony at their rejection.

Probably the rejection that hurt the most was that by his close friend, Peter. The most prominent of the twelve, Peter was confident in his own loyalty to Jesus, but the Lord knew better (Luke 22:33,34). So it was when Peter denied Jesus the third time (v 60), "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter... and Peter went out and wept bitterly" (vv 61,62).

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would we rate the Lord's experience with rejection? Family, neighbors, nation, Peter — more than a "5", maybe an "8"? Certainly enough so Jesus can fully sympathize with us when and if we are rejected.

Betrayal

We may never have experienced betrayal, when someone very close to us has — for money, power, popularity, or revenge — turned against us to seek our dire harm.

Jesus did.

Probably the most remarkable aspect of Jesus' suffering of betrayal is the fact he never marked Judas as the betrayer to the eleven. Jesus knew from the beginning who would betray him (John 6:64). This saddened him; it dismayed and troubled him, and gnawed at the very soul of his being:

"Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" He spake of Judas Iscariot... for he it was that should betray him" (John 6:70,71).

Yet he never exposed Judas. At the last supper, Jesus announced,

"Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!"

Because the eleven had no idea the betrayer was Judas,

"They began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing" (Luke 22:21-23).

With the Lord's feelings running so deep that "It would be better for this man if he had not been born," how did he not expose Judas? It's remarkable.

In terms of suffering betrayal, where would we rank Jesus' experience on a scale of 1 to 10? I believe we'd rank it a "10".

Thus any of us who have ever suffered betrayal can have the total assurance that our Lord and helper knows exactly what we're going through. He knows a 10.

Other trials

There are several other trials where we could apply this same scale of 1 to 10. We could apply it to **frustration** at the inability of the twelve to accept the certainty of the cross and of resurrection. A lot of us face great frustration in trying to convey the truth to others.

The Lord knew **exhaustion** to the point of sleeping in a boat in the midst of a storm. What mother has not experienced utter exhaustion during her baby's first year?

Jesus experienced an **uncertain future**: "The Son of Man has not where to lay his head." In our early years particularly, many of us have been completely dismayed at considering what the future might bring.

Futility is another trial known by our Lord. At one point, he must have cried out something like, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing" (Isa 49:4). On a scale of 1 to 10, where would we rank that?

An example for us

Why was the Lord crucified? One reason is clear: he was developing empathy for our trials of great pain. He experienced many other trials as well, so that we might feel confident in his understanding of our temptations.

There are, of course, other reasons why the Lord endured a wide range of suffering.

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1Pe 2:21).

We look to our leader to lead us in a right course. He is the spiritual prince whose own behavior defines the right way for us to respond to various difficulties in life.

Developing his own character

Hebrews 5:7,8 tells us that:

“in the days of his flesh... [Jesus] offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him who was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.”

From our own trials and afflictions, we know how they develop in us hope, faith, patience, forbearance, etc. We don't like difficulties in our life, but we know we learn obedience by the things we suffer. And so did our Lord Jesus.

In the cross and all its circumstances, we see the climax of our Lord's character development. The hands that tormented him were wicked hands guilty of shedding much innocent blood. Here were people fully deserving the outpouring of divine wrath. While Jesus is the ultimate judge of all, at that time he had to exercise supreme self-control. A time will come for judgment, but that was not the time.

The Lord was given the opportunity to argue his own defense. He would have made fools of his accusers with the brilliance of his words. But at that point, he had to do the will of his Father and submit to his fate.

In this climax of his character development, Jesus humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, putting to death the power of sin within himself. He is the captain of our salvation, our champion in fighting the great power of sin. It's like David slaying Goliath, while giving the rest of us courage to fight the Philistine within ourselves.

There was a lot being accomplished in those climactic 24 hours. Jesus was learning what a “10” feels like. He was setting an example for us in how to endure trial. He was destroying the power of sin in his own soul, encouraging us to do the same.

As we meditate upon the redemption the Father worked in the Son, we are powerfully exhorted, we are encouraged, we are motivated, and we are stirred to deep humility and thankfulness.

We thus proceed, with reverence and joy, to partake of the memorials before us.

Don Styles (Ann Arbor, MI)

*“Some will learn through pain and sorrow, others through joy and laughter”
(Arabic proverb).*

“Pain and suffering is inevitable, but misery is optional.”

“Where there is love, there is pain” (Spanish proverb).

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (14) Christ extends his grace to his captives

The teaching of the apostle in Ephesians 4:7-10 is challenging in the highest degree to the expositor. In the study that follows, we endeavor to interpret Paul's words by ranging somewhat widely over Scripture. My hope is that this will help the reader to understand a very concentrated passage.

Is it stretching imagination too far to visualize Tychicus, the trusted ambassador of the apostle, and one familiar with his teaching, being asked by the readers to help them in their understanding of certain passages in Paul's letters? With regard to Tychicus, see Ephesians 6:21; while the bearing of this passage concerns the news of the apostle that Tychicus could convey, is there possibly a deeper meaning to the words "[he] shall make known to you all things"? We recall that Peter, in his tribute to the apostle, mentions "the hard things to be understood" in Paul's writings (2Pe 3:16). Among the hard things we can perhaps place the passage we now struggle to understand.

Grace is given

Having dwelt on the unity of faith in the Lord Jesus (4:1-6), Paul considers the question of what each disciple can contribute. He states:

"But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (v 7).

We note first that the apostle mentions "each one of us". Thus every single member of the body of Christ has a part to play; this privilege has been bestowed by God's grace. For Paul, there are fundamental truths relating to our calling in the Lord Jesus. None is more important than the concept of grace. The framework, as it were, of the Christian calling is held together first and foremost by God's grace. This becomes effective in the measure in which the believer apprehends this truth. Confidence in this grace is an aspect of faith, and the proper exercise of this faith is in love. Thus we have *grace, faith, and love*. When we embrace these concepts and respond to them, we can aspire to become true disciples.

While grace is bestowed on each and every member of the body of the Lord, it is not in equal measure. This truth is revealed in the parables the Lord spoke towards the end of his ministry. In the first (Luke 19:11-27), he likened himself to a nobleman who departed to a distant land. Before leaving he gave a total of "ten pounds" ("ten minas": NIV) to his ten servants (Luke 19:13). Each received, without distinction, one "pound" or "mina". On his return, he summoned them to report on what they had done with the gifts they had received. The responses varied; one had traded so successfully that his original pound had gained ten further pounds, another had made five more, while yet a third had done precisely nothing with his pound. The Lord rewarded his servants proportionately.

In the first parable each servant received the same amount initially. But in another of his parables (Matt 25:14-30) the situation is different: one received five talents, another two, and another one. In the first parable, the lesson is that all share alike in the call to salvation, and the parable then spells out the different responses to God's grace in His extension of salvation to all, without distinction of race, or sex. In the second parable, we are shown how the capacity for service is varied. The response here again is variable.

"Ascended"

Having seen in verse 7 how all participate in God's grace in equal measures, the apostle makes a brief reference to Psalm 68:

"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (v 8).

While expositors are unanimous in praising to what they regard as a great psalm, they vary in identifying its precise context and its precise date of writing. These considerations need not detain us now. What matters is why and how Paul uses it. As the context makes abundantly clear, Paul is concerned with the triumph of the Lord Jesus. What prompts the quotation is the thought of the gift from Christ (v 7), and this is followed by a clear reference to his ascent to heaven ("when he ascended on high"). Psalm 110 had prophesied this ascent: "Sit thou at my right hand." With this we may compare Psalm 16:11 ("Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; in thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.") That the Lord was familiar with Psalm 110, and its precious promise for himself, is shown in that he quoted it to his adversaries at the end of his ministry (Matt 22:42-44). This was the joy that sustained him, the joy set before him (cf Heb 12:2). Facing his great trial, he had the certainty not merely of resurrection but also of ascension to heaven. He spoke enigmatically; even his apostles were bewildered when he spoke of going to the Father. Thus, in John 7:33, he declared: "Yet a little while am I with you, and I go unto him that sent me" (and see especially John 13:3).

His captives

So we must now ask: When our Lord ascended to heaven, what did he do for his followers? Apparently he made them *his* captives. They had previously been captives — that is, to sin and death — but now they were *his* captives, through his triumph.

In the interpretation of this thought, we have the guidance of the Lord himself. In a truly dramatic scene, the Lord is in Nazareth; he opens the scroll, and reads from Isaiah:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to teach good tidings to the poor; he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18,19).

In this prophetic anticipation of his ministry, the Lord is drawing on Isaiah 61:1. All its details are of interest, but we now focus on the concept of "release for the

captives”, or prisoners. In another truly remarkable Old Testament prophecy, the prophet calls on his fellows to “rejoice greatly”, because their king is coming to them, bringing salvation (Zech 9:9). Associated with this is the declaration that he is “lowly, riding upon an ass”. He is to speak peace, not merely to Israel, but to the nations. Then, there is a message addressed to the one who is to fulfil this prophecy:

“As for thee also, because of the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water” (v 11).

What we note especially in this verse is the idea of “thy prisoners”. By his action of salvation he has made them his prisoners, or captives. There is thus a clear link with the language of Ephesians 4:8.

The waterless pit is a striking figure for the grave. Death is a universal experience and an inescapable one. If we now revert to the New Testament, we find that Paul himself, in Romans 6:16, tells his readers that if they allow sin to reign over them, they are the slaves (bondservants) of sin. However, if they are obedient to God, they become the slaves (bondservants) of righteousness. This is achieved by their being baptized into the Lord Jesus.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit

These reflections enable us to give meaning to the imagery the apostle uses when he quotes Psalm 68, with its portrayal of a royal triumph. The ascension of the Lord Jesus enabled the Lord to bestow his gifts, on his apostles initially. The Gospels and Acts throw light on this great truth. In his record of the appearances of the Lord after his resurrection, Luke informs us he led forth the eleven from Jerusalem, and told them to tarry until they were “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). This was a clear promise of the gift of the Spirit (see also John 20:22). So it came to pass, when Matthias had been added to the eleven and the apostles were all together, there descended “from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind” (Acts 2:2), “and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (v 4). The phenomenon attracted the attention first of those who heard the public proclamation of the gospel after the Lord’s resurrection. Later in his discourse on this occasion, Peter refers to the Lord’s elevation and the great truth that the Father had granted to His Son, in fulfillment of the Son’s own promise, the power to bestow the Spirit. The harmony, between what Paul wrote in his letter and what occurred as authentic historical events, is most impressive. His teaching in the letter is greatly concentrated but, in the light of Luke’s record in Acts, it becomes luminous. It is indeed Luke who enables us to identify the circumstances in which the Lord was able to give gifts to men.

“Descended”

In Ephesians 4:9 Paul links the ascension to heaven with the notion that the Lord “descended into the lower parts of the earth”. This can only refer to the Lord’s burial in the tomb. It is when we read the accounts of the Lord’s death that we begin to understand the apostle’s teaching. The Lord’s dead body was given an honorable burial by Joseph of Arimathea who, acting with the help of Nicodemus, “bound the body in linen cloths with the spices” and buried it in Joseph’s new tomb. Joseph

saw that the tomb was rendered secure by rolling “a great stone” to the entry of the sepulcher (Matt 27:60; see also Mark 15:46). This action was taken by Joseph to ensure there would be no interference with the tomb. The Jewish authorities, now rejoicing that they had finally got rid of the Lord, were still not satisfied with what Joseph had done. They took added precautions and approached Pilate with a request. They received a guard to keep watch over the tomb; and they adopted measures to secure the sealing of the sepulcher (Matt 27:62-66).

Thus, in the circumstances of his death, as well as the circumstances in which his dead body was buried, the Lord went down, as it were, to the depths of the earth. But what seemed to his enemies to be his end was, for the Lord himself, the beginning. Despite all the efforts of his persecutors, he rose again on the third day. Remembering that Paul’s readers would have no acquaintance with the Hebrew Bible, it is understandable Paul would use the Septuagint. If we look at Psalm 139, we see what a wonderful meditation it is upon the universality of God’s Spirit: there is no place where it is not operative (see vv 7-12). In verse 15 the psalmist writes:

“My frame was not hidden from you, when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth” (NIV) —

This last expression should specially be noticed. Paul appears definitely to have this passage in mind, and especially “the depths of the earth”. It affirms that, when the Lord was buried after his crucifixion, this was the prelude to his resurrection and being invested with “the body of his glory” (Phil 3:21). In the great passage that concludes Romans 8, Paul declares:

“Neither death... nor height, nor depth... can separate us from God’s love.”

This great truth is exemplified first and foremost in the person of our Lord himself. It can be the experience of every faithful disciple: “Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1Co 15:23).

“All authority”

In the final verse to be considered now (Eph 4:10), Paul connects the Lord’s supreme elevation with the fact of his descent. We have interpreted this “descent” as bearing on his death, which involved his submission to the cross, with its shame and fearful physical suffering. After his resurrection, the Lord declared to his assembled followers:

“All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth” (Matt 28:18).

We take special note of the words “in heaven”. Paul endorses this himself when he declares that, because of Christ’s obedience to the death on the cross,

“God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9-11).

In our next study we hope to see precisely how the Lord’s grace was bestowed.

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Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (7) Steadfastness

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”
(1Co 15:58)

Contrary to popular lore Thomas Edison didn't invent the light bulb; in fact his 1879 patent was disallowed in the courts in 1883. The idea had been bantered about for almost 50 years, but no one had been able to successfully produce a lamp filament that survived for more than a few hours. Thus nobody could market a useful product. Edison's genius was his steadfast persistence in searching for, and eventually finding, a filament material that would last hundreds of hours. It is reputed that he and his associates tried some 10,000 different materials over several years before eventually finding the solution to the filament longevity challenge. The answer was as simple as a thin strand of carburized Clark's sewing thread sealed in a vacuum glass enclosure. Many years later Edison was asked if he was ever discouraged by so many failures before he finally succeeded. He is reputed to have replied: “We had conducted thousands of experiments on a certain project without solving the problem. One of my associates, after we had conducted the crowning experiment and it had proved a failure, expressed discouragement and disgust over our having failed to find out anything. I cheerily assured him that we had learned something. For we had learned for a certainty that the thing couldn't be done that way, and that we would have to try some other way.”¹

Even though Edison's steadfast goal had been to create a bright inexpensive source of artificial light, he soon found that creating the light bulb wasn't enough. Three years after he started manufacturing light bulbs, Edison's company had sold them to only a little over 200 customers. He realized that to make the product successful he would have to create a whole new infrastructure that would make light bulbs acceptable to the public. Hence he went on to develop the electric dynamo, electric fuses, power stations, a Copper wire distribution system, electric meters and so on.

Even with these developments, ten years after he had patented his light bulb he only had a little over 700 customers. Edison was probably the most steadfastly persistent inventor who ever lived, and he persevered. By forging ahead to develop the infrastructure (sometimes even in the face of potential financial ruin), he eventually had, by 1899, three million customers. He had also altered the face of the world.

Forging ahead steadfastly towards a goal is a character trait that all faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ need to develop — “knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”. We strive not for millions of customers and financial reward,

but for a much higher calling, the Kingdom of God — “for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

Edison could have given up, but because he was firm in his determination to accomplish his goal he succeeded when many others before him had failed. He demonstrated that steadfastness is not only a character trait that can help one become a successful inventor, but it is also an attribute that will serve us well on the path to the Kingdom of God.

Several different Hebrew and Greek words were translated by the English root word “steadfast” in the King James Bible. The oldest reference appears to be in the Book of Job, 11:15, where the Hebrew word comes from a root meaning, “to melt or cast as metal; by extension, to place firmly, to stiffen or grow hard.”² Molten metal is a fluid that can be poured into a mold and take any shape that the skill of the model maker can pattern. However, once the mold cools and the metal takes its solid form, it is hard and strong. Without reheating, it will require great force to reshape into some other object. Ancients were of course familiar with this simile, since armor and weapons of war were cast metals and prized for their strength. In the same manner we need to be malleable to the word of God. We should let His Word be poured into us and let it mold us into firm, steadfast creatures as that Word solidifies.

One weakness that can overcome us is the inability to accept basic doctrine and to move on to fulfilling the fruits of the spirit (Heb 6:1). Such a person is continually arguing with himself, and others, concerning their doubts. The apostle Paul castigates the Ephesians for exactly this failing. Instead of being steadfast in holding onto the doctrines they were taught, they were constantly enamored by new ideas that departed from the Truth. The apostle tells them:

“We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (Eph 4:14, NKJV; see also Heb 5:11-14).

If we are steadfast in our goal of achieving the Kingdom of God, then we will stick to our task of conquering the flesh and not be discouraged when we are blown off course by the storms of life.

Sometimes when trouble buffets an ecclesia there is the temptation, in effect, to pull up our stakes and run. There is this marvelous comment in the book of Acts:

“They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

Obviously, at that time, the fervor of the first century Christians was at its peak, but with the passage of time the steadfastness of holding to the “apostles’ doctrine and fellowship” didn’t hold up. We know this because we have all of the letters of the apostles (Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John) that address the weaknesses of the various first century ecclesias.

We are no different today; we suffer from temptations and trials from within and without. What are we then to do when we find ourselves in an ecclesial situation where there is no longer a congregational commitment to be steadfast in the

“apostles’ doctrine and fellowship”? It is important that we realize that the ecclesia is a God-given institution (Matt 18:17). It is the foundation of the Truth:

“I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1Ti 3:15).

If the ecclesia is not being steadfast we owe it to the congregation to be steadfast ourselves. It is patently wrong for us to stay away from meeting when we are upset with something that has occurred, because we may feel offended in some way. It is instead our job to do our best in a patient loving way to correct the wrong. The book of Hebrews exhorts us:

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb 10:24, 25, NKJV).

Instead of thinking of ourselves we need to think of the need of others.

We didn’t choose the membership of our ecclesias.

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1Co 1:26).

The ecclesia is **not** a social club where people of like social status and interests associate together for mutual enjoyment. The only thing that everyone in a particular congregation may have in common is their calling to the Word of God. In such a situation it may indeed be necessary to “stir up”³ up love (for it will not always naturally occur). If we forsake the gathering of ourselves together, we are certainly not remaining steadfast in our own faith.

Sometimes 2 Corinthians 6:17 and Revelation 18:4 are quoted as justification for separation, but clearly neither of these refers to ecclesial circumstances. The former reference is to the idolatry and lusts of the world, while the latter citation alludes to the harlot Church. Unless one’s ecclesia has gone completely worldly and/or adopted the doctrines of the harlot church, one should not forsake it. It is only under the most extreme circumstances that one should remove oneself from an ecclesial assembly and seek association elsewhere. Thus, withdrawing for perceived offenses and refusing to go to any meeting cannot be justified on Scriptural grounds. This places us in the position of judging our brethren when indeed the mote may be in our own eyes. The bottom line is that we shouldn’t give up on our brothers and sisters. We need to be firm in our own faith and steadfast in renewing the faith of others if necessity should make it so.

Edison’s story has another valuable lesson. If we are steadfast in our goal of achieving the Kingdom of God, we can sometimes learn more from our failures than we can from our meager successes. We will not be able to succeed in everything we do. Unfortunately, there may be times that we will sin miserably, but we can recover as long as we don’t give up. In speaking of forgiveness the Lord Jesus taught us that God’s mercy is virtually without limit. The Scriptures don’t teach ‘three strikes and you are out’, as happens not only in baseball but also in the penal codes of some states. Instead, Jesus told his disciples when it comes to

forgiving sins:

"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven" (Matt 18:22, NKJV).

The psalmist tells us that with God there is forgiveness that he "may be feared" (Psa 130:4). The seemingly curious connection between "forgiveness" and "fear" is readily understood from the root meaning of the original Hebrew word in Psalm 130, which refers not to *terror*, but to *deep reverence*. God is to be revered because of His virtually unlimited capacity for forgiveness, a quality that has been amply demonstrated in that He gave his only begotten Son for the sins of the world (John 3:16). Since God is steadfast in His love for us, it is only reasonable that we do our best to return that love by not giving into our failures. Even if we make 10,000 mistakes, we can eventually succeed by learning from our defeats. By seeking to do better we can overcome the weaknesses of the flesh.⁴ The Word of God is the key to learning how to overcome our failures and get back on the road to eternal life:

"Keep my commandments, and live..." (Prov 7:2).

"If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love" (John 15:10).

Continual study and contemplation of the Word of God will strengthen us in keeping His commandments. It is said of the godly man:

"His delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psa 1:2).

If we are steadfast in keeping the Word of the LORD before us, then we will be strengthened to keep His commandments. As a result, sin will flee away and we will indeed abide in His love. This is more than just doing our daily Bible readings. It involves keeping the Word of God always before us in all our dealings in life.

How else can we overcome failure? One thing to bear in mind is that, contrary to myth, scientists and inventors rarely if ever work alone. Edison had a whole team of engineers that worked with him. Einstein said that he stood on the shoulders of giants, referring to the fact that he was only able to accomplish what he did by learning from the work of the many scientists who had preceded him. The world has learned how to succeed in conquering weaknesses of the flesh by setting up such self-help organizations as Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers. The premise of these organizations (and similar entities) is that mutual self-support by a group of people with similar weaknesses strengthens the individual and allows them to be steadfast in accomplishing their goals, whether it be to abstain from alcohol or to develop good eating habits to control weight.⁵

The ecclesia was founded by the Lord Jesus Christ and is the ultimate self-help organization. We are all suffering from the severe weakness of giving into sin; we are 'sinaholics'. By association with the ecclesia in coming to Bible classes, attending the memorial service and participating to the fullest in the religious and social life of our fellow brothers and sisters, we place ourselves in a climate that will help us conquer sin in the flesh. However, just as alcoholics and foodaholics can fail by not sticking to the programs of their respective support groups, even so we can fail in serving God by not being steadfast in our support of the eccle-

sia. An obvious corollary of these thoughts is that the elders of an ecclesia have a great responsibility to see that the congregation is served effectively, so that an atmosphere of love and respect prevails at all times for all members. Alcoholics Anonymous would never have someone who is visibly drunk run an AA meeting, nor would Weight Watchers have a 300-pound moderator telling others how to control their eating habits. Neither should an ecclesia have arranging brothers who are not spiritual examples to the flock.

Fortunately, God has provided us with the perfect example of steadfastness, demonstrated in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew from his youth (Luke 2:49) that he was destined to do his Father's will, and he never wavered from that task. Jesus was able to say:

"I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12, NKJV).

This is truly a light that has never failed, and never will. It has lasted almost 2,000 years and will continue to shine forever.

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Notes:

1. Quoted from an interview with Edison, published in the January 1921 issue of *American Magazine*.
2. Strong's number 3332.
3. The KJV uses the word "provoke" here, which is even stronger. See Strong's 3948.
4. I am not saying here that one should commit sin 10,000 times before learning to stop any more than Jesus was asking one to sin 490 times before ceasing. The numbers are mere metaphors for not giving up.
5. I am a gold key alum of Weight Watchers, so I know this from personal experience.

Special Invitation

For many years, unity discussions have been taking place with Churches of God of the Abrahamic Faith. In the interest of promoting friendship and mutual understanding between our respective communities, we print the following invitation:

*You, your family and friends are invited to the
32nd Annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 21-27, 2008.*

Main Speakers:

Bro. John Pople — "Powerful Lessons Hidden in Mysterious Scenes"
Bro. Scott Tennant — "Micah's Message to the Modern World"
Bro. Kyle Tucker — "Comparing Spiritual Things with Spiritual"

*Contact Bro. Brad Rek 330-609-6957 or lisarek8@cs.com
Also visit CGAF.org for additional information
and online registration (late March '08)*

Reflections

What Then?

When all the great plants of our cities
Have turned out their last finished work,
When the merchants have made the last bargain
And dismissed the last tired clerk,
When our banks have raked in their last dollar,
And paid out the last dividend,
When the Judge of the Earth says,
“Closed for the night”,
And asks for the balance — *What then?*

When the choir has sung its last anthem,
And the preacher has said his last prayer;
When the people have heard their last sermon,
And the sound has died out on the air;
When the Bible lies closed on the pulpit,
And the pews are all empty of men;
When each one stands facing his record,
And the Great Book is opened — *What then?*

When the actor has played his last drama,
And the mimic has made his last fun,
When the movies have made their last picture,
And the billboard displayed its last run,
When the crowds seeking pleasure have vanished
And gone into darkness again,
When the world that rejected its Saviour
Is asked for a reason — *What then?*

When the bugle's last call dies in silence,
And the long marching columns stand still,
When the captain has given his last order,
And they've captured the last fort and hill;
When the flag has been hauled from the masthead,
And the wounded have all been checked in;
When the trumpet, the last one, is sounded
And we stand before him — *What then?*

(Author unknown)

My Journey

*I have wandered through valleys, climbed over hills,
Stumbled through deserts, walked through a forest still.
Slumbered through twilight, dreamt of peace within,
Searched through many mansions to find a song to sing.
I crossed a raging river, swam an ocean deep,
Searching for knowledge and wisdom to keep.*

*I am but a weary traveler on a long and narrow road,
I've stumbled, and faltered, seeking a new abode.
I see within the darkness a light that beckons me,
Hear, through the turmoil, sounds of harmony.*

*There are many shades of knowing, many ways to be,
But there is One Truth to follow, the true way to see.
I tremble and weep as I walk this narrow way,
Remembering all I've done from all my yesterdays.
I have seen a timely passage of the way I used to be;
Now I'm cleansed by the waters, anew, feeling free!*

*As I watch through a window with a candle burning bright,
Through the mist I search for an end to the night.
Through joy and sorrow, I will triumph another day,
Watching and waiting: for Christ's return I pray.
Then the darkness will be lifted; I'll be wandering no more,
For my journey will be ending. The Truth remains my core.*

*I was a weary traveler on a long and narrow road.
I still stumble and falter, but have found a new abode.
I found within the darkness his Light that beckoned me.
Now I hunger and thirst for Christ's return to set me free.
Now I pray for his Kingdom and its sounds of harmony.*

*Marieke Garner
(Hamilton Ewen Road, ON)*

Seven Things the LORD Hates

Calamity will come suddenly to “the naughty person” (the scoundrel, or villain), the one who walks with a “forward” (or perverse) mouth, who “winks with his eyes” (deceiving others in his insincerity), and who enjoys or devises mischief and sows discord.

Yes, the Lord declares that there are *seven things* — involving our eyes, our mouth and tongue, our hands and feet, and our “heart” (our inner being) — that, used in an evil way, are an abomination to God (Prov 6:16-19).

A proud look

When we were children, probably none of us escaped either receiving or perhaps giving a proud look! It is the look of accomplishment turned into conceit, or a “righteously” raised eyebrow, or the lofty ‘I’m better than you’ look. It is definitely different than the looks and actions of a humble person.

In our youth, we may have been loud and possibly presumptuous; perhaps we demanded notice, exaltation, and adoration. But, in our maturity we learned, as servants of the Lord, that we are commanded not to “lord it over others,” but to love others and to esteem (and value) them as better than ourselves. If we are to be good and faithful servants, we must follow the Lord’s example. We must not elevate ourselves, but make ourselves of lesser importance. We gird our towels around ourselves and serve others, as he did. It did not matter whom Jesus served, whether man or woman; his respect for them was the same.

The proud look will only lead to evil because it comes from an arrogant spirit. We may see it in the young person who wants to appear important before his peers, who may be rude in speech, poorly mannered, laughing loudly and making sport of others, belittling and bullying others, and causing pain and grief. The proud look comes from an over-sized ego; it may involve pride in our physical appearance, or even in our Bible knowledge or our position in the meeting. The pride may come, later, from being wealthy or holding an important job. Whatever the causes, the proud look needs to be addressed because it is sinful and we are warned that *pride comes before a fall!*

Jesus noted how Judas criticized the woman with the alabaster box of ointment, who “wasted” its contents on the Master (Matt 26:7-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8).

We are told he “cared for the money bag,” certainly more than he did for the funds for the poor — this love of money was the root of all evil, and he was a thief. We note how Jesus’ reprimand led to Judas leaving the company of the disciples, and going quickly to the chief priests, where he made plans to betray Jesus. He then received the coveted silver (Matt 26:14-16; Mark 14:10,11; John 13:2).

A lying tongue

Lying is a very common sin in today’s society. It is used so often to get one’s way in almost everything: in gaining employment, passing tests, getting ahead

financially, and elevating oneself above others. Just little “white lies” in the sight of the ungodly, we tell ourselves. The tongue, we are told, is an unruly evil; we must be careful with our words and even our tone. Did Judas, in his words and his tone, make the woman with the alabaster box feel small and despised? Was he discrediting her and demeaning her because of her past? Perhaps that is why Jesus said, rather strongly, to Judas: “Leave her alone!”

The proud person, who lifts himself up over others, likes to remind people of their past errors. He may use words that belittle or demean, or he may conspicuously whisper to someone else in the presence of the person he is “putting down”.

This is done often in the world. It should never been done by Christ’s disciples.

Hands that shed innocent blood

Being a party to hurting others, whether by word or deed, is also a terrible evil. When we hurt others, we may never be able to repair the friendship. We may cause offense when the wounds go so deep that the wounded one leaves the truth. We are warned not to offend the little ones, and that, if we do, a millstone should be tied about our neck and we should be cast into the sea.

Young school children, in their desire to be accepted, may join a gang in their neighborhood or school. We hear in the news of more conflicts and school shootings because of bullying. Often in order to join the gang, perhaps even to feel protected, one has to become a part of injuring a member of another gang, or has to steal or do some other malicious thing to prove one’s loyalty. This is extreme, but we can also be a party to hurting someone with just our words (or with that proud look)! Remember, words cannot be taken back; words can become like chicken feathers, flying in the wind, that can never be gathered up. We may want to take back what we said, but consequences will linger. Slanderous words are heard daily on our news programs. They are calculated to sting, and sometimes to destroy lives. Remarks seemingly made in jest may be deliberately harmful.

When Judas took the silver coins and agreed to identify Jesus in the quietness of the garden, he chose as his sign a kiss of friendship. How sad the Lord must have felt when his disciple kissed him on the cheek! A kiss is the sign of endearment, and should never be used in a hateful way (Matt 26:48,49; Mark 14:44,45; Luke 22:47,48).

A heart that devises wicked imaginations

When we imagine or plan to hurt someone, or we plot to do wrong (like stealing or betraying), we often have in mind some benefit from doing so. We expect some recognition, and so our heart becomes disloyal. Our thoughts may have been honest in the beginning, but later we grow interested in satisfying our own pleasure. The lust of the flesh takes over, as like the serpent we cunningly design a way to deceive our victim. We watch for the opportunity; we wait for the perfect time. Jesus’ strong words to Judas seem to have given him the excuse he needed to betray our Lord. And it all began with his proud look upon the woman with the alabaster box!

Feet swift in running to mischief

What is “running to mischief”? It is the decision to plan evil. It starts in the heart or inner being of the individual, and it continually grows if not checked when temptation and enticement step in.

The heart of Judas was already sick with covetousness. He already had an exalted opinion of himself; now, his pride hurt, he could not resist the offer of silver to betray Jesus. He *may* have thought: ‘Surely this will force Jesus to establish his kingdom. That won’t be such a bad thing!’ But I don’t think he thought about spiritual matters at this time. His rational mind had left him, and now his feet were swift in the mischief he plotted with the chief priests. He was not thinking that he was doing wrong. When they took Jesus and he did not resist, perhaps Judas had second thoughts. But by this time his mind had forgotten obedience and forgiveness.

He could not go to God in a spirit of repentance. Instead, he went to the chief priests and, in a fury, threw their coins back at them. Then he went and hanged himself.

When we have sinned, we must remember the Lord is ready to hear us, and we need to humble ourselves and return to him in repentance, seeking forgiveness.

A false witness who speaks lies

Witnessing is giving testimony or a report, on an official record. In Jesus’ trial, the Pharisees sought out false witnesses who were willing to fabricate lies about Jesus — or at least testify falsely by twisting the words he had said. In their proud desire to retain power over the people, the Pharisees violated the laws of God. Under the Law of Moses, false witnesses should be stoned. But, in their desire for power, this no longer mattered. They broke laws left and right!

Perjury, or false witnessing, is practiced every day in the courts. Lawsuits of lies and cunningly devised accusations are served against innocent victims every day. Some make a living suing others, knowingly devising such mischief. Others may be influenced by these lies.

Some years ago, when I was barely 15, a very hurtful rumor was circulated about me. It was totally false, but my peers believed the person who repeated the lie, and they distanced themselves from me. I was so hurt that I ran away in tears from the Bible school — as far as I could go. Without suitable clothing, and without any protection, I walked for miles. Exhausted, I finally called my mother, who was at home, hundreds of miles away, and I sobbed on the phone.

She gave me the best advice I have ever found for dealing with hurtful lies: to go back (in this case to the Bible school), and to accept that the friendship may have ended. She told me that I must show my former friends, by the way I lived my life, that no one would ever believe the lie. She was right, and I found other friends. I also found God and was baptized just six months later. When I turned to Christ, he became my very best friend. Most importantly, I learned that day that the Lord deals with those who are false witnesses. They indeed will have their

reward, although it may not be what they expected. Sadly, though I forgave the false witness, my former friendship was never really restored.

He who sows discord among brethren

If we bite and devour one another, as Galatians 5:15 warns us not to do, we must take heed that we are not consumed by one another. Sowing discord is the kind of abomination that destroys so much good. How can we preach and teach the gospel if we don't follow it ourselves? Won't those to whom we preach notice our behavior? We are to be known for our love for one another. How can the spirit of God dwell in those who purposely, or even mistakenly, cause discord and division? Our love for others should solve our problems. Sometimes, however, one party will not be open, or listen.

Having Judas' attitude — one that is proud, self-seeking, covetous, manipulative, and deceitful — is incredibly sad. It is worse yet when one loses sight of the loving forgiveness of God. Such an attitude caused much trouble among Christ's disciples.

Some discord had sprung up among them: we remember that the mother of Zebedee's children desired two high positions for her sons — positions of prominence. When the others heard of this, they were indignant with the two brothers (Matt 20:24).

Whoever will be great among Christ's disciples, or be chief, must learn to be a servant now.

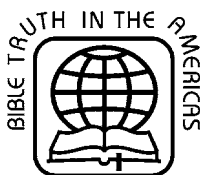
Jesus is our example. He willingly served and died for us, and we must do the same for others. The commandments of the Lord are a shining light for us. When we receive reproof and correction, we should think that perhaps these are necessary for our growth in Christ. Let us not take offense, but rather learn to see the love behind the words given, and ponder them, before we let our feet run to mischief. We are commanded to speak up and turn a sinner from his destructive way. God can use us to accomplish His will. Let us look for the best and seek forgiveness when we fail. Peter, after his denial of the Lord, became a changed man. Let us not refuse to repent, as did Judas.

A sister

A Common Faith

No one can deny that the New Testament has variety as well as unity. It is the variety that gives interest to the unity. What is it in which these people, differing as widely as they do, are vitally and fundamentally at one, so that through all their differences they form a brotherhood and are conscious of an indissoluble spiritual bond? There can be no doubt that that which unites them is a common relation to Christ — a common faith in him, involving religious convictions about him.

James Denney



Bible Mission News

Thisisyourbible.com Website

This is an amazing statistic: a person visited our website every 2 1/2 minutes in January. We also had **1,000,350** hits on the site's contents last month. Our featured question was: "Should Christians delve into the occult?" The question was answered by **505** people. Below you can see the various choices for response and how the question was answered.

Should Christians delve into the occult?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| • No. The occult is of the devil and his demons and should be avoided at all costs! | 309 |
| • Not an issue. The occult is just harmless entertainment. Enjoy! | 11 |
| • Generally no, but some occult practices such as astrology are harmless. | 17 |
| • No. Occult practices have no basis in reality and are contrary to Bible teaching. | 134 |
| • Don't know. | 34 |
| • Total responses | 505 |

What is the Bible's answer? See "Satanism"

In addition, the pamphlet associated with the question of "Satanism", that has drawn **411** readers since 2006, was accessed **569** times in January.

We had **11** new tutors sign up last month, and we still need more all the time, since we have **438** new students of whom **305** have signed up for classes. Once again, we ask, "How else could we reach this many people?"

Want to help?

- Visit the website and 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.
- 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.

Brother Francisco Gilardoni — His Personal Account

How did you get in touch with the Christadelphians?

On July 18, 2005, an advertisement appeared in the daily newspaper of Córdoba, *La Voz del Interior*. It invited readers interested in studying the Bible in a systematic way to write to a given address for study material. Since my youth I have always had an interest in the Bible, but my reading had always been random and my knowledge patchy. I responded to the invitation in the paper and as a result completed the basic correspondence course, followed by an advanced course, and after this a third course.

The more I studied the courses the more I realized that the spirit of this message reflected what my parents had instilled in me many years ago in Entre Ríos, Argentina. They were Catholic, but I would like to think that, had they had the opportunity to consider the message preached by the Christadelphians, which in love I practice today, they would have responded as I have, recognizing the true teaching about God and His Son, the man Jesus Christ.

As well as the postal courses, I am very grateful to the brothers and sisters who came to Córdoba with love and dedication, and have taught me the Truth. As I pulled away from Catholicism I requested material to help clarify my newfound understanding on subjects I knew had been distorted by the Church, subjects such as baptism, celibacy, the sacraments, and the destination of the dead.

Finally, my conscience awakened, and full of faith and goodwill, I finished the appropriate preparation. On November 21, 2006, at the age of 88, I was baptized by my brothers here in Córdoba.

How has the first year as a Christadelphian gone?

The year since my baptism has gone very well. A great source of this wellbeing has been constant prayer to God through Jesus Christ. I pray for the health of my wife, family and friends. But the chief and constant focus of my prayer is that God, creator of all things, will send His Son Jesus Christ — according to the promise — as soon as possible, and that with his return to this earth the hatred, evil, corruption, and physical and spiritual poverty that fill this world will be ended. I pray also that, after the resurrection and judgment, Christ will establish the heavenly Kingdom of God on this earth. Then that promised kingdom of truth, health, love, and peace will become a reality.

I would like once again to express my heartfelt gratitude to Bre. James Hunter (and his wife Jean), Donald Luff, Robert Alderson, Hugo Petrilli, and Rubén Barbosa (and their families also). These all have helped me on the path to spiritual peace. To those brethren I hope to know, I offer my constant friendship. At the same time, I ask for God's and Christ's blessings on my brothers and sisters throughout the world.

*Your brother with much affection,
Francisco Gilardoni*



Baptism of Bro. Francisco Gilardoni

Searching the Internet for Truth

www.labiblia.com

I'll begin by telling you how, some years ago, while I was searching the internet trying to find information about the Bible, I came across *www.labiblia.com*. From that day on I began to read the studies and teaching there. After a while I asked to be sent correspondence courses. That's how I began my contact with *la Misión Bíblica Cristadelfiana*.

Before long I was invited along to some Bible studies at the Gran Palace Hotel in the center of Santiago, Chile. There I first met with Christadelphians, and I specifically remember a man with a beard and a rough voice, surname Petrilli. He had an unmistakable presentation, and from his accent I thought he must have been from Argentina. Afterwards I had a chance to talk with Hugo Petrilli, and he told me how he had been baptized 25 years earlier and was the only Christadelphian in Argentina all that time. I could detect his frustration at having to walk by himself for such a long time.

In 2003, I decided to be baptized, and on October 19 of that year I was baptized by brothers visiting Chile. At that time there was a concern at the back of my mind that there could be a repeat of the circumstances of my Bro. Hugo Petrilli, and I too could pass many years by myself. But that wasn't the case. Sis. Giselle Pintado, who is from Ecuador, was living in Santiago, and before long Bro. Richard

Castillo was also baptized. So here we are, three of us, on this long strip of land at the ends of the earth.



Bro. Richard Castillo, Bro. Don and Sis. Miriam Luff standing by the Centro Biblico Cristadelfiano plaque/sign by the entrance door to new meeting room, Sis. Gisella Pintado and Bro. Bernardo Soto

Recently, in the building where I work, some offices came up for rent, and the idea came to me that we might rent one as a meeting place. I approached the owners of the building, and they had no problem with the idea. With the support of the Bible Mission we have rented one of the offices, and equipped it with the necessary furniture: folding chairs, a desk, a lectern, clocks, etc. We are on the tenth floor of a building right in the center of Santiago, just 2 blocks from the Plaza de Armas, the very center of the city.

We officially inaugurated our Centro Bíblico Cristadelfiano, on November 3 and 4, 2007 with a series of studies presented by Bre. Don Luff and Robert Alderson. A number of interested students came along on both days.

I hope that with God's help we will continue to give simple studies each Saturday to those who are interested here, and that with time the ecclesia in Chile will grow. We don't want to go at things too fast; it would be painful for us to stumble or fall in this project. We want to do things slowly but surely so that the Work of the Lord will grow "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither: and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psa 1:3).

*Your brother in the Faith,
Bernardo Soto Raimil (Chile)*



Group conversation in Santiago meeting room after lecture

Welfare in Africa and Beyond

"If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be" (Deut 15:7,8).

This article looks at the problems of our brothers and sisters in Africa and beyond, and considers the help available to them.

Brothers and sisters in need in Africa...

In Kenya, the homes of several brothers and sisters have been destroyed in the tribal violence that followed the disputed elections there. At the moment 12 Christadelphian families have been displaced, but everyone has been affected. In many parts of the country, shops have been looted and transport has ceased, and everywhere food prices have rocketed. While there have been riots in the west of the country, in parts of the east the crops have failed, making the problems even worse.

The troubles in Kenya have been widely publicized and reported, and all the world's media have sent reporters and camera teams to the country to film the disturbances — while, almost unnoticed, another catastrophe has occurred some 700 miles to the south. In Malawi and Mozambique there have been severe floods that have forced many people to leave their homes and seek refuge. In one area of Mozambique alone, two Christadelphian meeting halls were washed away, and more than 200 brothers and sisters have been displaced.

It is one of the tragedies of our world that, while in 'the West' we enjoy greater wealth than any generation before us, many in other countries live in crippling

poverty. In Africa a third of the population lives on less than \$1 a day, while in some countries as many as one adult in six is infected with HIV. Orphans are everywhere. Meanwhile corrupt men lead corrupt governments, making themselves and their friends rich while their people starve, and taking for themselves money that other governments and charities send to help the needy. The problems of Kenya are not unique; before these events the spotlight was on Zimbabwe, where inflation has made money worthless and another dictator hangs on to power.

...and beyond

In many countries of the world a similar tale could be told of individual brothers and sisters:

- A sister in Russia lived in an unfinished house. The roof was collapsing, and the snows of winter were coming, with temperatures below 0°F. She had almost no money.
- A brother and sister in Israel are almost totally blind. She cannot see with one eye and the other has blurred vision, while her husband can only distinguish between light and dark with the one eye that is functioning. They have almost no income of their own.
- In southern Africa a sister was raped, and lived in fear because the man who attacked her was threatening to repeat the assault.
- Elsewhere in Africa a young boy was suffering from a strangulated hernia that needed urgent surgery, but his family and ecclesia could not pay the medical bills.
- A contact in Bosnia met an old woman whose only source of warmth was to burn old clothes in the middle of her room. He tried to help her, but he had little money himself.

This is the world to which many thousands of our brothers and sisters, and their children, awake every morning. It is a world that challenges their faith, their morality, and their care for each other. At the same time it challenges the rest of us to care for those in need as the Lord Jesus would wish.

This article focuses on Africa, and the needs of Christadelphians there, not because they are the only ones in need, but because the problems have been so serious, and because there are so many brothers and sisters there.

The challenge of Africa

The greatest help we can give to anyone in need is to teach them the gospel. It is good to provide food and shelter, to heal diseases, to alleviate poverty in this life. It is even better to provide a hope of life to come, when God will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there will be no more death or grief or crying or pain.

Responsibilities for preaching in our community are shared among the four Bible Missions. While the CBM of the Americas works in Central and South America, the CBM in the UK (www.cbm.org.uk) works in Africa, the Middle East, the former Soviet Union, and Europe. In Africa by God's grace, there are around 16,000 brothers and sisters in 27 countries, and the number is growing fast.

CBM appoints for each country a linkman, a brother to lead a team that visits the country regularly, one who knows the brothers and sisters there, and to whom they can turn in time of need. Preaching is carried out by correspondence and visits, while at the same time local brothers and sisters are spreading the gospel themselves, and in some areas the knowledge of the Lord is spreading very quickly. This is the key work of the CBM. Yet, along the way, we meet many in real need. This is not surprising, of course: most of these countries are poor by western standards, and have no state welfare system for those in need.

It is not, of course, always easy to know how to help, or how much to give, and yet our obligation is clear. The apostle John wrote:

“If anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” (1Jo 3:17).

Help for the problems in Kenya...

Everyone will be aware of the violence in Kenya that followed the disputed elections at the end of last year. In some way or another this has affected brothers and sisters throughout Kenya, and to a lesser extent in Uganda, where refugees have crossed the border to escape the troubles.

Most of the violence in Kenya has been in the west of the country, and it is there that our brothers and sisters have been most affected, particularly in Rift Valley and South Nyanza provinces. Throughout the country, brothers and sisters are in touch by email and mobile phone with the CBM Kenya team — particularly Bro. Alan Sutton, the linkman — so we have a good picture of how they have been affected.

Overall we are thankful that, at the time of this writing at least, the troubles seem to be calming down. In the west the homes of some brothers and sisters and their families have been destroyed, and others have either fled to places of safety or been evacuated. It is one of the blessings of the internet that it was possible within a few days to send money, and help was sent from the CBM Welfare Fund to assist these brothers and sisters and to provide for anyone else in serious need.

In the country as a whole, everyone has been affected by increased food prices. Food has been looted and is simply not available for sale. The Kenya team are monitoring all these situations, and as and when new needs emerge further funds will be sent, to supplement what local brothers and sisters are able to do for themselves.

...and in Malawi and Mozambique

The CBM has an office in Malawi, in which local brothers work to coordinate activities in both countries. Through them, as in the past, money has been sent to meet the needs of the brothers and sisters who have been affected by the flooding, and as in Kenya there is excellent communication with the linkmen, Bre. Trevor Radbourne and Arne Roberts.

When there is no food

In recent years, CBM has responded to disasters in Africa on an even larger scale.

The worst of these was three years ago, when there was a widespread famine in Malawi, Mozambique, Kenya, and Tanzania, and in these countries many people starved to death. The drought in 2005 was the fourth year when the rains had failed, and many in Africa were unable to grow their own food and had no money to buy any, as the shortages forced prices up. Thousands of brothers and sisters were caught up in the famine, and we can be grateful that there are honest and caring brethren in those countries who can be trusted to help others and to arrange food distributions. In Tanzania money was sent to several regional centers to help brothers and sisters there. In Malawi, Mozambique, and Kenya grain was purchased in the towns, and trucks transported the grain to local ecclesias and distributed food for each family. In this way the families of around 10,000 brothers and sisters were provided with maize and cooking oil to see them through the famine. It was gratifying that, when brothers and sisters visited the families later, they were able to confirm that the food had been shared fairly among those in need.



Food being shared among the members of an ecclesia in Kenya during the famine of 2005. See how bare the earth is.

The ravages of disease

In many parts of Africa, diseases such as malaria are a constant threat, and tuberculosis is increasing alarmingly.

Children are particularly vulnerable to malaria because mosquitoes become more active in the evenings when they may be asleep, and the children of some brothers and sisters have died as a result. In recent years, therefore, CBM has provided mosquito nets for the children of brothers and sisters. During 2007 around 4,000 nets were provided to families in Africa.

In some countries in Africa, AIDS is an ever-increasing threat. Millions of adults are dying from AIDS while they are still young, or in early middle age. The average life expectancy in Sub-Saharan Africa is now 47 years, when it could have been 62 without AIDS. The effect on households can be severe. Many families are losing those who used to provide an income, and many of those dying from AIDS have surviving partners who are themselves infected and in need of care. They leave behind orphans, grieving and struggling to survive without a parent's care.

We do not know how many brothers and sisters are infected with the HIV virus (many are not aware themselves), but we have a duty of care in those cases too. In countries where there are treatment programs, CBM helps brothers and sisters to register, so that they can obtain free drugs and medical advice.

Education is also important, and a booklet has been prepared that sets out to teach brothers and sisters how to avoid being infected, how someone with HIV should behave, and how an ecclesia should respond to those who do contract the disease.

The dangers of welfare

It seems hard to imagine that something as Christ-like as helping our brothers and sisters could be a source of trouble, yet even in the first century there were those who followed the Lord only because they enjoyed the loaves and fishes. The very first problem the early church encountered had to do with welfare:

"A complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution" (Acts 6:1).

Those problems have their counterparts today. There is always the danger that, when people see Christadelphians being provided for in times of famine, they will seek baptism not because of a real faith but as an insurance against the next time the crops fail. Others, seeing the influence that ecclesial elders have in welfare matters, may seek to become elders themselves for their own financial gain.

Sadly, these problems have happened, and do still happen. The only wise course is that the provision of welfare should be moderated with an understanding of human nature and a little common sense. Thus, when help is provided, it must be on a scale that will not attract undue attention. The aim is to help brothers and sisters through a difficult time, not to make them conspicuously wealthier than their neighbors.

As far as possible, brothers and sisters must be treated equally, so that nobody feels envy or jealousy at the help given to another. The aim is that, when a brother or sister is in need, they should turn first to their family. If the family cannot help, they should ask their ecclesia. If the ecclesia is unable to meet the need, the ecclesia itself should turn to CBM for assistance.

Self-sufficiency

The ultimate aim must be for brothers and sisters to be independent, and able to survive times of hardship without needing to depend on others. In many areas, for instance, brothers and sisters are dependent on growing maize, and if the

rains fail either at sowing time, or before harvest, the crop may be lost. In several countries, CBM is seeking to help brothers and sisters to vary the crops that they grow, so that they can eat a more varied diet, and so that with more than one source of food they may be better equipped to cope with drought.

Another fund, the Christadelphian Meal A Day Fund (www.meal-a-day.org), has funded many projects throughout Africa that have this aim in mind. Some examples are:

- Providing water tanks for schools or ecclesias, which collect rainwater and provide drinking water for a village. Several villages have benefited in this way, and recently an ecclesia in Los Angeles donated enough money to provide a large water storage tank for one of the Fund's children's homes in Kenya.
- Funding wells or boreholes so that fresh water can be available for villages where there is an ecclesia. During 2007 another 30 wells or boreholes were provided in Africa by Christadelphian Meal A Day.
- Funding orphanages so that children who might otherwise be living wild can have a safe home.

CBM and the Christadelphian Meal A Day Fund work closely together, and both benefit from this cooperation.



This brother in Uganda suffered from throat cancer, but is now able to communicate by using an electronic voicebox, which CBM provided.

The situations with which we began?

We began by thinking not only of Africa, but also of those in need in other countries. There, too, help is given to meet needs when they arise.

- The sister in Russia, living in an unfinished house, was given help to move into

- a flat, and financial assistance to enable her to start to earn her own living.
- Money is being sent to Israel to pay for eye treatment and to provide a small living allowance for the blind brother and sister.
- The sister in southern Africa who was raped has been helped to find a safe place to live.
- Money was provided so that the African boy with the hernia could have surgery.
- Money was sent to Bosnia to help the poor woman and to reduce her debts.

But these are only a handful of the thousands who have had reason to be grateful for the kindness and generosity of their brothers and sisters.

Contact Information

Any brother or sister wishing to contribute to the welfare of brothers and sisters in Africa can do so by contacting the CBM Treasurer, Bro. Philip Tarrant: phil.tarrant@btinternet.com

“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:10).

Andrew Walker (Knowle, UK)

CBM Welfare Secretary

andrew.j.walker@blueyonder.co.uk

Meeting in Bangladesh

One of the more original names for a Christadelphian Community I have come across in my travels is the title of the Christadelphian Ecclesia in Dhaka. Still, in the 2008 CALS Diary, they call themselves the Christadelphian Bible Students. That is exactly what they are. Since Bangladesh is a Muslim state, Christian Churches have to be recognized and registered. Officially they don't exist; thus, my son Kenneth had to have two weddings, a civil one (presided over by a registered Baptist minister) and a Christadelphian wedding (which Bro. Tim Galbraith traveled to Dhaka to solemnize). It is noticeable that many of the Dhaka brethren have Christian names. We may presume they were keen Bible students before they became Christadelphian Bible Students. Kenneth's wife Nipun belongs to a Baptist family. It can be no coincidence that their meeting room is an apartment leased by Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC), who contacted the group while working for the International Monetary Fund branch in Dhaka.

The first visit that Arla and I made to the apartment was three hours after we landed, off a flight from Fredericton in New Brunswick — via Halifax, London and Doha, Qatar — to Dhaka, on Friday, September 21. After two wakeful nights and a day in the air, we were really not ready for a two-hour long lecture on the promises to Abraham, with readings from a Bangla Bible. At least, we were told that was the subject!

After breakfast, changing, and freshening up at Ken's apartment, we went by two

rickshaws to the meeting at Banani, in the north end of Dhaka, arriving in good time for the lecture. We were asked to remove our shoes before entering the meeting room as a courtesy. Socks were permitted, but bare feet were standard. The majority of the people present sat in three rows, with more seats on either side, forming a U-shaped audience. There were several visitors, and a number of family members and their friends present. The outside hallway and one of the bedrooms was used for Sunday school classes. At the top of the U stood Bro. Prince, Bible in hand, with important points written in Hindi script, and occasionally English, for our sakes, on a white board behind him. After the address, there was an opportunity for discussion.

A little later lunch was served: rice and curried chicken, plenty of cold water, and 7-Up. The memorial service took place about 2:30, following a familiar pattern. However, the members of the meeting sat in a square around a low table on which was arranged the bread and wine. The wine had been poured into precisely the right number of small glasses. Kenneth gave the exhortation, translating sentence by sentence into Bangla. We were to get two more opportunities to attend the meeting at the apartment during our visit to Dhaka.

I was invited to give the Bible address the following Friday. I found the experience of talking to an audience in a language only a few could speak, not a little disconcerting. At least I had to speak for only half the allotted time, the remainder of time being for translation. My exhortation on the final Friday was even shorter. I was told later that Bro. Bappy did an excellent job of translation — no small feat, I would imagine!

Dhaka is a city of 11 million people, who seem to be on the move all the time. We found traveling around Dhaka no pleasure whatsoever. Those we visited, and who visited us, lived reasonably close, but these journeys were made on foot, by bus, by rickshaw, or by three-wheel mini-cab, powered by natural gas. Few could afford the price of a taxi, and the motor bike was a popular private conveyance, whereas private cars in Dhaka, at least, belong to the upper strata of society, such as senior army officers and bureaucrats. The Christadelphians' efforts to travel regularly to the Friday meetings, with their families, by public transport, warrant our greatest respect.

Sunday school is not limited to the Banani flat, but becomes a very important facet of home life for many of the brothers and sisters in semi-isolation. Arla and I were taken to visit such a family at the town of Savar, west of Dhaka; this was a rather tedious drive in a small taxi hired for the day. There we visited Bro. Daniel and Sis. Trina. Bro. Daniel has around 15 neighborhood children in the class he teaches himself. While we were there, Daniel and Nipun questioned the children on their previous class. The proper answers were rewarded with wrapped sweets. The class was held in the home of the parents of one of the children — very obviously, from the room's decorations, orthodox if not Catholic Christians. At Daniel and Trina's we had light refreshment and afterward held a short memorial service. I believe that a room has been rented for the Sunday school since we returned to Canada.

On Tuesday, October 2, Ken took a break from work to take us out of Dhaka. We took the train to Chittagong, a name I remember from my seafaring days as the main seaport of Bangladesh. There we transferred to a bus for the journey to Cox's Bazaar. Shortly after sunset the bus stopped at a village en route, at which a supper was provided for the Muslim passengers, who had conscientiously observed Ramadan by fasting all day. Ken had arranged that Bro. Sajal, in Cox's Bazaar, should book us rooms for two nights. This allowed us time to meet Sajal and his wife. They both work for World Vision [*a worldwide children's welfare organization*], he in the office in town and she at a children's home at Chowfaldandi, about 28 kilometers north, from which Sajal commutes every day on his motor bike.

Cox's Bazaar is a tourist town. Our hotel overlooked the Bay of Bengal. The long sandy beaches were very enticing, but use of these beaches was limited to paddling, because swimwear is forbidden as immoral. However I spent much of an afternoon riding with Sajal, trying to book a plane for the following day back to Dhaka, so we could attend the meeting that Friday. I had already declared my refusal to travel by bus to Chittagong, in case the cramped seating might further aggravate my knee, already sore from traveling by rickshaw. The option of a sleeper on the train back from Chittagong still meant a bus trip there.

Eventually we were able to book a flight to Dhaka on Friday morning. It was just as well. I was expected to exhort in the afternoon. Missing the morning Bible study was offset by being able to travel to the children's home and visit with Sajal and Chom, his wife, in the World Vision home for children. We had a breaking of bread with Sajal before they accompanied us in the World Vision SUV, that Sajal had arranged for us, for the return trip to Chowfaldandi. Back in Cox's Bazaar we took this lovely family out for dinner at a restaurant close to our hotel. Then they returned home by bus. I was left with a distinct feeling that our inability to book a ticket on a regularly scheduled flight on Thursday was no accident. Even Cooks [*a large travel agency*], after several tries, gave up. But this allowed for our time with Sajal.

The Friday flight next morning was efficient and comfortable, so that we were back in time for lunch at the Banani apartment, in Dhaka. Chicken and beef curry, and that afternoon another excellent translation by Bro. Bappy at our final memorial service in Dhaka.

Before we left for our return to Canada, Ken took Nipun (with her family), Arla, and myself to the Radisson Hotel. It was "our" birthday and a farewell to us from her family. Two days later we were on our way, headed back to Fredericton, with a stopover (a very expensive one) in London. It was strange to return to our roomy home, quiet streets, and light traffic. Our culture shock was reversed. Sussex Christadelphian Hall and the apartment in Banani were set in different cultures. But the common ground, shared in faith, hope, and love, assures all of us that we shall meet again, when the Lord returns.

Ron Easson (Sussex, NB)

“That the Man of God May be Perfect”

On the weekend of November 9-11, 2007, 45 brothers from Canada and the Eastern United States met for the second annual Brothers' Weekend. The location was Hidden Acres retreat, in the rolling hills of central Ontario, about a 90-minute drive west of Toronto.

It was a joyful event for all brethren attending. Starting with the readings on Friday evening until we dispersed after lunch on Sunday, the focus of our time and attention was on the theme “Called to be a Man of God”.

We had four 90-minute sessions (three on Saturday and one on Sunday). For each session, the brother leading the discussion first made a twenty-minute presentation; this became the basis for a number of small group discussions. After about 45 minutes of these small discussions, a brother selected from each group gave a brief summary to the full group.

The individual topics were as follows:

1. “Called to be a Man of God among Brethren”, led by Bro. Colin Badger
2. “Called to be a Man of God at Work”, led by Bro. Dev Ramcharan
3. “Called to be a Man of God at Home”, led by Bro. Chris Sales
4. “Called to be a Man of God in the Ecclesia”, led by Bro. Ron Leadbetter

The exhortation in the memorial service was given by Bro. Mark Carr, following the general theme, “That the Man of God May be Perfect”.

On Saturday evening, there was a group prayer session. At this time brothers could request that we pray altogether for a particular situation or person as identified. It was with deep appreciation that our prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and help were offered. May our Father in heaven hear and answer our prayers.

During our weekend together there was time for recreation such as walking, table tennis, and the late evening bonfire. Friendships were strengthened and new friendships made. We all left encouraged and a little more confident as each “man of God” grows day by day to become more like “*the* Man of God”.

Brothers, do mark in your calendar November 14-16, 2008, for the next Eastern “Brothers' Weekend”. Join us for what, God willing, may be a time to build each other up in the faith and hope we treasure.

*Nathan Badger, Gary Cousens, Steve McKay,
Joe Sparacino, and Martin Webster*

*“One man awake awakens another,
The second awakens his next-door neighbor,
And three awake can rouse the town,
And turn the whole place upside down.
And many awake can raise such a fuss,
That it finally awakens the rest of us.
One man awake with dawn in his eyes...
Multiplies” (Author unknown).*

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

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

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 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.

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

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Anderson Family Support Fund provides help for Bro. Grant Anderson's family after Grant's serious car accident. Mail checks payable to Christadelphians to: P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696. Website: www.milfordroad.net/Andersons.html

News & Notices

AUSTIN LEANDER, TX

We are pleased to report the baptism of one of our Sunday school students, MARK BERRY, on August 19, 2007. He is the son of Bro. Bryan and Sis. Jenifer Berry.

Our Sis. Keitha Linville and her husband, Paul, were blessed with a daughter, Sarah, on August 21, 2007. Sis. Keitha is the daughter of Bro. Steve and Sis. Kathy Lucas.

We welcome, by transfer, Sis. Luci Cook from the Austin South, TX, Ecclesia.

We have welcomed many visitors. Those from outside Texas include Bro. Lennox and Sis. Sinetta Prashad (Toronto West, ON); Sis. Jodee Webb (Hamilton Greenaway, ON); Sis. Karen Cooper (Manitoulin Island, ON); Bro. David and Sis. Janet Riley (Bournemouth Central, UK); Bro. Michael and Sis. Vanessa Floyd (Port Elizabeth, South Africa); Sis. Nicole Nevers (Meriden, CT); Sis. Robin Sternad (Simi Hills, CA); Sis. Betty Vogel (Kouts, IN); Bro. Ian Prentice (Bedford, UK); Sis. Nini Graham (Thousand Oaks, CA); and Bro. John Seagoe (Santa Barbara, CA). We also thank Bro. Paul Wade (Houston West, TX) for his word of exhortation.

We were pleased to have Bro. Gordon and Sis. Rosa Hensley, as well as Bro. Jason Hensley, from the Simi Hills, CA, Ecclesia, visit for our Fall Fraternal Gathering, held at the HEB camp in December. We thank Bro. Gordon for leading our studies of "Christ in the Old Testament".

Fred Bearden

BEDFORD, NS

We held a successful study day, with outside interest, on Saturday, October 20, 2007, at Grand Lake-Oakfield Community Center. Bro. Brian Luke (Adelaide Brighton, South Aust.) led us in an analysis of Daniel. Also here was Bro. Brian's wife, Sis. Lorna. Other welcome visitors from Sussex, NB, have been Bro. Brad, Sis. Deb and Sis. Joan Goodwin and family; Bro. Cliff, Sis. Julie, Bro. Paul and Sis. Marie Baines and family; Bro. Ken and Sis. Wendy Dickson; Sis. Carolyn Kelly; and Bro. Ron and Sis. Arla Easson. We thank the brethren for their stimulating exhortations.

Ronald A. A. Hill

BRANTFORD, ON

On February 2, 2007, we rejoiced together in the baptism of PETER JENNINGS, son of Bro. Jim and Sis. Shirley Ann Jennings. Bro. Peter was a member of our Sunday school and we are happy to welcome him now as our brother, and look forward to laboring with him in fellowship as we await the return of our King.

Daniel Billington

DETROIT LIVONIA, MI

After a successful interview with the Arranging Board, Sis. Linda Putnick has been restored to fellowship. She has been attending the Milford Road Ecclesia for six months, and has transferred her membership there. We commend her to the care of the brothers and sisters at Milford.

Jeffrey P. Adams

DOUBLE SPRINGS, AL

In reviewing our planned activities for the first nine months of this year, unfortunately we will not be able to have our study day as planned. Initially we had planned to hold the study day on March 14-16, 2008, with our Bro. Stan Isbell leading our classes and giving a topical lecture. We will have to postpone that effort until either this coming fall or early next year, in the spring. Instead, we plan on having a “Learn to Read the Bible Effectively” seminar in April.

Our Bro. Wesley Jones suffered a mild heart attack in late December. Sis. Margaret Jones was hospitalized with a staphylococcus infection, also in late December and through the middle of the first week in January. Both are recovering nicely, although Bro. Wesley continues to have dialysis three times a week. We ask for your prayers.

Even though we are not having our study day in March, we certainly would welcome any visitors to our ecclesia. We promise not to work you too hard.

Troy Haltom

KAMLOOPS, BC

We are happy to announce the baptism of ROD JACKSON on January 27, 2007, and pray for our Father’s blessing on his walk to the Kingdom. Rod was first exposed to the gospel message at a “Learn to Read the Bible Effectively” seminar in the spring of 2005. He has continued to be an eager and enthusiastic student since that time.

We welcome by transfer Sis. Nicole Winter from London West, ON, and Sis. Cheryl Lario from Calgary, AB, both during the summer of 2007. Our Bro. Daniel Ferrie transferred to the North Battleford, SK, Ecclesia in the winter of 2006 for work purposes, but he has since returned to our ecclesia as of September 2007.

We rejoice in the marriage of Bro. Jesse Fletcher, son of Bro. Jon and Sis. Pam, to Sis. Lori Sargent, daughter of Bro. Dan and Sis. Wonda, on December 15, 2007. We pray their united walk to the Kingdom may be filled with pleasant memories.

We thank the many brothers and sisters who have joined us in fellowship this past year, and particularly Bro. Stephen Hornhardt, who led our spring fraternal. We would also like to thank Bre. Rod Massey, and David and Jonathan Lawrence (Prince George, BC); Skip and Stephen Bartholomew, and Graeme Osborn (Vernon Okanagan, BC); Andrew Jackson, and Rafeek Soolaman (Maple Ridge, BC); Wesley Butler (Vancouver, BC); Ron Kidd (London West, ON); Bernard Burt (Coventry, UK); and Colin Hollamby, Carl Parry, and Brian Luke (Adelaide Brighton, South Aust.) for their various adult Sunday school classes, exhortations, lectures, and Bible classes.

Our plans during 2008 include starting a new “Learn to Read the Bible Effectively” seminar in mid-February; an Inter-Ecclesial Gospel Proclamation Workshop for April 26-27, 2007; a visit from Truth Corps during the summer months; and a proposed September fraternal, all things being, of course, subject to our Father’s will.

Jon Fletcher

LOS ANGELES, CA

The Los Angeles Ecclesia has been meeting for a number of years at our current location at 10721 Pioneer Blvd., Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670. Being a short 22 miles by freeway from LAX, 12 miles from downtown Los Angeles, and 15 miles from Disneyland, we are close to many travelers who may be passing through. Our Memorial Service begins at 10 am, followed by Sunday school, and we have a continuing Bible

class and seminar on Wednesday evenings beginning at 7:30 pm. We are delighted when visitors do come. Our meeting numbers about 60. Two noteworthy events that indicate that our meeting is aging were the 100th birthday of our Sis. Olive Clare earlier this year, and the 75th wedding anniversary of Bro. Oty and Sis. Opal Broyles on December 27, 2007. Sis. Clare is originally from Ireland, having come to the US via Canada. She has been in the Los Angeles meeting for many years. Bro. Oty and Sis. Opal have now moved to Lemoore, in the Central California valley, to be close to their daughter and son-in-law; but we are in frequent contact with them.

We had our Los Angeles Reunion dinner this past fall, attended by over 100, who are or have been in the Los Angeles meeting or the Sunday school in the past. We are very excited about the success of our Wednesday evening “Learn to Read the Bible Effectively” seminar. We modified the format somewhat, making it more along the lines of the Reseda Ecclesia’s program; this has proven very successful. We finished our 12-week introductory session, and then made a transition into the intermediate seminar with all the students continuing. The seminar has been a proven means to bring the Hope of Israel to our neighbors and has led to several baptisms. Seeing the enthusiasm of our current students is uplifting to the brothers and sisters.

We welcomed the transfers to Los Angeles of Sis. Priscilla Walther from Boston, MA, and Sis. Megan Wilson from Kouts, IN, as well as the return of Sis. Kristen Patterson from San Francisco, CA.

God willing, we plan a study day on May 31, 2008, to be led by Bro. Nathan Lewis, who is currently enrolled at the University of Southern California in a three-year advanced dentistry program. Bro. Nathan and Sis. Suzanne Lewis (Christchurch, NZ) have been frequent visitors to the Los Angeles Ecclesia.

The Los Angeles Ecclesia is also hosting the Christadelphian Youth Summit planned for February 16-17, 2008.

The newest member of our Sunday school, Ari Jude Brinkerhoff, joined us on November 30, 2007, due to the efforts of Bro. Ben and Sis. Elissa Brinkerhoff, his parents. Sis. Kathryn and Bro. Chris Yearsley, of Auckland, NZ, were visiting until recently to help the new parents.

James E. Land

MONTEGO BAY, JAMAICA

With sadness at the loss of a countenance that truly reflected the love of Christ, but with thankful joy at a race well run, we record the falling asleep of a great saint, Sis. Margaret Drummond, age 104. A very few older brothers and sisters in North America will fondly recall her diminutive body and towering spiritual presence as she campaigned for the gospel in the days of her full strength. Like Moses, she had all her faculties until a day or two before her death. A few days later, Sis. Udaphne McLeod, also known and loved worldwide, was taken seriously ill. We know that many will wish to pray for her recovery.

Our meeting hall has recently been completely renovated inside and out. We would love to welcome visitors, but please contact me at 1-876-369-0057 before visiting our ecclesia, as we are not able to meet in the hall every Sunday.

Siswe Stephen

MONTREAL, QC

We request that correspondents please send any ecclesial mail from now on to my home address at: Michael Parry, 22 - 310 Ave. Lanthier, Pointe-Claire, QC H9S 4G5, rather than to the PO Box, which has been discontinued.

Michael Parry

PARIS AVENUE, OH

This past year has been a year full of rich and varied experiences and blessing from our Heavenly Father. First of all, note the change in the name of our ecclesia to Paris Avenue Christadelphian Ecclesia (PACE) from the former North Industry, OH, Ecclesia. We have moved into a newly constructed hall that is located near Alliance and Louisville, OH. Our first breaking of bread took place on Sunday, January 27, 2008, after nearly eight months of construction on a 5.5 acre plot of open farmland.

We sponsored two study weekends during 2007. Bro. Jonathan Bowen, from the Brantford, ON, Ecclesia, led the one in March and Bro. Dev Ramcharan, from the Toronto West, ON, Ecclesia, led the one in September.

We witnessed two baptisms during 2007: KYLE MISKO, son of Sis. Tammy and Bro. Greg Misko, Jr.; and JOYCE CORBETT, who came into the truth after eight years of study via the seminars.

Our Sis. Angie Swanson married Bro. Steve Mumaw of the Kouts, IN, Ecclesia on June 23, 2007.

Born to Sis. Amanda and Bro. Everett Muniz was a daughter, Moriah, on November 11, 2007.

We have had two transfers into our ecclesia: Sis. Martha Muniz from the Detroit Royal Oak, MI, Ecclesia, and Sis. Molly Schmitt from the Simi Hills, CA, Ecclesia.

Sis. Angie Mumaw transferred to the Kouts, IN, Ecclesia, and Sis. Katy Wuthrick transferred to Avon, IN.

We would like to announce two different study weekends that the Paris Avenue Ecclesia is sponsoring in 2008: March 15-16, 2008, with Bro. Jay Mayock of the Hamilton Ewen Road, ON, Ecclesia, who will be speaking on the topic of Isaiah; and September 20-21, 2008, with Bro. Roger Long of the Coventry, Grosvenor Road, UK, Ecclesia. That topic has not yet been decided.

We have enjoyed many visitors from Petersburg, VA; Canton, OH; Pittsburgh, PA; Manitoulin Island, Hamilton Ewen Road, and Hamilton MacNab, ON, as well as other Canadian ecclesias; Kouts, IN; several Detroit area ecclesias; several ecclesias in Texas; and several of the California ecclesias. Exhortations have been given by Bro. Bill Jennings (Hamilton MacNab), Bro. Bob Pommer (Pittsburgh), Bro. Henry Ternent (Pittsburgh), and Bro. Troy Haltom (Grand Rapids, MI).

Our ecclesia is helping to sponsor a meeting in central Ohio, that will meet in Columbus on the first and third Sundays of each month, and in Coshocton, OH, on the second and fourth Sundays. If you find yourself in central Ohio at any time, please join that body for fellowship and worship. The contact persons for precise information on times and places are Bro. Kevin Flatley at: kflatley@insight.rr.com, phone number 614-933-8535; and Bro. Paul Prater at: pdprater@aep.com, phone number 740-623-8589.

This past year we sponsored a seminar on prophecy, and there was a follow-up on the topic "The Good News of the Gospel." That has resulted in four people continuing now with classes looking toward baptism.

For further information on our study weekends and times of activity, contact Recording Bro. Greg Misko, Jr., at: gmisko@neo.rr.com, or by phone at 330-784-7159. Again, please note the change in our ecclesia's name.

Jack Vogelgesang

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

We have enjoyed visiting speakers from the San Francisco Peninsula, CA, Ecclesia. Our sincere thanks to Bre. Robert Sleeper, Jim Seagoe, Jessie Warner, and John Popel. Our thanks also to our Bro. J.T. Hawksworth (Portland, OR) for his exhortation when he was visiting.

Our Sunday School Program is scheduled for April 6, 2008, and our Sunday School Picnic for June 8, 2008. Both are to be held at the Marinwood Community Center.

Our dear Sis. Sheila Giltzow fell asleep in the Lord in early December at the age of 92. Our love and prayers to her husband Ed Giltzow.

Paul Campbell

SARASOTA, FL

Our ecclesia continues to welcome the visits of brothers and sisters from the US, Canada, and the UK. In January we enjoyed the company of Sis. Lynn Sporzarsky (Treasure Coast, FL) and her husband George; Sis. Connie Walsh (Shenandoah Valley, VA); Bro. Rick and Sis. Elaine Sales (Shelburne, ON); Bro. Norm and Sis. Jan Luff and Sis. Judy Barclay and her husband Phil (Brantford, ON); Sis. Nella Berkhout and her husband Jack (Niagara, ON); Bro. Tom and Sis. Yolanda Baldock (Mississauga West, ON); Bro. John and Sis. Mary Cromie (Peterborough, ON); Bro. Terry and Sis. Jean Cannon (Castle Bromwich, Birmingham, UK); and Bro. Keith and Sis. Louise Archer (Studley, UK).

We thank Bre. Archer and Sales for their words of exhortation.

Please note that the undersigned is now recorder.

James Wilkinson

THOUSAND OAKS, CA

During the past few months we have been pleased to welcome many brothers and sisters from our neighboring California ecclesias. In addition, we welcomed from afar: Bro. Jimmy and Sis. Jennie Vetkos and Bro. Tony and Sis. Pam Cipriotti (South Yosemite, CA); Bro. Frank and Sis. Dorothy Abel (Shelburne, ON); Bro. Mark and Sis. Teri Bitteringer (Bozeman, MT); Bro. David and Sis. Nicole Wisniewski, and Bro. Dan and Sis. Ashley Robinson (Brantford, ON); Bro. Jack and Sis. Shirley Robinson (Kitchener / Waterloo, ON); Bro. Nathan and Sis. Suzanne Lewis (Christchurch, NZ); Bro. Jim Cowie, Bro. Ben Cowie and Bro. Ben Nolan (Wilston, Aust.).

Our thanks go out to Bre. Jim Cowie, David Wisniewski, Jack Robinson, and Dean Gibson (Reseda, CA) for their words of exhortation; Bre. Neal Caplan and John McConville (Reseda, CA), and Chris Stickney (Simi Hills, CA) for their exhortations and afternoon classes.

Our special thanks go to Bre. Jim Cowie and David Wisniewski for their help with our annual Kids Camp on the subject of “The Judges”. Again, we had a full camp of nine to 16-year-olds, who had a lot of fun while becoming quite knowledgeable on the judges.

Also, special thanks to Bro. Frank Abel for leading us in our annual “Day With The Word” and weekend activities. His classes on “Where Is Your Conscience?” motivated all in attendance to continue to seek first the Kingdom of God.

Tom Graham

WACHUSETT, MA

Our ecclesia is saddened to report that our Sis. Ellen Clark peacefully fell asleep in Jesus on January 4, 2008, in her 93rd year. Baptized in 1932, she remained a faithful attendee at our memorial meeting, until her health declined to the point where she found it difficult to get around. She now rests from all her labors, joining her husband, Bro. Burton E. Clark, awaiting the resurrection morn. Our sympathies are extended to her son and family.

We had the pleasure of Bro. Ron Kidd’s company (London, ON) in November, 2007, when he led a most informative Bible class.

On November 4, 2007, the Hudson, NH, Ecclesia joined us at our memorial service. We all enjoyed dinner together, followed by a time of fellowship.

Wesley Trow

The Name of Christadelphian

I have borne the name of Christadelphian for forty years, and upon the significance of that title a few words may be useful. It came into existence when it was necessary to distinguish the brethren from other so-called Christians. Ever since, that name has stood for the One Faith and for separation from the present evil world in its religious, social and political aspects.

“Brethren in Christ”, a high and noble calling, an honorable name! Has it lost its meaning since it first came into being? The Ecclesia at Sardis had a “name” that it lived, but it was dead. They called themselves Brethren in Christ, and they had a high reputation, but in Christ’s estimation they were like the Pharisees, “whited sepulchers”, outwardly beautiful, but inwardly full of dead men’s bones. May the salt never lose its savor; may the name Christadelphian never become a misnomer; may it never come to be borne by a people who have become false to the Truth it signifies.

Brethren! remember our proud and exalted appellation; see that it never becomes tarnished, dishonored, meaningless. It is the fact that is important; not the name. If we call ourselves Christadelphians, then let us be Brethren of Christ in that we hold his Truth unimpaired, and follow his example of holiness.

J.M. Evans

Minute Meditation

That's all I need to know

There is a delightful story about a little girl who memorized the 23rd Psalm to recite at a Sunday school program. She was able to say it perfectly to her parents as they drove to the program. When it was her turn, she nervously stepped up on the stage in front of the microphone and turned to face the audience — the biggest audience she had ever seen. She said, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want,” and then she panicked, and suddenly her little mind went completely blank. She stood in complete silence for several seconds. Finally she blurted out, “That’s all I need to know,” and ran back to her seat.

What she said was more profound than she realized. If the Lord really is our shepherd, then, in a sense, that *is* all we need to know. A shepherd takes care of the sheep. The sheep do not have to worry about their needs because that is the shepherd’s job.

If the Lord is our shepherd, the rest of the psalm applies to us. He will make us to lie down in green pastures; he will lead us beside the still waters. He will restore our soul; he will lead us in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil: for he will be with us; his rod and His staff will comfort us. He will prepare a table before us in the presence of our enemies; he will anoint our head with oil; and our cup will run over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

What a great way to live. If the Lord is our shepherd then we will “seek the Lord, and we shall not want any good thing.” If the Lord is our shepherd then “he will deliver us from all our fears.” All things will work together for our good, and we really can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, if the Lord truly is our shepherd.

How can we make the little girl’s words true for us, so that we can say, “That’s all I need to know”? Those words will apply to us if we “trust in the Lord with all our heart and do not lean upon our own understanding,” because then “He will direct our paths.” If we set our purpose in life to “seek the Lord”, then we will be in good hands following our shepherd. He will keep us safe. We need him to guide us because there is a way that seems right to mankind, but its end is the way that leads to death. Jesus tells us to choose our way carefully because “The gate to destruction is wide, and the road that leads there is easy to follow. Many people go through that gate.” There is only one way and that one way is following the good shepherd. Jesus has said to us, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

We do need to be aware of one important consideration: if the Lord is our shepherd, then we are not free to go where we want to go or free to do what we want

to do. If he is our shepherd then we must allow him to direct our paths. We must obey our shepherd. We read, "Obey all the Lord's laws and commands, so that you may live in safety." If we love him we will keep his commandments.

We love our shepherd because of his care for us. Jesus tells us, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me — just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." Jesus our shepherd gave up his life for his sheep. He is gathering his flock. We want to be among those whom he is gathering.

So let us choose to make the Lord our shepherd, and then that is truly all we need to know. If we set our mind to follow him, he will lead us to places in his everlasting kingdom.

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

MARCH

7-9 Young People's Study weekend Bro. Jeff Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA). Contact Sis. Becky Hill, 11110 South Bay Lane, Austin, TX 78739 dolphingirl72388@aol.com

8,9 Victoria, BC Study weekend Bro. Mike LeDuke (Kitchener/Waterloo): "With Christ in Mind — Paul's Letter to the Colossians". Contact Sis. Pat Williamson (250-721-4938) pwilliamson@telus.net

15,16 Lompoc Valley, CA Annual study weekend Bre. Don Pearce (Rugby, UK) and Paul Billington (Brantford, ON): "An Up Close Look at Bible Prophecy Being Fulfilled in Our Time". Registration: contact Bro. Ron Stewart ronandshirley777@aol.com or call 805-733-5577. Seating limited; we suggest an early response

21,22 Simi Valley, CA Bible study and sports challenge Bro. Allen Laben (Norfolk, VA): "Parables in Luke". Contact Bro. Jason Hensley Jason@speakingofhisglory.com 805-202-6063

21-23 Toronto Fraternal Gathering Silverthorn Collegiate, 291 Mill Road, Toronto, ON. Bro. Tecwyn Morgan (Birmingham, UK): "Jesus Fulfills the Feasts". Contact Bro. Stephen Wilton sdwilton@yahoo.com

21-23 Wichita Falls, TX Spring gathering Texas Christadelphian Camp and Conference Center, Buffalo, TX. Bro. Roy Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI): "Marriage in the Lord". Contact Bro. Larry Beutel, 1900 NW Access Road, Iowa Park, TX 76367; or Bro. John Clubb jclubb4081@aol.com

22,23 Echo Lake, NJ Study weekend Bro. John Hellawell (Peterborough, UK): "David — Shepherd, Soldier, Sinner, Sovereign, Saint". For CYC: "Creation or Evolution?" Contact Bro. David Link dlink44131@aol.com 973-696-3316

29 Worcester, MA Study day Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA). Contact Bro. Aaron MacAdams, (978) 502 9690, aaronmacadams@hotmail.com

29 April 5 Florida Bible School Christian Retreat, Bradenton, FL. Adult / teen classes. Bro. Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON): "Bumps along the Road of Discipleship"; Bro. Mike LeDuke (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON): "With Christ in Mind — Paul's Letter to the Colossians"; Bro. Martin Webster (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON): "The Fifteen-Minute Exhortation". Contact Bro. Walt Dodrill 727-528-1197 waltoddrill@msn.com. Registration: Sis. Diane Jennings 727-528-1886 diane@dianej.net

APRIL

4-6 Men's Weekend Lake Cachuma, CA. "There is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work" (Eccl 3:22). Contact Bro. David Lloyd 818-352-6486

5 Boston, MA Study day Bro. David Levin (Baltimore, MD): "Seven Pillars of Spiritual Personhood". 9:00 am, lunch served. Contact Bro. Jeff Wallace jeff@tecbs.org 508-763-2981

MAY

2-4 Vancouver Island Sisters' Weekend Nanaimo, BC. "Becoming a Handmaid of the Lord". Sisters Linda Reding and Beth MacAdams (Worcester, MA). For registration information contact Sis. Iris Brown rayandirisbrown@shaw.ca 250-758-4284

2-4 Central Coast Women's Weekend Camp Ocean Pines, Cambria, CA. Sis. Kim Brinkerhoff (Pomona, CA): "God's Beautiful Garden"; Sis. Shirley Barratt (San Luis Obispo, CA): "Walking in God's Garden"; Sis. Helen Jennings (Pomona, CA): "The Garden Restored"; Sis. Ann Crouse (North County San Luis Obispo, CA): "The Secret Garden (John 15)". Exhortation by Bro. John Warner (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): "The Garden Tomb". \$50 non-refundable deposit to secure registration. Contact Sis. Ann Crouse 805-239-3517 RoAnCrouse@aol.com

3,4 Pittsburgh, PA Study weekend Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI): "Godly Love". Contact Bro. David Pommer thepommers@verizon.net 724-224-7363

25,26 Sussex, NB Study weekend Bro. Dale Crawford (Bedford, NS): "Portrait of the Perfect Man — Job, Jesus and the Saints"

16-18 Hartford City, IN Lake Placid Study Weekend Lake Placid Conference Center. Bro. Jim Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI): "James". Anyone interested in teaching a class for the children please contact Bro. Jerry or Sis. Dorothy Asbury 27 Dogwood Terrace, Maryville, IL 62062 or phone 618-288-5023

JUNE

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

28 - July 6 Mid-Atlantic Bible School Shippensburg, PA. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK): "A Holy Nation"; teens: "We Have Found the Messiah"; Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON): "The Fate of the Dead"; teens: "Resurrection of the Dead, Who and When?"; Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA): "The Servant and His Songs (Isaiah 40-

66"); teens: "How Readest Thou?". Information at www.christadelphians.net/MACBS

JULY

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

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

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

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

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

26-August 3 Midwest Bible School Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "Prophetic Images"; Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON): "The Fate of the Dead"; Bro. James Mansfield (Aust.): "How the Lord Treated People". Contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 44943 Yorkshire Drive, Novi, MI 48375 248-462-5740 mike.live@gmail.com

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

AUGUST

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

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

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

NOVEMBER

8 Brantford, ON, Prophecy Day Copetown Community Centre, Copetown, ON. Contact Bro. Gary Smith 519-758-0362 hgarysmith@sympatico.ca

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

— of the Kingdom of God —

Vol. 71

May, 2008

No. 4

Editorial — The Sacrifice of the Wicked	159
Exhortation — “Where can wisdom be found?”, <i>Joe Coutts</i>	162
Exposition — Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians: (15) The Lord’s disciples respond to his gift, <i>Tom Barling</i>	166
Bible Study — Little Words that Mean a Lot: (8) Offense — Part I, <i>John C. Bilello</i>	171
Bible Study — Job’s Monsters, <i>Ethel Archard</i>	176
Music in Worship:	
David Brown, A Brother in Christ and a Hymn Writer	180
Music in Scripture, <i>Bob Burr</i>	182
God moves in a mysterious way, <i>George Booker</i>	184
Reflections:	
Will He Come?, <i>Abiathar</i>	190
“Come, Follow Me” — to My Table, <i>Leon Walters</i>	192
“No doubt!”, <i>Sharee Grazda</i>	194
News & Notices	196
Minute Meditation — “Fool so feelish”, <i>Robert J. Lloyd</i>	204
Coming Events	205

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Editor: George Booker

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The Book of Job

I call that book, aside from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels, indeed, as if it were not Hebrew; such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism, or sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble book! A book for all men! It is our first, oldest statement of the never-ending problem — man's destiny and God's way with him here in this earth. And all in such free, flowing outlines! Grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity, in its epic melody, and repose of reconciliation. So true every way! True eyesight and vision for all things, material things no less than spiritual. The horse: "Hast Thou clothed his neck with thunder!" "He laughs at the shaking of the spear!" Such living likenesses were never since drawn. Sublime sorrow; sublime reconciliation; oldest choral melody, as of the heart of mankind; so soft and great; as the summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars. There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible, or out of it, of equal literary merit.

Thomas Carlyle

The Book of Job is one of the most remarkable, not only in the Bible, but in all literature. As was said of Goliath's sword — "There is none like it", none in ancient or modern literature. Hence the difficulty of those who have labored to define the class of compositions to which it belongs. It belongs to no class; it is a class by itself.

John Kitto

Editorial

The Sacrifice of the Wicked

“The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable — how much more so when brought with evil intent” (Prov 21:27).

God abhors (or considers an “abomination”: KJV) worship without righteousness. Hypocritical worship is bad enough; worship with evil intent is the absolute worst! Sins of deception are, in the book of Proverbs, frequently called an “abomination”, for examples, dishonest scales (Prov 11:1), lying lips (Prov 12:22), an unjust judge (Prov 17:15), and differing weights (Prov 20:23). Yet if such things are detestable to the LORD, how much more the implicit intent to deceive the LORD Himself! Not only the sacrifices, but also — and even — the prayers of certain men are detestable (Prov 28:9).

The old expositor Charles Bridges wrote, “Such was it, when Balaam brought his sacrifice, that he might curse Israel (Num 23:1-3,13); Saul, in wayward disobedience (1Sa 13:8-15; 15:21-23); Absalom and Jezebel, to cover their treachery (2Sa 15:7-13; 1Ki 21:9-12); the adulteress, as a lulling to her unwary prey (Prov 7:14,15); the Pharisees, as an aid to their covetousness (Mat 23:14)... What an abomination must their service be before him, who is ‘of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity’ (Hab 1:13)!”

Eugene Peterson offers this brusque paraphrase of Proverbs 21:27: “Religious performance by the wicked stinks; it’s even worse when they use it to get ahead.”

“The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable”: This phrase is parallel to Prov 15:8a: “The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked.” Sacrifices from wicked people are unacceptable because those offering them are insincere and blasphemous (cf Prov 21:3; 28:9; see also 15:29; Psalms 40:6-8; Isaiah 1:10-17; 66:1-4; Jeremiah 6:20; 7:21-23; Hosea 5:6; Amos 5:22; Malachi 1:7,8). Outward service means nothing unless it is accompanied by a change of heart.

The word for “sacrifice” here is “zebach”. It is used particularly of the peace offering (Lev 3:1,3,6; 4:10,26; 7:11-13). Cain’s sacrifice was rejected because it was offered insincerely (Gen 4; Prov 14:9,12). Paul points out that God detests continuing in sin as though grace and forgiveness were easily and readily available, and adds the emphatic “By no means!” (Rom 6:1,2). Finally, Jesus speaks of a similar impediment to God’s acceptance of sacrifice:

“But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother [some manuscripts add ‘without cause’] will be subject to judgment... Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift” (Matt 5:23,24).

“Worship” that is heedless and without reflection, that is merely going through the motions, is a form of resistance or rebellion to Almighty God. If so-called worship does not occupy the understanding, or the “heart”, Biblically expressed, then it is surely detestable to the One we pretend to worship. It is the worst kind of lying, because it is seemingly directed to the One Being who knows the ultimate truth of all things. If there is any one time and place when we must be absolutely honest, it is when we come into the presence of our Creator.

“How much more so when brought with evil intent!” This rhetorical device — ‘How much more!’ — shows that if the act is abomination, the wicked heart is a greater sin. It argues from the lesser to the greater.

“Evil intent” is the translation of the RSV, as well as the NIV. AV and ASV give “a wicked mind” (AV, ASV). The noun “zimmah” means “plan; device; wickedness”; here it indicates that the person is coming to the act of worship with “sinful purpose”.

One such example of evil intent might be if the worshiper sees his act, or even his contribution of money or effort, as a sort of bribe — to buy off God, and to soothe a guilty conscience. Such a man might steal from the poor, or contrive crooked business deals, and then seek “forgiveness” by giving back a small portion of his ill-gotten gains to God.

Two old folk proverbs speak to this “evil intent”: one from the English: “Steal the goose, and give the giblets [the liver and gizzard] in alms.” And the other from the Spanish: “Steal the pig, and give the pig’s feet to God.”

The nineteenth-century German theologian Franz Delitzsch — not noted for pulling his punches — is quite blunt on this matter: “But frequently enough would it occur that rich sensualists brought trespass-offerings, and other offerings, in order thereby to recompense for their transgressions, and to purchase for themselves the connivance of God for their dissolute life. Such offerings of the godless, the proverb means, are to God a twofold and a threefold abomination; for in this case not only does the godless fail in respect of repentance and a desire after salvation, which are the conditions of all sacrifices acceptable to God, but he makes God directly a minister of sin [i.e., a servant of the wicked man’s sin].”

It may be added here, that church history suggests that many would-be human “ministers” have connived with worshipers to the same abominable end, and lined their own pockets in the bargain. It is no surprise that the harlot, and mother of harlots, depicted in Revelation comes to be known for the richness of her “merchandise”.

Another feature of “detestable sacrifice” and “evil intent” is merely the slightest reordering of events. Instead of paying for one’s sins *after* they have been committed, this “detestable sacrifice” is paying for one’s blessings *before* they have been bestowed. This is sometimes called “prosperity theology” or “the health and wealth gospel”. In this scenario the sacrifice becomes a sort of “quid pro quo”: ‘I give to God a little first, and then He will give much more to me later.’ It is no less abominable to the LORD.

If we begin to think that we may “pay” for our sins or buy God’s favor with money, or service, or a pretended devotion, then we are well along on the road to a false religion. The only real gift we can bring to our heavenly Father is ourselves. The wise men traveled some distance and came to lay before the child Jesus their gold, incense, and myrrh. But the real gift they brought was their devotion and love, merely demonstrated in their material gifts.

We know that the cattle on a thousand hills already belong to God; He doesn’t *need* our money, although it is surely a good thing to offer it in service to Him. What He really wants is our “heart”:

“My son, give me your heart!” (Prov 23:26).

Matthew Henry correctly observes: “Many can freely give God their beasts, their lips, and even their knees, who would not give him their hearts.”

And Robert Roberts wrote, “The wicked sometimes sacrifice. They did so under the Law, and they do so under the gospel. The form of the sacrifice differs, but the spirit of the thing is the same. They give for Divine use, but instead of being acceptable, it is ‘abomination’ to God. The reason is to be found in the mind in which it is given. It is not given from a love of God, or from a desire to be in the way of obedience, but either from a superstitious notion that it may avert the consequences of their wicked course in common life (which is the most respectable form of this wickedness), or from a desire to be considered religious by their fellow-sinners, or to procure the good graces of the priesthood, through whom they may obtain influence and trade with the people. The approaches that please God are the approaches of ‘upright’ men [Prov 15:8] — men who fear God and work righteousness in private as well as in public — every day as well as Sunday — in the transactions of common life as well as in religious exercises — towards enemies as well as among friends.”

George Booker

“How manful a lesson is contained in this Persian proverb: ‘A stone that is fit for the wall is not left in the way.’ It is a saying made for them who appear for a while to be overlooked or neglected; who see in themselves capacities which as yet no one else has recognized or cared to put to use. Only be fit for the wall; square, polish, prepare yourself for it; do not restrict yourself to learning just enough as is absolutely necessary for your present position; but rather acquire useful information, stretch yourself out on this side and on that, cherishing and making the most of whatever aptitudes you find in yourself; and it is certain your turn will come. You wilt not be left in the way; sooner or later the builders will be glad to have you; the wall will need you to fill up a place in it, quite as much as you need a place to occupy in the wall. For the amount of real capacity in this world is so limited, that places need persons to fill them quite as urgently as persons need to fill places” (R.C. Trench).

Exhortation

“Where can wisdom be found?”

I am thinking of a poem that is often overlooked. But first, what triggered the thought? My wife and I were enchanted recently. In a local and expensive jeweler's shop we examined a bejewelled model of a crystal chasm, where miniature silver miners worked at a precious rock face, suspended on silver threads, with picks and hammers and buckets.

This memory sprang to mind clearly when I read Job 28 again. Let us have a look at it.

It is a remarkable poem about workers in the dark bowels of the earth, working under dangerous conditions to collect the treasures hidden there. Poetry gives us more than words. We scan compressed phrases, and then imagination adds to and fills the gaps. The NIV is clearer than the AV here:

“Far from where people dwell he cuts a shaft, in places forgotten by the foot of man; far from men he dangles and sways... No bird of prey knows that hidden path, no falcon's eye has seen it. Proud beasts do not set foot on it, and no lion prowls there. Man's hand assaults the flinty rock and lays bare the roots of the mountains. He tunnels through the rock; his eyes see all its treasures. He searches the sources of the rivers and brings hidden things to light” (Job 28:4,7-11).

Today also many people risk and lose their lives for treasure they will not use, but the poet makes a leap here which reveals much to us. From one kind of riches he moves to another kind of riches altogether:

“But where can wisdom be found?... The deep says, ‘It is not in me’; the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’ It cannot be bought with the finest gold, nor can its price be weighed in silver” (vv 12,14,15).

With this we compare other passages, from the Psalms:

“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there” (Psa 139:6-8).

“Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you” (Psa 73:25).

Back to the mine. Who wore those jewels? Who made and wound the rope? What did they eat? How far did they travel? Were they slaves, or prisoners? Were they cared for, these miners who dangled in space, in the flickering dark, invisible to those on the surface above?

Remember the backroom people we don't see, cleaners, couriers, rubbish collectors — who work sewing our clothes, gathering and processing our food, and

stocking it on shelves, assembling our computers and mobile phones? Who makes the trinkets we wear and display and use?

The author Dale Carnegie wrote of making new friends by noticing them. “Say to the shoeshine boy, ‘How’s the family?’ Say to the lift-boy [*the elevator operator*], ‘Thanks and have a good day.’” They also are a part of us, and we are a part of them.

Wisdom, we learn, is often found in the depths of silence, whereas foolishness can be revealed in extended and superficial talking — as seen in Job’s friends. We should be careful lest we take over their role in our turn, by extensively reviewing their faults.

The book of Proverbs considers ‘wisdom’ consistently throughout.

“Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honour. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed. By wisdom the LORD laid the earth’s foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; by his knowledge the deeps were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew” (Prov 3:13-20).

“Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding” (Prov 4: 5-7).

“My son, if your heart is wise, then my heart will be glad” (Prov 23:15).

“Get wisdom?” How is this possible? It is like the rainbow; we can’t grasp it, and hold it. But we can observe it.

“If your heart is wise...” How do we behave wisely? Can we be wise on command? **‘Now** I am wise!’

We cannot be wise by choosing to be so. But slowly, like fruit on the tree, wisdom may grow, almost unnoticed. The “fruits of the Spirit”, like the attributes of “love” described in 1 Corinthians 13, are a measure and a model of our character.

More than an accumulation of knowledge, “wisdom” is a skill we may learn. Ever so slowly, we gain insights into God’s ways, and then we apply the lessons in our daily lives. Perhaps others may discern wisdom in us, even if we do not see it.

Wisdom is something like happiness. We can’t grasp it, but it’s a result, a byproduct, of our outlook, our way of life. Like a butterfly that flutters before us — we reach for it, we lose sight of it, and then there it is on our shoulder. Others may be aware of it before we are.

Regarding his own citizenship, the Roman captain said to Paul, “With a great sum obtained I this freedom” (Acts 22:28). May we paraphrase him?: ‘At great expense obtained I this wisdom.’ For we find it not all at once, but over a lifetime, through many and varied experiences. It may cost us our lives, so to speak, before it can be “bought”. Then also, as Paul himself says, “God has made foolish the wisdom of this world” (1Co 1:20), and if this is so, then perhaps also those who are “foolish” in the things of this world may find true “wisdom” in God. That would be a relief.

How can we begin, and continue, this journey of redemption which is our life? Again, we go back to Job 28:

“The fear of the Lord — that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding”
(v 28).

So it had been said of Job himself from the beginning:

“In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil” (Job 1:1).

It’s clear that Job was well on the way to wisdom when his troubles began; we might forget that when we consider him.

“How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver!” (Prov 16:16).

We have two tempting invitations:

- The Lady ‘Wisdom’ invites us to her house with seven pillars (Prov 9:1): *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding”* (v 10). To “fear God” is to give Him reverence. *“If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you”* (v 12).
- The Woman ‘Folly’ also invites us, but her guests are on their way to the grave (Prov 9:13-18).

“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever!” (Rom 11:33-36).

“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6:8).

Will we go on a quest? Should we make another vain resolution? How do we *find* wisdom?

Job was a man who feared God and shunned evil; he was blameless and upright; he was knowledgeable and wise. Yet even he finally had to conclude: ‘What do I really know? I can only leave it all in God’s care.’

Thinking on these lines, I came across this following statement, from the French philosopher Marcel Proust: “We cannot be taught wisdom. We have to discover

it for ourselves by a journey which no one can undertake for us, an effort which no one can spare us.”

I see a cameo of Jesus and ourselves here. For all our seeking there is a space within us only Jesus can fill. Without him, we will search endlessly and in vain. These days God speaks through His Son, offering us the gospel of the Kingdom. Paul writes to the Colossian brethren, and to us, remarkable words — dense, close-packed words:

“My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:2,3).

In our mind’s eye we go back to the miniature silver miners, hanging precariously on little silver threads, giving their lives to seek precious riches. Now we know who they really are. They are us:

“Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name. ‘They will be mine,’ says the LORD Almighty, ‘in the day when I make up my treasured possession [my jewels: KJV]. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him’ ” (Mal 3:16,17).

Joe Coutts (Aberdeen, Scotland)

Special Invitation

For many years, unity discussions have been taking place with Churches of God of the Abrahamic Faith. In the interest of promoting friendship and mutual understanding between our respective communities, we print the following invitation:

*You, your family and friends are invited to the
32nd annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 21-27, 2008.*

Main Speakers:

Bro. John Pople — “Powerful Lessons Hidden in Mysterious Scenes”

Bro. Scott Tennant — “Micah’s Message to the Modern World”

Bro. Kyle Tucker — “Comparing Spiritual Things with Spiritual”

Contact Bro. Brad Rek 330-609-6957 or lisarek8@cs.com

*Also visit CGAF.org for additional information
and online registration.*

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (15) The Lord's disciples respond to his gift

We come now to the consideration of Ephesians 4:11. By the sovereign authority bestowed on him by his Father, the ascended and glorified Lord Jesus was enabled to distribute gifts to his followers (see Acts 2:33). The Greek is emphatic: it is he in person who made the gifts, and this the NEB makes clear:

*"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers."*¹

This verse gives us insight into the organization of the early church. There was an obvious need for ordering the life of the new communities which came into being, as the result initially of Peter's preaching and the work which continued. There was a rapid growth of the early church, reflected in the figures recorded by Luke: 3,000 (Acts 2:41; see also 4:4). It was reported to Paul that there were many thousands of Jewish believers (Acts 21:20). As all the early ecclesias were composed of Jews or proselytes, they organized themselves along Jewish lines. The subject cannot be explored in detail here; it has been studied by Edwin Hatch.² (It is inevitable that the subject should come up in Paul's letters. Apart from Ephesians 4:11-12, we take note of Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:28.)

Our immediate concern is with Ephesians 4:11. Here, Paul focuses on the word, the means by which God's will, and His concern for man's salvation, are conveyed. The term "apostles" makes us think first of the twelve (the faithful eleven and Matthias: see Acts 1:26-2:1). They unquestionably took a leading part in the earliest days of the church's history. However, there were others who are designated apostles, like Judas and Silas (Acts 15:22,27,32). These were specially gifted with the Holy Spirit, and this played an important part in the preaching of the gospel and in informing their converts about the life and teaching of the Lord Jesus.

What is of great interest is the fact that from the earliest days, there was democracy in the church. This is admirably illustrated in the choice of the seven who were made responsible for the distribution of charity to widows. The apostles resolved this problem by calling the rank and file together, and telling them: "*Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom*" (Acts 6:3, NIV). This was done by the choice of the seven. Later, when the problem of the relationship of uncircumcised believers to the Law of Moses was debated, the decisions arrived at were plainly submitted to the general body of disciples (see Acts 15:22).

Yet the organization of the new communities required others, pastors and teachers. Writing to Titus, who worked in Crete, Paul instructed him to appoint elders in every town (Tit 1:5). The apostle Peter describes himself as an elder, and says that

such were to “tend the flock of God”. Here we note an echo of the Lord’s words to Peter by the sea of Galilee (see 1Pe 5:1 and John 21:15-17).

“For the perfecting of the saints...”

In verse 12 (of Ephesians 4), the apostle informs us of the purpose behind the bestowal of the gifts:

“For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ.”

Thus those who received the gifts were called to service, not to any form of self-exaltation. The NIV is explicit in this regard: “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” The emphasis is on service to others, but primarily to the Father Himself, though He does not Himself need our services. However, that is the meaning of our call.

In the understanding of service, and in response, the Lord Jesus is the outstanding example. Matthew’s conclusion to the record of the Lord’s temptation is: “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt 4:10). Then again, after performing the task of washing the apostles’ feet, the Lord said to them: “For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). Increasingly, as we reflect upon the teaching and example of our Lord, it becomes apparent how we must, to achieve spiritual progress and development, deepen our knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

Then, in verse 13, Paul speaks again of the unity of the faith (cf vv 4,5), and stresses what we have already dwelt upon, that we must achieve a growing knowledge of the Lord Jesus, thereby ensuring we attain “to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (NIV).

This growing acquaintance with our Lord is the surest guarantee we do not become a prey to false teaching, being seduced “by the sleight of men, in craftiness” (v 14). When we recall, yet again, the errors which had arisen in Colosse, and the threat to the other ecclesias in the Lycus valley, we can begin to appreciate the thrust of this verse. The apostle will not allow his readers, and surely disciples of all generations, to miss what he is so constantly emphasizing, and now in verse 15: our spiritual development is a process of growing “up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ” (NIV). While a new status is conferred upon us as the result of baptism, this becomes meaningful only in the measure we crucify the old self, and become increasingly conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus.

The whole body

Then, yet again, Paul employs the analogy of the body: “From whom [i.e., Christ] all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love” (v 16). As we have already discovered, in the apostle’s use of the figure of the body, each separate member has its own special function. The building up is a process to which every single member makes a contribution, however modest it may appear, but its importance, if made in love, will be known to the Lord.

The moral consequences

Inevitably now, the apostle, following his usual practice, spells out the moral consequences of the new life in the Lord Jesus. We should note the solemnity of his words:

“This I say therefore and testify in the Lord, that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind” (v 17).

He is not, therefore, speaking like some Roman or Greek moralist, but in the Lord. It is this which gives authority to his teaching. He knows full well what is happening in the contemporary world, as he shows in Romans 1:21-32. He uses similar terms now: his readers likewise would be well aware of what was going on around them, in the society to which they themselves had previously belonged. “They are darkened in their understanding” is Paul’s judgment (v 18, NIV). Once human beings turn from God, they are in darkness. To quote the NEB: “Dead to all feeling, they have abandoned themselves to vice, and there is no indecency they do not practise” (v 19).

Nothing could be more opposed to the new life: “But ye did not so learn Christ” (v 20). It is his teaching, his conduct, then, as now, which should be the light on our path. Whether it was Paul in person, or the worthy Epaphras, or some other in whom Paul had total confidence, it was the work of God in the person of His Son which was at the heart of their preaching, and his readers were well aware of this essential truth. In view of this, they are exhorted to divest themselves of “the old man” (v 22), what we may term “the Adamic man”, and put on “the new man”. The same exhortation occurs in Colossians 3:9. It is no surprise that it is in the chapter devoted to the deeper meaning of baptism that Paul declares that by this act of faith and obedience our old man was crucified (Rom 6:6). For Paul the proud young Pharisee, it had been a painful experience but by the exceeding grace of God in His Son he embarked on a new life (see 1Ti 1:12-16). He knew that the annihilation of the old self is a lifetime process and that the ideal must be kept before our consciousness each day (see 1Co 15:31).

“Therefore...”

The consequence of living the new life in Christ is “to be created like God in true righteousness and holiness” (v 24, NIV). Then comes the “therefore” (NIV), and the apostle once more gives practical instruction. We must be true and honest in our conversation one with another (v 25); all forms of falsehood must be eschewed and truth should characterize our whole lives.

Yet again Paul brings the reason before us: “We are members one of another.” Thus the concept of one body is yet again affirmed. That disunity with all its distressing consequences can characterize a Christian community is illustrated in the history of the church at Corinth, yet the Lord had given Paul this assurance: “I have much people in this city [Corinth]” (Acts 18:9,10).

The control of the tongue is an important aspect of the new life in Christ. There is a celebrated NT chapter devoted to this (James 3), and the Proverbs frequently dwell on this feature of social relations. References to the use of the tongue are

numerous; we take note of one: “The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit” (15:4, NIV).

“In your anger do not sin...”

Anger may be legitimate in some situations but it should never be nursed; it should subside before one can hope to spend a peaceful night; so the apostle gives this counsel:

“Be ye angry, and sin not [‘In your anger do not sin’: NIV]: let not the sun go down on your wrath” (v 26).

The control of the small member can lead to conduct which discredits the faith and gives the critic (the “devil”) opportunity for criticism.

“Steal no more...”

In verse 28, there is a warning against theft; it was rampant in the Roman empire and slaves, abused by their masters, might easily filch something belonging to a rich master. The case of Onesimus wonderfully illustrates this: he had absconded, but not with an empty pocket (Phm 1:18,19). The way Paul handled this situation is a model of delicacy and tact. But the real antidote when there is a temptation to steal, is to work, so that one can minister to the needs of another. Here, once more, Paul is himself an outstanding example, in his address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, he was able to claim: “Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them who were with me” (Acts 20:34).

How we speak

The subject of the speech of a disciple has already come in for some consideration. In verse 29, the apostle addresses the matter directly:

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building up others according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (NIV).

The power of the tongue was tragically illustrated in German history, when Hitler with his intoxicating rhetoric moved a great nation to wars of conquest and the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust. On a lower level, foul language, especially of a suggestive nature, is becoming increasingly common. The disciple must avoid even flippant, frivolous talk.

Sealed with God’s Holy Spirit

Thus we avoid grieving God’s Holy Spirit, the seal which authenticates our discipleship, a subject examined earlier (see Eph 1:13). God is holy and the Israelites were told: “Ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy” (Lev 11:45). Briefly, this means that all aspects of a disciple’s behavior should bear witness to the fact he is part of a new creation (cf 2Co 5:17). Though there is much that calls for discipline in our human nature, we have an understanding and forgiving God. There is a joy in the new life in the Lord Jesus, of which society at large knows so little.

When, then, there is an assembly of believers, the atmosphere should bear witness to the fact that this is a company of men and women who have embraced and practice a new way of life. They are truly God’s people. There should be no place

for “rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice” (v 31, NIV). On the contrary, their relations should reveal kindness, and a tender and forgiving heart, for this is the individual’s own response to the forgiveness he has received from God and His Son (v 32).

It is thus the chapter finishes on a high note, and the next chapter continues in the same vein.

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Notes:

1. The term “gave” is interesting in this context: “He [the LORD God] gave the apostles and the other spirit-gifted brethren to the Israel after the spirit, just as the sons of Levi had been given to Israel.” See John Carter, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Christadelphian, p 89.
2. Edwin Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, Longmans, Green, London, 1892.

“Great music never complains”

In a charming essay on music, a recent writer has gathered up a great deal in one telling sentence. He speaks of the various moods of the world’s masterpieces of music — the romance, the sorrow, the aspiration, the joy, the sublimity expressed in them, and he adds that there is only one mood forever unrepresented, for “Great music never complains.” At first, this seems too sweeping. We remember so many minor keys, so many tragic chords, in the best music. But, as we think over it longer, it becomes truer and truer. Great music has its minor keys; its pathetic passages; its longing, yearning notes. But they always lead on to aspiration, to hope, or to resignation and peace. Mere complaint is not in them. The reason, after all, is simple. Complaint is selfish, and high music, like any other great art, forgets self in larger things. The complaining note has no possible place in noble harmonies, even though they be sad. So, if we want to make music out of our lives, we must learn to omit complaint.

Some young people think it rather fine and noble to be discontented, to complain of narrow surroundings, to dwell on the minor notes. But it is well to remember that the one thing to avoid in singing is a whine in the voice; and whining is perilously close to any form of pathos. “Great music never complains.” That is a good motto to hang up on the wall of one’s mind, over our keyboard of feeling, so to speak. The harmonies of our lives will be braver and sweeter the more we follow this thought. Without it, fret and discord will come, and mar the music that might be, and that is meant to be.

“The Christian Age”, cited in Biblical Illustrator

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (8) Offense — Part I

“A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city” (Prov 18:19)

Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, of Virginia and Massachusetts respectively, were among the most influential founding fathers of the United States of America. They had worked closely together with great respect for each other — indeed, it would not be going too far to say, even with affection — in drawing up the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation that followed. However, with the passage of time and the framing of what eventually became the Constitution of the United States of America, the two drew further and further apart. Adams was a Federalist and keenly in favor of a strong central government, while Jefferson, a Democratic, was an ardent supporter of states’ rights. Eventually, John Adams became greatly offended and estranged from Thomas Jefferson over a pamphlet that Jefferson had written accusing Adams of being a monarchist. To try to make amends Thomas Jefferson wrote the following to John Adams in a letter dated July 17, 1791:

“That you and I differ in our idea of the best form of government is well known to us both, but we have differed as friends should do, respecting the purity of each others’ motives...”¹

With these few incisive words Jefferson hit at the heart of what invariably leads to virtually all perceived offenses, namely, ascribing *motives* to another person’s actions (when only God knows the heart). This is not to dismiss the fact that some offenses may indeed be real, but it has been my life experience that, in by far the most instances where a brother or sister has been offended, it has been the result of perception (and ego) rather than an actual, deliberate sin being perpetrated.

Without a doubt, brothers or sisters who are offended by something done to them can cause untold harm in the ecclesia. Offenses real or perceived can be the root of a believer leaving the ecclesia, and unfortunately on occasion even leaving the community. It can lead to strife and even division within the ecclesia. Given the seriousness of this issue, it is no wonder that extremely detailed advice is given to us in both the Old and New Testaments about how to deal with “offense”.

For starters we need to know that there are actually several different ways that the words “offense, offend, offended” are used in Scripture. We will explore this first and then go on from there, hopefully to show in practical ways how the Bible teaches us to deal with offenses against us, real or imagined. Finally, it is important to note that the distinction between *real or imagined* is really irrelevant, because one person’s perception can easily be another’s reality and vice versa. In the end, to heal offense we need to deal with the issue regardless of whether we feel it is *real or imagined*.

When we are told that the butler and baker had “offended” (Gen 40:1) against Pharaoh, the word there comes from a root meaning *to sin*.² We have no doubt about that meaning given the context, because the King of Egypt had suspicions that someone in his household was involved in a plot to assassinate him. Since the butler was, in effect, the chief wine steward³ and the baker the head chef, it was these two individuals who were responsible for checking and tasting everything that was set before Pharaoh to eat or drink. To “offend” the king was thus to be involved in carrying out his murder, apparently a frequently used mechanism for achieving turnover in public office in ancient times. Fortunately, we have moved well beyond this today and generally practice *only* character assassination! Sometimes it appears to me that we have become too accustomed to the character vilification that we witness in public political life, so much so that we carry it over in dealing with brethren and sisters in the ecclesia whom we may disagree with on an issue. It has been said that if one cannot convince someone by the power of his argument then he will resort to destruction of the other person’s character. It ought not to be so amongst us:

“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him... that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matt 18:6).

Sometimes offense is simply a matter of careless, idle talk. With no harm intended, we may speak quite innocently without fully appreciating the effect our words might have on another person (cp Prov 29:20). Many years ago I was invited to give a series of lectures in another part of the Christadelphian world. The brother who had corresponded with me, to plan our visit, met us at the airport after a long flight. We had never previously met; hence I needed to find this brother by looking for the sign with my name on it at the exit from passport control. The brother looked somewhat surprised when I approached him and the first words out of his mouth were: “Your writing led me to expect someone a lot taller.” My response was: “From our correspondence I was expecting a very intelligent brother. I hope we are not both disappointed.” We then both joined in a good laugh and became good friends. The lesson is that a good sense of humor will often defuse potential offenses. A very wise sister once added to this by saying if we approached life with an “assuming no offense intended” attitude we would be able to move on and deal with issues without hurt.

The bulk of the Scriptural uses of the word “offense” do not really deal with the concept of personal “insult”, even though it is this connotation that usually comes to mind when we use the word today. The word “offence”⁴ has changed meaning since the King James Version was written in 1611 AD. We can easily verify this by referring to modern dictionary definitions where personal “insult” or “displeasure” are given as the primary meanings.^{5,6} However, “insult” is not the intended meaning in most instances in our Scriptures. When Paul spoke to the Corinthians about not offending their brothers and sisters he clearly meant not to put before them a “stumbling block” that would cause them to trip and fall from grace and lose their inheritance in the Kingdom of God. When Jesus alludes to offending he is using the word in a similar vein, namely, creating a “cause to stumble” and by

*implication lose eternal life.*⁷ The intent of the King James translators in using the word “offend” for ‘stumbling’ instead of the more pejorative term ‘insult’ resides in the primary meaning of the word *offend* in the early 16th Century. The Oxford Universal Dictionary gives the following definition that was current at the time the KJV was translated: “In the Biblical use: to be a stumbling-block to a person; to cause to stumble or sin; to be caused to stumble or sin (1611).” This sense of the word does not have anything to do with feeling hurt if someone points out for example, how short I am, neither should I really take to heart other insults that might possibly refer to my baldness or rotundity. (At one time or another, I have had all of these voiced to me by tactless brethren and sisters.)

*“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them”
(Psa 119:165).*

The brother or sister who might perpetrate such insensitivity needs to be forgiven (and *gently* admonished following Matthew 18:15), but such idle words aimed at our egos should not cause us to stumble from the path to the Kingdom of God.⁸

There is a marvelous narrative in Joshua 22 that is virtually a primer on how potentially serious consequences resulting from perceived offenses can arise almost inadvertently. It shows us the path for healing the breach that can come about from such a tragic misunderstanding. In this chapter we join the Israelites just when they have triumphantly completed the conquest of the land of promise. It was now time for the tribes to assume their inherited portions of the land. Joshua dismisses the Reubenites, Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh, who had fought valiantly beside their brethren, and instructs them to take up their inheritance on the other (i.e., eastern) side of the Jordan River in the land of Gilead (Josh 22:1-3). Joshua gives them strict charge to follow the LORD diligently — no half measures (v 5). Idolatry apparently (as with Achan and even earlier with Rachel) still lingered in their hearts, and was perhaps still hidden in their tents (cp Josh 24:23). If we bear this thought in mind, of hidden lust for idolatry still lingering in the hearts of the children of Israel, then we will be able to appreciate the perceived offense that follows later in the story.

Unfortunately, human nature has not changed since Joshua gave his charge to the Israelites; we too are prone to fail in the same manner. We can give every outward appearance of worshiping God, but still continue hiding idols in our tents! We need to be ever so mindful of what we allow in our homes, the kind of television programs, DVDs, magazines and Internet content that find their way into our tents. The challenges that parents face today in protecting their children from the gore, violence, and sexual immorality that the various modern forms of media can so readily deliver is indeed daunting.

Before crossing over the Jordan River the Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites constructed a “great altar” on the western bank; it could apparently be seen for some distance (the NIV calls it an “imposing altar”). These three tribes had apparently done this, “neither asking for advice nor offered any explanations.”⁹ The remaining tribes were offended, thinking they were setting up an alternate place

of worship. This was an offense in the true sense of the word, because it created a stumbling block interfering with worshipping the LORD God. The remaining tribes received the news, no doubt passed by some scouts who had seen the altar and immediately assumed the worse (v 11), hence they prepared for war against their brethren (v 12). This is a perfect illustration of how failure to communicate on both sides can lead to offense. If the three tribes who were building the altar had informed the rest of Israel remaining on the western bank of their intent, nothing would have come of the matter. Alternatively, if those Israelites who spotted the construction of this imposing altar had bothered to check with the builders before going back to the main camp and instigating trouble, again there would have been no cause to provoke the nation.

Unfortunately, we frequently act the same way. We take an action, assuming that our brethren and sisters fully comprehend our intent, even though we may have given scant attention to informing them of the details. Conversely, when we are faced with an action of another person which we don't fully understand, we often jump to the worst possible conclusion.

One of the principal lessons here in Joshua 22, for us today, places this burden of communication especially upon arranging brethren. It is extremely important that Arranging Boards of elders constantly keep all the members informed, not only of their actions, but also of the motivations behind them. Doubtless this is why Bro. Roberts insisted in the Ecclesial Guide that all Arranging Board meetings be open to all members of the ecclesia. In this modern age of communication there should be no difficulty in providing every member of a meeting with the minutes of all arranging board meetings in a timely fashion.

There can be no doubt that, if the assumptions that were made by the tribes remaining on the western side of the Jordan were correct, then serious action had to be taken. The nation had learned hard lessons in the wilderness wanderings and was determined not to have these tragic failings repeated. "Is the iniquity of Peor not enough for us?" (v 17), they cried out, remembering what had happened at Peor when the nation had joined itself to the pagan god Baal (Num 25:3) and twenty-four thousand perished of the God-sent plague (Num 25:9). The memory of Achan was also still in their minds (Josh 7). In this incident the sin of one man in burying idols in his tent, apparently with the complicity of his family, led to painful retribution upon the whole nation and the annihilation of his family. Given these circumstances it is easy to see why the tribes remaining west of the Jordan were sensitive to the perception that the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh were flirting with idolatry and that the whole nation would be severely troubled by the construction of a false altar. However, it is precisely under such circumstances that we need to be especially cautious about taking precipitous action without checking all our facts.

It is entirely possible that we can jump to conclusions about the behavior of a brother or sister based on past actions. While prior behavior cannot be discounted, neither should we fail to allow for forgiveness and the willingness to seek a new path on the part of one who has previously sinned. The teachings of our Lord

and Master Jesus Christ in his dealings with the woman caught in the act of adultery are particularly apt (John 8:1-11). Likewise the conversation that Jesus had with the Samaritan woman at the well is also instructive (John 4:16-18). In both these cases offense against the law of God was clear-cut under the Mosaic code, and both women would have been subject to severe punishment like that of the three eastern tribes suspected of idolatry. Yet Jesus offered forgiveness not retribution.

Fortunately, cooler, wiser heads prevailed, and it was decided first to send trusted Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, along with ten reliable witnesses chosen from the princes of each of the tribes remaining west of Jordan (vv 13,14). This same Phinehas was the one who took bold immediate action to stay the plague that had resulted from Israel's flirtation with Baal at Peor. Notice how this parallels the procedure that our Lord Jesus Christ gave us for dealing with offense (Matt 18:15-18). First the tribes should have directly communicated with each other (Matt 18:15), but they failed to do so (vv 11,12). We must not skip that step, but if we do or if such communication fails, it is not a reason to go to war! The next step is to involve trusted elders to ascertain the nature of the offense and seek to rectify the situation:

"Take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established' " (Matt 18:16; cp Deut 19:15).

When Phinehas and the western tribal elders confronted the eastern tribes, a full accounting of their actions took place and the matter was completely clarified to the satisfaction of all (vv 22-27). The Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh assured Phinehas and the elders that it was all a big misunderstanding, and appeared equally offended because they thought their actions should have been obvious. We can tell the fervency of their plead by the curious iteration of the names of God — "LORD God of gods" (v 22, the only time this word sequence appears in Scripture). They assumed their intentions should have been apparent. If they had intended the altar for worship of pagan gods it would have been built on their eastern side of the Jordan, *not* in the territory of the other tribes. They felt it was obvious that the altar was built for commemoration and not for worship. Unfortunately, "obvious" and "assume" are words that so often get us in trouble. We can learn this important lesson from this story: we can probably never make a mistake by too much communication. The worse that can happen in that case is that we can be boring, which beats going to war over a perceived offense!

The entire affair had a happy ending with everyone completely satisfied: "So the thing pleased the children of Israel..." (v 33, NKJV). The altar of contention became an altar of "witness": "For *it is* a witness between us that the LORD *is* God" (v 34, NKJV). Would that all occasions for offense between brethren and sisters end so peaceably, with mutual respect and love restored as befits the children of God.

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

(To be continued, with the most offensive man who ever lived)

Notes:

1. David McCullough, *John Adams*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2001, p 430.
2. Strong's number 2398.

3. The NIV translates “butler” properly as “cupbearer.” It is the same position as the “Rabshakeh” held in the Assyrian Court in the days of Hezekiah. It was a most trusted position and one of great influence on a monarch; hence this was a particularly grievous offense.
4. British spelling used in the KJV with a “c”, but American spelling uses an “s”.
5. The Compact Oxford English Dictionary defines “offend” as: verb: (1) cause to feel hurt or resentful; (2) be displeasing to, etc.
6. Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1979, defines “offend” as: (1) to attack or assail, (2) to hurt the feelings of, to insult, to displease.
7. See Strong’s numbers 4624 and 4417.
8. Recall the childhood rhyme, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names can never hurt me!”
9. Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History — Old Testament*, William B. Erdmans, Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982, Vol III, Chapter XII, pp 96-104.

Bible Study

Job’s Monsters

Job was a righteous, God-fearing man. He was also a wealthy man, who enjoyed all the blessings life had to offer.

The book of Job starts with Satan questioning his sincerity. Did Job serve God because there was something in it for him? Was his goodness simply a way to earn material blessings?

This question unleashes an onslaught of trials. First, marauders ravage his flocks and possessions, and kill his servants. Next, a natural disaster takes his children’s lives. To lose one child at any age is utterly devastating; Job loses ten. On top of all this, he comes down with a disease that makes him unrecognizable and brings with it horrible pain.

Job’s worst fears have come true:

“For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me” (Job 3:25).

Then along come Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. To Job’s agony, they add another trial, a psychological one, by insisting that Job deserves his troubles as punishment for his sins.

After Elihu puts forward his perspective on the discussion, God Himself intervenes. His words to Job culminate with descriptions of two monsters, Behemoth and Leviathan.

A God of retribution

Who were these people? Genesis offers a few clues. The name Jobab appears in Genesis 36:33 in the line of Esau. Eliphaz, Teman, and Zepho (Zophar in the Septuagint) are in the same genealogy (v 11). Bildad the Shuhite would be related to Shuah, Abraham’s son by Keturah (Gen 25:2). So, the three comforters

were descendants of Abraham. Elihu was a Buzite, from the family of Abraham's brother Nahor (Gen 22:20,21).

Although not of the chosen line, Job and his friends would have believed in Abraham's God.

Their arguments revolve around the theory that God works on the basis of retribution. Sinners are punished with trouble in this life. The upright are rewarded with prosperity and health.

Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar believe God is, above all, *just* in His dealings with humanity:

1. All suffering is punishment for sin.
2. Job is suffering terribly.
3. Therefore, Job is a terrible sinner.

Theirs is a tit-for-tat world where God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. They allude to Job's misfortunes and urge him to confess the sins for which God must be punishing him. Job points out that their simplistic explanation does not always hold true, and certainly not in his case.

As their words against Job become more and more offensive, Job becomes more and more defensive, laying bare his real attitudes and motivations.

Job's attitude problem

Job questions God's fairness in inflicting such terrible hardship on him despite his efforts to do all the right things. He seems unable to see the kind, merciful side of God's character. To him, God is a strict, powerful, unfeeling master. He talks about storms and earthquakes, how the poor suffer and the wicked enjoy their riches.

Thus, Job's true attitudes are revealed through his suffering. As Satan suspected, Job *does* expect to be rewarded for his service to God. After much suffering (and many words) he admits as much. Job's fear of punishment from God has been the motivation for his righteous acts: "For destruction from God was a terror to me" (31:23). In his effort to do all the right things, he has not appreciated the love and majesty of God.

When God reveals Himself in the whirlwind in chapters 38 to 41, He addresses Job's wrong perceptions.

Job has accused God of using His power in arbitrary, destructive ways (9:12). God explains how He uses His power constructively to control the sea, the weather, and the forces of destruction.

Job has said God wasn't right to bring calamity on him, a righteousness man (27:2-6). God describes how all creatures are subject to trials, how some must even die so others can live.

In chapters 38 and 39, God makes Job realize that he really knows very little about how the world works. He speaks in the imagery of creation, and tells Job to look beyond his own self-centered world.

Behemoth and Leviathan

God completes His revelation by describing two great beasts. Through these creatures, God portrays what has happened to Job. Behemoth is probably a hippopotamus, Leviathan a crocodile.

In chapter 40, God tells Job to consider Behemoth. He is a mighty beast, big and strong. He thinks his little tail is as great as a cedar tree, his body as strong as iron. The trees and reeds hide him from danger. He has everything he wants, and believes he is safe from all harm. A herbivore, he does not live off other animals.

God links Job with Behemoth: “I made him with you” (v 15). This beast is like you, Job. You thought your good deeds and piety had earned you a pleasant, secure life.

Job was comfortable and self-confident. Like Behemoth, in Satan’s words, he had a hedge around him (1:10). Only his Creator could tame him (v 19). Only God could show Job his true place.

Lurking in the water is a ruthless, untamable monster. In chapter 41, Leviathan is not lounging, as crocodiles often do, by the bank of a lazy river. This vicious beast is in attack mode (v 31).

God confronts Job (vv 10,11). Who would dare challenge Leviathan? More than that, how could you presume to challenge Me, his Creator? How can you say I owe you anything? Everything under heaven is Mine! Job, you thought I had an obligation to repay you for serving Me by making you comfortable. You thought you deserved My protection.

Leviathan is the most feared beast in God’s creation. His teeth inspire fear (v 14). His breath burns whatever it touches (v 19); think of the burning accusations Job suffered from the mouths of his so-called comforters. Even the mighty are afraid of Leviathan (v 25). Nothing on earth is his equal, and he has no fear. He destroys whatever crosses his path. He shows the high and mighty how weak and helpless they are (vv 33,34).

Symbolically, Job has faced Leviathan, because what he most feared has come to pass (3:25). He lost his children, his wealth, and his health. Like Behemoth, he was strong enough to survive the struggle. After being made perfect, in a sense, through his suffering, he becomes a mediator before God on behalf of those who treated him so insensitively in his time of need.

Leviathan is “king over all the children of pride” (41:34). Job’s suffering broke his pride and led him to a fuller appreciation of his Creator. His confrontation with what he most feared taught him that being chosen by God does not mean an easy life, and left him a wiser and humbler person.

Leviathan today

Surely, as Leviathan stalked his prey, Behemoth should have realized something was wrong. In his self-confidence, Job, like many people, had the attitude that if he did all the right things, then “bad things can never happen to me.”

No one wants to be compared to a big, ugly hippo. No one voluntarily chooses to tackle a raging crocodile. Yet if it attacks, there is no choice.

Leviathan is the worst trial you ever face — a tragedy or hardship you feared, or one you never imagined could happen to you. When this monster strikes, it tears your heart out. It inflicts deep wounds and terrible pain. There's little you can do to stop it. Although the struggle is exhausting, you never give up. You pray, knowing the outcome is in God's hands.

One key message of the book of Job is that suffering is not to be regarded as punishment from God. It is a natural part of the world God created. No one is immune. It forces the faithful to mature spiritually and to grow closer to God in ways that could never be imagined if life were always easy and comfortable.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2Co 4:17,18).

Ethel Archard (Ottawa, ON)

The purpose of trouble

Trouble (so far from being evidence of desertion) is a means employed in God's hands to lay the foundation of future joy and blessedness. Let His children then be comforted and strengthened to endure even the deepest and most inexplicable affliction. Let them learn to see God in the darkness and to feel His hand in the tempest. Let them beware of the folly of Job's three friends, rebuked of God. Let them know that this time of our pilgrimage is the night, and that though weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning — and that joy a joy prepared by the weeping. Let them apply the consolation Christ has given them: "Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall be comforted."

Robert Roberts, ***The Ways of Providence***

*"Don't pray to escape trouble.
Don't pray to be comfortable in your emotions.
Pray to do the will of God in every situation.
Nothing else is worth praying for"
(Samuel Shoemaker).*

*"Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone,
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in one's own"
(Adam Lindsay Gordon).*

Music in Worship

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David Brown, A Brother in Christ and a Hymn Writer

The earliest known mention of David Brown is of his baptism by John Thomas in 1862 in London. Brown quickly came to see a need for printed material to aid in his preaching work. He had Robert Roberts' *Twelve Lectures* reprinted and bound at his own expense. He also had *How to Search the Scriptures*, by John Thomas, reprinted.

Brown wrote several pamphlets for preaching purposes and had them printed for distribution throughout Britain. Among these were a series of three in 1865, entitled:

- (1) *A Synopsis Of the Essential Truths of Holy Scripture Necessary To Be Believed for Salvation*
- (2) *The Bible: The Religion of Jesus; and the Principles of the Oracles of God*
- (3) *A Discourse on Eternal Life — a Summary of the Christianity Revealed in the Bible, and the Kingdom of God*

These were advertised in the then new magazine, *The Ambassador of the Coming Age*, edited by Robert Roberts, which was distributed by ecclesial agents. Brown was Robert Roberts' agent in London, and he regularly ordered quantities of pamphlets and books from Birmingham.

Robert Roberts described David Brown as "a very well-meaning man, who did good service to the Truth in his time."

David Brown is remembered today by words he wrote to eight hymns in the current Christadelphian hymnbook (2002 edition). The richness and value of these hymns can be attributed to his mature understanding of the Scriptures. The words he wrote reflect a deep love and respect for God and a fervent longing for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Eight hymns with words by Brother David Brown are:

- | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hymn 83 | "Glory and blessing be"
Words by David Brown
Music by James Flint (born 1813) |
| Hymn 174 | "We come, O God, to bow before Thy throne"
Words by David Brown
Music composer: unknown |

Hymn 266	“Lord, we wait the time of blessing” Words by David Brown Music by Tattersall’s Psalmody (1794)
Hymn 268	“The vision tarrieth not” Words by David Brown Music composer: unknown
Hymn 308	“Yahweh Elohim” Words by David Brown Music by James Flint (born 1813)
Hymn 337	“Be careful for nothing; the Lord is at hand” Words by David Brown Music by William Croft (1678-1727)
Hymn 366	“Jesus! Thou sun of righteousness” Words by David Brown Music by James Flint (born 1813)
Hymn 379	“Most glorious things are spoken, Jerusalem, of thee” Words by David Brown Music by Alexander Ewing (1830-1895)

(Quotes and information extracted from the pamphlet by the late Bro. Stuart Cowlshaw, *Some Past Christadelphian Hymn Writers and Composers*, 1991, pp 5,6).

Making melody in the heart

Lord, my voice by nature is harsh and untunable, and it is vain to lavish any art to better it. Can my singing of Psalms be pleasing to thy ears, which is unpleasant to my own? Yet though I cannot chant with the nightingale, or chirp with the blackbird, I had rather chatter with the swallow (Isa 38:14), yea, rather croak with the raven, than be altogether silent. Hadst thou given me a better voice, I would have praised thee with a better voice. Now what my music wants in sweetness, let it have in sense, singing praises with understanding (Psa 47:7). Yea, Lord, create in me a new heart (therein to make melody) (Eph 5:19), and I will be contented with my old voice, until in thy due time, being admitted into the great choir, I have another, more harmonious one bestowed upon me.

Thomas Fuller, 17th-century English preacher

Music in Scripture

People have enjoyed music and benefited from music from very early in the recorded history of mankind. We read in Genesis 4:21 that Jubal was “the father of all those who play the harp and flute”. Here there is reference to two of the main classes of instruments, stringed and wind. We are not told at this point the occasion for which these instruments were to be used.

The second reference to music in Scripture is, however, very explicit. It was for a proposed farewell get-together. When Jacob fled Padan-aram and his father-in-law Laban perused and caught up with him, Laban said to him, “Why did you run off secretly and deceive me? Why didn’t you tell me, so I could send you away with joy and singing to the music of tambourines and harps?” (Gen 31:27, NIV). Today these instruments would be classified as percussion and stringed instruments, two categories of instruments still familiar to us.

Another interesting early reference to music in the Bible is after the deliverance of the Israelites from the hordes of their Egyptian pursuers. Moses and the Israelites sang a song to the LORD in thankfulness for their protection and rescue:

“Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD, ‘I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him’ ” (Exod 15:1,2, NIV).

On the same occasion of Israel’s deliverance from the Egyptians, Miriam, referred to as a prophetess, and a group of women also praised God with tambourines, singing, and dancing:

“And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand: and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea” (Exod 15:20,21, AV).

We know that music has always occupied an important place in worship although, surprisingly, there is no reference to singing in the Law of Moses. Music was entirely instrumental. For example, blowing trumpets was part of the ritual on the Day of Atonement. “Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation” (Lev 23:24, AV).

David practiced music in worship that involved both singing and the use of instruments. David also organized both categories of music for his son Solomon (1Ch 25:1-7). Singing, and the use of several instruments, was detailed for use in Solomon’s temple. At the time of the dedication of the temple, both musical instruments and human voices were used in worship to praise God:

“It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they

lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD” (2Ch 5:13, AV).

What did music of Bible times sound like? We really have no idea. Musical notation was either primitive or non-existent. The phonograph had not been invented, nor had the digital recording equipment. Music must have sounded very different both in structure and harmony from music of today. A “joyful noise” made to the LORD probably involved shouting or chanting for joy as well as singing. “Make a joyful *noise* unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with *singing*” (Psa 100:1,2, AV). This explains why Joshua had difficulty knowing whether he could hear singing or fighting in the camp of Israel when he and Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tables of stone: “And when Joshua heard the *noise* of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a *noise* of war in the camp. And he [Moses] said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that *sing* do I hear” (Exod 32:17,18, AV).

It is interesting to note, in view of the prominent place that music occupied in worship in Solomon’s temple, and indeed its importance in worship for us today, that the first documented maker of a musical instrument was a descendant of Cain. Also that the second time it was mentioned was for a family celebration. Does this mean that God is pleased when people are happy (for the right reasons, of course) or that music is a gift and that it presents an opportunity and a challenge to us to use it wisely?

God is indeed pleased when merrymaking for the right reason is wholesome. In the parable of the prodigal son, when the lost son came home, there was music and dancing:

“Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew night to the house, he heard musick and dancing” (Luke 15:25, AV).

Music can be used as an expression of rejoicing and merriment shared among family or a group of friends. With music, people of all ages from little children to the most senior share joy and happiness. As well, music is an individual and communal method of praise and worship.

Music also presents us with a challenge to employ it in either private or ecclesial praise and devotion to our Heavenly Father. What matters to God is the spirit and intention of the worshipper, not the musical style or instrumentation which changes over time and location. Thus we are exhorted:

“Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 5:19,20, NIV).

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

God moves in a mysterious way

This is one of my favorite hymns. It was Hymn 92 in the old hymnbook, and it is Hymn 142 in the new one.

The author

The words of this hymn were written by the poet William Cowper (1731-1800). Cowper (pronounced “Cooper”) was not a Christadelphian, and in fact believed various false doctrines. But as a beautiful statement of the providence of God this hymn is in my opinion without parallel.

Throughout his life William Cowper was physically frail and emotionally sensitive. At an early age he suffered a mental breakdown and attempted suicide because of the pressures of schoolwork. He spent time in a mental institution. In later years he continued to be plagued by bouts with depression. But in the times between such spells he devoted himself to reading the Bible, and he composed many hymns characterized by a strikingly vivid use of Scriptural imagery. In our new hymnbook, his hymns are also found in 244 (“Wherever, Lord, thy people meet”) and 317 (“Hear what God, the Lord, hath spoken”).

The progression of thought

The hymn praises God as One who dwells in and rules over all parts of His awesome creation. As we look at the hymn, we see that:

- Stanza 1 is about the sea,
- Stanza 2 describes things under the earth, and
- Stanza 3 describes the heavens, while...
- Stanza 4 talks about the crops upon the earth.
- The final stanza is a summary, exhorting us to consider *all* God’s works.

The hymn is based in large part on Job 28. Its theme is that God will, one day, make everything plain. Then He will explain in their fullness the things we don’t really understand, now. This is not only an idea to be found in Job 28; it is one of the main points in the whole Book of Job. It is God’s main theme when He finally communicates directly with Job.

The suffering Job asks, ‘Why? Why?’ in ever increasing pain and bewilderment. These complaints finally come very close to sin: anger with God, bitterness, and an unjustified pride in his own “righteousness”. (We shouldn’t be too hard on Job, however. We haven’t come within miles of experiencing the degree and depth of suffering and loss that he did.)

Finally, toward the end of the Book, God reveals Himself to Job. Ironically, even when He appears to Job, the LORD doesn’t give him point-by-point answers to his questions about the losses and trials he has suffered. Instead, God tells Job to look at the world around him, with its natural phenomena: ‘Job, were *you* there when I created the heavens and the earth? Can *you* feed the wild animals? Can *you* explain how the child grows in the womb? Can *you* tame the mighty beasts

and sea-creatures, and get them to do *your* will?’ And so forth. In short, and rather bluntly paraphrased, God is telling Job: *‘I am God, and you aren’t.’*

Evidently, Job finds that answer satisfactory, for he repents “in dust and ashes”, and is forgiven for his indiscretions and his speaking against God. And God at last blesses Job once again.

Still there is no definitive answer from God, not really, as to *why* Job needed to suffer as he did. The real answer is instead: ‘Job, you let *Me* worry about that.’ The answer is not that much different from the parent’s answer, familiar to every child. The child asks, ‘Why? Why? Why do I have to go to school today? Why do I have to eat my broccoli? Why do I have to go to bed at 8 o’clock? Why? Why?’ And the parent says: ‘Because I said so.’ Or ‘I’m the parent and you aren’t.’

Which is another way of saying, ‘Trust in me to do the right thing, even with your life, and one day I will explain everything. That will be the day you are prepared to understand what I will tell you. Until then... well, you’ll just have to have faith.’

It is a hard answer to accept. We imagine ourselves, at every stage of our lives, so intelligent that we can handle all knowledge, if it is just communicated to us. But we can’t, apparently. God tells us, ‘You can’t handle all the facts; I’ll tell you what you need to know for now. The rest will have to come later.’

That’s what this hymn is all about.

Stanza One: The Sea

*God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.*

The image of God’s footsteps in the sea is the profound thought of this stanza. Paul concludes a main section of his letter to the Romans with a doxology of praise to God in these words:

“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!” (Rom 11:33).

The wisdom of God, Paul says, is in the “depths” (of the sea) and is “unsearchable” or “mysterious”. The sea is a place where man can scarcely venture, without sinking into oblivion. Just as Peter tried to walk on the water, and sank, so there are certain depths of knowledge and understanding that we cannot reach, for now. And while Peter’s desire to walk on the water to Jesus was commendable, such a walk wasn’t meant to be, at that time. It would have been better to remain safe in the boat.

There was a time, however, when Israel did follow the footsteps of the Lord through the sea. That was when Yahweh led them out of Egypt. Psalm 77 alludes to this:

“Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen. You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron” (vv 19,20).

The footprints were not seen because, after the Glory of God led them through the seabed, the waters closed over their path and drowned the Egyptian army that attempted to follow them there.

The only way we are safe in the “depths” of the sea is when our Heavenly Father takes us by the hand to lead us. Even then we must stick close to Him, like the flock of sheep must stick close to the shepherd. Those who attempt to walk through that “sea” on their own initiative, like Pharaoh’s army, will surely sink and drown in their own pride and ignorance.

Stanza Two: Under the Earth

*Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.*

Here we get even closer to Job 28, which is an extended parable: the miner tunnels and labors underground to find the precious metal ore or gems that are hidden from ordinary view:

*“But where can **wisdom** be found?” (v 12).*

It cannot be bought, yet it is worth far more than any precious stones, like diamonds or rubies.

*“God understands the way to it” — that is, to **wisdom** — “and he alone knows where it dwells” (v 23).*

It is buried, as far as natural man can see; it is — here’s that wonderful word — “unfathomable”. We cannot reach the “depths” where it is hidden.

Elsewhere, however, Job himself has spoken about this theme, for he says in Job 23:8-10:

“But if I go to the east, he [God] is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him. When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him. But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.”

There is an irony here, and it contains a powerful exhortation. Wherever Job seeks to find God, he cannot. By this he must mean: ‘I look for Him like I might seek a man, but He is never there.’ However, even though Job cannot “find” God, Job is never out of God’s sight. God is always with him, seeing him, and watching over every step he takes: “Even though I can’t see him, **He** knows the way that I take.”

God is always there, though never seen. And all the while Job is asking his questions, and seeming to get no answers, and looking for the face of God, and seeming to find nothing... *all that time God is mining and extracting that most precious of metals, gold, out of the life of Job.* “When He has tested me, I will come forth as gold.” Out of the unfathomable mine of human nature, God by His never-failing skill is extracting and refining His own special treasure: the tried faith of His servant Job, a faith that is like gold tried in a furnace (1Pe 1:7).

So the treasure to be desired, as Job 28 (and Proverbs) says, is “wisdom”, but it is not wisdom in the abstract. It is instead wisdom tried and tested, that has traveled in the way of God: “He knows the way *I take*.”

What a profound thought, and what a remarkable twist. Wisdom is not so much the “object” one finds, somewhere along the way. Rather, it is the “journey” one takes in the quest for that wisdom. It is through the journey of our lives in the Truth, and arising out of that journey, that God Himself — in His wisdom (what the hymn calls His “bright designs”, and His “sovereign will”) — extracts the “treasure” *He* is seeking. We thought we were seeking God and His wisdom, but all the while He was seeking us, and the development of our wisdom. In His providential guiding of our lives, our heavenly Father was molding character, putting that character to the test, purifying and preparing it for eternity with Him.

God’s work of “creation” did not end on the sixth day; it is an ongoing work of “creation” (called in the New Testament the “new creation”), whereby we are being turned into something worth preserving, something worth God’s love and time and effort. “Behold, I make all things new.” And that includes us.

Stanza Three: The Heavens

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take.
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.*

From a discussion of “wisdom” being mined out of the earth, the Book of Job moves to a consideration of the heavens. Elihu finally speaks, and he describes a God who is beyond our understanding, even as the phenomena of the sky is beyond our understanding, or control:

“How great is God — beyond our understanding! The number of his years is past finding out. He draws up the drops of water, which distill from the mist as rain; the clouds pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind. Who can understand how he spreads out the clouds, how he thunders from his pavilion? See how he scatters his lightning about him, bathing the depths of the sea” (Job 36:26-30).

The clouds bring rain, which nourishes the earth, and thereby nourishes man. But those clouds can be frightening, even to the “saints” of God. In Job 37, Elihu seems to be describing, in great detail, an approaching storm (vv 1-5, 11-13, etc). Closer and closer it comes, and fiercer and fiercer it grows, until finally God Himself speaks out of the storm (Job 38:1).

The scene here is similar to the one in 1 Kings 19, where the prophet Elijah has fled for his life to mount Horeb, or Sinai. There he experiences a “theophany”, a manifestation of God that is frightening in the extreme: a great and terrible wind (a tornado?) tears the mountains apart, and a savage earthquake shakes them even further. Then comes the great fire (lightning?), so that the prophet flees into the cave to escape. And all this serves to introduce Yahweh Himself, who finally speaks, in “a still, small voice” (KJV, RSV), or by a “gentle whisper” (NIV).

The way God acts, in the world at large and with the nations, or in the individual trials of our lives, can at first seem fearsome, like the rumbling of thunder or the crash of lightning. But we find, in time, that the “clouds” we so much dreaded are in fact filled with the mercy of God. All that He does is, ultimately, for our blessing. When He speaks to us in the gentle voice, then we understand: all that went before, even “the bad”, was for our good (Rom 8:28). He is truly in charge, and has a design and a purpose for each of us, in every particular.

Stanza Four: Upon the Earth

*His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.*

The parable of the farmer and the seed and the harvest, found in many forms throughout Scripture is the basis of this stanza.

The farmer must sow his seed, and then trust in God to bring the sun, and the rains, at the proper time, in order to produce a harvest, even though he cannot understand how it all works together (Eccl 11:1,5,6).

The poor family, down to the last of their stores of grain, must sow in faith, trusting that God will give them an increase to support their lives in the coming year (Psa 126:5,6).

The preacher of the gospel must cast his “seed” into all kinds of soil, trusting that some of it will take root and produce a good harvest (Matt 13; Mark 4).

The single kernel of wheat (Jesus Christ himself) must fall into the ground, and die, before it can produce the harvest of much grain (those who, in faith, partake of that life) (John 12:23-28).

For each of us, discipline and correction from God, though unpleasant, will “produce a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (Heb 12:11). The “bud” may be exceedingly “bitter”, but the “flower”, the final result, will be “sweet” beyond all reckoning. What blessings He has in store for those who love Him.

Stanza Five: The Lesson

*Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan [i.e., study carefully] His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.*

God *will* make it all plain, in His own time. What we need is patience, and faith, and trust in Him. What we need also is to recognize that all the answers are not immediately available, and that we may need to wait for them to be given to us.

This, I believe, also has a bearing on how we read Last Days prophecy. When we sing, “God is his own interpreter, and He will make it plain”, we are really saying, ‘We can’t — nor do we need to — understand how or when everything will work

out to fulfill Last Days prophecy. The details can surely be left to God, and He will make it plain when it is fulfilled. In those cases, where we are uncertain now, we can safely wait to see **how** He brings it to pass when the time comes. After all, it's His show, not ours.'

What we need is the patience and faith to "wait for the LORD". We need to be willing to let go of our own desires, and our own timetables, and our own preconceived ideas of 'how things ought to be'. And we need to let God decide how, and when, and where to try us, and to mold us, and to discipline us. He alone, a loving Father, knows best what we need.

"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a [polished metal] mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1Co 13:12).

"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he [Christ] appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1Jo 3:2).

"These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev 7:14-17).

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

"Several of these phrases [in Rev 7:16,17] are derived — with what appropriateness — from a wonderful Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 49. The entire chapter should be studied. It travels in a comprehensive sweep from Jesus in Gethsemane, contemplating his life's work and effort apparently in ruins, to the glorious climax when he is able to rejoice in a vast multitude called out from Israel and the Gentiles to experience the marvels of God's gracious salvation.

"In the words 'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more,' is to be recognized the fulfillment of all that the Manna and the Smitten Rock foreshadowed in the wilderness (1Co 10:3,4) — the fulfillment also of Christ's own promise: 'He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst' (John 6:35). Those hungering and thirsting after righteousness find full satisfaction at last. It is an appropriate return from him whom, all unknowing, they fed when he was hungry and to whom they gave the cup of cold water when he was athirst (Matt 25:35; 10:42)."

Harry Whittaker

Reflections

Will He Come?

I love this time of “near day”; this time as night wanes and a new day settles upon us. And I love this city, the city of our God. I pause in my early morning priestly duties. I move from the storehouses under the Temple buildings to the open area approaching the very Temple itself, and I am surprised at this early hour to find you, a visitor to our troubled city. It was a muggy night and sleep was difficult. Did you have the same problem? Why don’t you stay here with me? We can listen together to the sleeping city, and I can tell you about some unusual events.

Even though Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside are still wrapped in slumber, you can see that the eastern sky is beginning to lighten. Soon, this quiet scene will change. Men, women, children and animals will stream through the city gates and streets. The noise levels, like the heat of early spring, will increase until it becomes the throbbing din of one huge marketplace, alive with human and animal sounds and smells. But, the question is: will *he* come, this Nazarene whom all of Judea watches?

At first, there was the Baptizer. He stood on the banks of the Jordan, proclaiming his message, his call for repentance. It is said that he came in the tradition of our prophets: gaunt, ascetic and lonely. I saw him only once. Actually, I heard him before I could see him. His clothing was as austere as his message: he was dressed in camel’s skin. He ate the plain, simple desert fare of locusts and wild honey. His preaching and reprimands drove our Jewish leaders into a frenzy. And there was Rome: its soldiers and its governors always watching and listening. In the end, Rome did to this John, son of Zechariah, what our very own rulers wanted to do, but legally couldn’t: Rome killed John the Baptizer.

Now we have this Galilean who has been preaching and teaching throughout the land for several years. It is Passover time and the Jewish leaders and their spies are nervously watching, to see if the preacher, Joshua from Galilee, will come to the feast. He has come before, and what a commotion he caused!

Any way, let me remind you a little of our nation’s story. Ours is a restless people, with a restless and fractured peace. There was a time long ago when we had our own kings. Some were great and godly men, but many were as evil as these Romans. And in making a choice to have an earthly king as other nations did, we deserted our one and only true King, our God who brought us into this fair land from a land of slavery. But all of that is another story. Rome has been our master for many years, and our people, as you know, resent these foreigners, although some have made their peace with Roman ways and live very comfortably from such a change in values.

Certainly you’ve heard about the late King Herod, known as “Herod the Great”. He was great — great, some have said, in energy, in magnificence, and in wicked-

ness. It is also said that he surrounded himself with spies and lived in perpetual fear of retribution from an outraged people. He was not a full-blooded Jew, you see, but he hoped to impress and appease our people by rebuilding our Temple. He spared no expense. It is one of the wonders of our age, this Temple that sits high in our city and glistens like a jewel in the sunshine. Of course King Herod had other building projects to keep us busy and, he hoped, to keep us peaceful. There was his winter palace at Jericho; the city, port and temples of Caesarea; the great white marble temple of Caesarea Philippi; and the lavish fortresses, palaces and storehouses of Masada, Herodium and Machaerus. Herod is dead now, but his family lives on. They rule over us in the name of Rome, and they rule just as harshly as their father did.

Rome watches us closely by day and night. One can hardly blame them. We are not an easy people to govern. Our nation simmers with resentment of foreign rulers, foreign soldiers, foreign currency, foreign laws and the ever-rising foreign taxes. Rebellion lurks, like a short dagger hidden under a cloak, and no one feels safe in the thrones at feast times. All it takes is a single incident to incite a mob; then Rome's soldiers will eagerly descend without mercy upon young and old, innocent and zealot.

As we prepare for Passover, there is one question on many lips: *Will he come?*

You ask if I have ever seen him. No, I haven't, nor have I had the privilege of hearing him, but I have heard the reports. It is said that he heals all kinds of diseases, even leprosy! The blind have their sight restored, the deaf can hear, and the lame run and jump with joy and energy. A man with a shriveled hand was healed on the Sabbath. Such an action on such a day made our teachers and elders furious, it is said. He has twelve men who are his close friends, his "disciples", but many more follow him also. He seems to prefer the company of the poorest people and has provided food for huge numbers of folks in desert places. Then there are the tax collectors and other "sinners" who follow him. I understand that there are even some wealthy women who follow him and his group. You can just imagine how some talk of this behind closed doors!

He tells people to love their enemies, to do good to those who hate you, to bless those who curse you and to pray for those who mistreat you. According to this Nazarene we are to do to others as we would have them do to us! He talks of an easy yoke and a light burden. And the children love him. They, too, follow him everywhere; he tells them stories, stories which even their parents love to hear. And always, always, he talks of his Father in heaven and of a kingdom to come.

Do you know that it is said that he even raises the dead? The dead! Can you believe it? There has not been one like this man in our land for hundreds of years. Can this be the prophet like Moses of old? But this man comes from Nazareth — tiny, dirty Nazareth in Galilee. Why, I am told that there are even whispers about his mother's morals, and questions about his father's identity.

Excuse me. I am rambling on. Look, daylight is breaking over the Mount of Olives. If you look closely you can see pilgrims who spent the night under the olive

trees in Gethsemane. And you cannot miss the clatter of the Roman soldiers on the streets below us. Soon now, the sleepy owners will be opening their shops; then those shops will be full of early risers seeking bargains. I must hurry to my duties. I hope I haven't bored you with all these details.

As I leave you, let me recommend a little shop, where Baker's Street meets Potter's Street. Tell Sarah I sent you. Such a meal she will serve you! Oh yes, and a further word of caution: watch yourself in the crowds and keep that money bag hidden. May our God, the God of Israel, go with you!

But I can't help thinking... *Will this be the day? Will he come?*

Abiathar

"Come, Follow Me" — to My Table

When opportunity knocks, we must open the door and seize it.

Jesus was walking by the lakeside. There was a brief eye contact. Then, there were a few words — kindly expressed but urgent:

"Come, follow me!"

Mark tells us:

"At once they left their nets and followed him" (Mark 1:17,18).

Here was an opportunity seized — to do good.

At another time, Mark tells us that Jesus spoke the same urgent words:

"Come, follow me!"

But this time there was a different response:

"At this the man's face fell. He went away sad" (Mark 10:21,22).

Here was an opportunity lost.

Another time, large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed Jesus (Matt 4:25). Another opportunity seized, to their benefit. But in another place John sadly tells us:

"Many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him" (John 6:66).

A wasted opportunity, thrown away and lost, perhaps forever.

Leaders and followers: that is human society everywhere. Jesus went about doing good, and many followed him. But so many lost the heart to follow when the way got rough. And many had wrong motives.

Not everybody follows a leader for the same purpose, or with the same motive. Many follow politicians because they feel it will get them a spot at the top. When there's a riot or a demonstration, some follow to make their point, and some just to make trouble. Most people follow leaders, even Jesus, to become 'better off'. In any religious body, including our own, some join and even become leaders so that people will look up to them and give them praise. In a church, we can achieve a status that the world would not give us otherwise. It's an easy road to

the top. John warns us that religious people are especially vulnerable to unworthy motives in their following:

"They loved praise from men more than praise from God" (John 12:43).

There is no doubt that, throughout his earthly life and ministry, Jesus had an enormous following. Some people followed Jesus to hear his words, and found comfort and strength to cope with their difficult lives. Some followed relentlessly to condemn him, because what he said and did was new and threatening to them. Some clung to him because they got their fill from his generosity (John 6:26).

Why do we follow Jesus Christ? Is it so that people will look up to us and give us respect? Or do we follow him because he, and he alone, can give us life?

If we follow him to this festive table with its bread and wine, we will hear him say:

"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. This is the bread that came down from heaven. He who feeds on this bread will live forever" (John 6:53,54,58).

There is double symbolism here. "Flesh and blood", the human body and life of Jesus, of which we obviously cannot partake, are represented by edible food, bread and wine, which we *can* share.

But these are still further symbolic of his commandments, his spirit, his teaching and his life:

"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing" (John 6:63).

What we do here is not a ritual act, nor is it just a ceremony we go through every week. We follow Jesus to this table because in spirit he is here, and that is where we want to be and ought to be if we are his. It is a matter of identification. It is like baptism:

"Unless I wash you," Jesus told a reluctant Peter, "you have no part with me" (John 13:8).

There is no point in following Jesus unless we are prepared to follow him all the way, right here to this table. Some find his teaching 'hard', his call difficult to accept, and so are offended (John 6:60,61). For many of us, coming to this table is very inconvenient, costly, and perhaps even risky. Is it worth making the effort? Do we lose anything by not being here?

" 'You do not want to leave too, do you?' Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God!' " (John 6:67-69).

Leon Walters
(Spanish Town, Jamaica)

“No doubt!”

This reflection was occasioned by a particularly serious Calvin and Hobbes cartoon, in which Calvin and his stuffed-tiger friend Hobbes come across a small bird that has died. As they bend down to look at it on the ground, Calvin says, “Isn’t it beautiful? It’s so delicate... Once it’s too late, you appreciate what a miracle life is... you realize that our existence is very fragile, temporary, and precious...”

Then he sighs, “But to go on with your daily affairs, you can’t really think about that... which is probably why everyone takes the world for granted and why we act so thoughtlessly.”

As they stand up and begin to walk away, Calvin reflects: “It’s very confusing... I suppose it will all make sense when we grow up.”

And Hobbes replies, sadly, “No doubt!”

Every day I am reminded of the frailty of life. With so much uncertainty around me, I am determined to “number my days aright, that I may gain a heart of wisdom.”

How do we “number our days” with care and make every one count? How do we get the most out of this life and not jeopardize or sacrifice our eternal life? We are advised to fear God, keep His commandments, seek first His kingdom, and love Him with all our heart and soul and mind. If we do this, we will be blessed; if not, we will be cursed.

If we dwell with Him, we will rest in His shadow; He will save us from snare and pestilence; we will be covered by His presence; and under His wings we will find refuge.

If we love Him, He will rescue us, protect, answer, deliver, and honor us. He will satisfy us with long life, and He will show us salvation.

But if we are senseless and wicked, or if we are fools and evildoers, we will be repaid for our sins, and we will be scattered and destroyed.

Just as the scope of God’s power is incomprehensible to me, so also I cannot fathom the depth of His love for those who keep His commandments, nor His wrath against those who ignore Him. Such awareness would be so weakening, so debilitating, that perhaps God, aware of our frail nature, knew we could not exist in this world with such complete knowledge of His awesome being.

My prayer is to kneel before Jesus, weak with reverence but strong in faith, and feel his hands reach to lift me up to join those good and faithful servants. Thereafter, at the feet of the teacher, the healer, the warrior, the priest, and the king, I will at last “gain a heart of wisdom”, and dwell in his kingdom of peace and joy and love forever.

There, surely, it will all make sense.

No doubt.

Sharee Grazda (Austin South, TX)

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News & Notices

BARRIE, ON

We rejoice with Bro. Ryan and Sis. Beth Lockwood on the birth of their son Ephraim Ryan on January 2, 2008. We pray for God's blessing upon him, his parents, and his extended family in the ecclesia that we all might be teachers and examples to him.

On January 27, 2008, TOM WOEGERER was baptized in the saving name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Tom was introduced to the truth by his business partner, Bro. Dave Yeaman, and has shown an eager willingness to search the Scriptures, and discover God's plan. His enthusiasm has been a tremendous example to us all. The public confession of his faith was witnessed by seven members of his family and his girlfriend.

Our ecclesia is busy making preparations for the ASK long-term preaching campaign in the nearby city of Orillia. The 2008 part of the campaign will consist of three public addresses, the first of which is in April. We are hosting Truth Corps, and this will be followed by a series of Bible Seminars in the fall. We pray God will bless these endeavors to proclaim His truth in the Orillia area, and thank the brotherhood for their financial support of ASK that has made this preaching opportunity possible.

We also thank all the brothers and sisters who have visited us over the last six months, with special thanks to the brothers who have given us much needed words of exhortation. We welcome all who pass by our ecclesia to stop in and meet with us around the Lord's Table.

Grant Abel

BROUGHTON, JAMAICA

Our first thought is one of sadness, yet there is one of rejoicing in hope of the resurrection as we remember the passing of our Sis. Margaret Drummond. Hers was a full life, to the age of 104 years. She walked with us for over forty years, she was quiet but full of radiance when she spoke of her hope, and her last years in isolation did not dim her vision. Together, we look forward to the return of the Master.

Our sympathy also goes out to the ecclesia at Museum Place, Cardiff, UK, and in particular with Sis. Joy at the passing of Bro. Gordon Lee. It is with fond memory we recall the many visits he made to our ecclesia with the group of Bro. Lionel Haynes. We feel sure his journey was not in vain.

R. Arthurs

MANITOULIN ISLAND, ON

The past year has been filled with many exciting events for our ecclesia. We have been meeting in members' homes, rented facilities, and the Bible camp for over 100 years, but we have been blessed this past fall with our own ecclesial hall. Our ecclesia was provided with the opportunity to purchase a building in Manitowaning, and we thank all of the brothers and sisters for their support in making the purchase possible.

We are happy to report the birth of two Sunday school scholars. Bro. Barry and Sis. Samantha Cooper were blessed with the birth of their second son, Zachary John, and Bro. Ron and Sis. Tracy Cooper were blessed with the birth of their fifth child, Andrew Gary.

We were also pleased to witness the marriage of our Bro. Jeff Cooper to Sis. Tracey Peeler on January 5, 2008. We pray for God's guiding hand as they begin their walk together. We commend Bro. Jeff to the love and care of the brothers and sisters of Hamilton Ewen Road.

Sis. Joyce Lausch has spent a few months in the London area, and we are pleased to have her back in our area. Sis. Joyce is in isolation in Sudbury. We ask that any brothers and sisters traveling through the area please keep our sister in mind and visit with her if you are able.

Sis. Julia Wilson has transferred to the St. John's Newfoundland Ecclesia. We also commend Bro. Tim Cooper to the Toronto Church Street Ecclesia. We pray that they may find comfort and guidance as we await our Master's return.

We would like to thank all of the brothers and sisters who have visited the Manitoulin area over the past few months. Particularly we would like to thank Bre. Bill Perks, Wayne Cooper, Andrew Heinz, Lee Elliot, Phil Wilton and Mike Narjes for exhorting us or leading our mid-week class. We would also like to thank Bro. Tim Young for conducting our fall study day. It was truly appreciated by all.

In March, we held our annual Young People's Weekend. Bro. Chris Sales spoke on the topic of Joseph. It was a wonderful weekend and we thank all of those who attended and supported our young people and our ecclesia. Our next study day is scheduled for May 3, 2008, and Bro. Ben Saxon is scheduled to bring us classes on "Do all to the Glory of God." Our Fall Study Day is scheduled for the weekend of September 27, 2008, and Bro. Jamin Wigzell will be presenting our classes, God willing. Any wishing to attend or seeking more information are asked to contact the undersigned.

Bro. Paul Cooper is now our recording brother, and we ask that all correspondence please be sent to his attention. Our mailing address is Box 167, Manitowaning, ON P0P 1N0.

Paul Cooper

MENDOCINO COUNTY, CA

On September 21-23, 2007, we had our annual campout at Clear Lake. Even though we had rain, we enjoyed classes, fellowship, and activities under a makeshift shelter at the Hirst campsite. We also made kites under the guidance of Bro. Terry Phenicie and had a tasty barbecue; there is never a lack of good food. In October we enjoyed words of exhortation by Bro. John Popel (San Francisco Peninsula, CA).

On a sad note, we must say that our Sis. Gigi Vargas passed away October 22, 2007, while living in Corpus Christi, TX. Our Bro. Chon Vargas moved back and is now meeting with our ecclesia. Sis. Velma Barber, from Floresville, TX, also moved up and is living with Bro. Bob and Sis. Priscilla Gaston and family. She is now 95 years old and doing well; she has been attending meetings, and we are very happy to have her back in our area.

Our Sis. Edris Robinson enjoyed another birthday in November. She is now ninety-three years old and is quite active in the meeting.

We have been blessed these last few months to have many visitors from near and far. We have truly enjoyed the fellowship of them all.

We plan to have a campout in September, over the Labor Day weekend, with classes and various activities. It will be held at Lake Mendocino. We hope to see you there! God bless you all.

Debra Phenicie

MERIDEN, CT

Over the past six months we have enjoyed the fellowship of brothers and sisters from several ecclesias: Baltimore, MD; Cranston, RI; Echo Lake, NJ; Elgin, ON; Norfolk, VA; Springfield, MA; Wachusett, MA; and Worcester, MA. We are grateful to Bro. Leslie Wilkinson (Worcester, MA), and Bro. Joshua Lagasse (Norfolk, VA), for their helpful words of exhortation.

Bro. Paul Kinlocke of the Broughton, Jamaica, Ecclesia, has been with us since December. Bro. Paul is the brother of our Sis. Camelia Harvey. We would also like to acknowledge our gratitude to him for his exhortations on our behalf.

Bro. Brad and Sis. Sarah Demarest and their children have returned to Connecticut from isolation in North Carolina. We are very pleased to have them as part of the Meriden Ecclesia again.

We lost our dear Sis. Elizabeth Bridgen in January. Sis. Beth came into the truth in Wolverhampton, UK, in the late 1940s, through the influence of her brother, Bro. Frank Page. She came to Connecticut in the late 1960s and was a member of the Meriden Ecclesia for nearly 40 years. Sis. Beth was in her ninety-seventh year and was the second oldest member of our ecclesia. Our sympathies are extended to her two sons, David and Roger, who live in Britain. Bro. Warren Phillips of our ecclesia conducted the funeral service.

Our Bro. Ken Robinson lost his wife, Barbara, last November. Barbara had cancer and had faced it with a very positive attitude for several years. Our hearts are with Bro. Ken and their daughter, Jessica.

We share the loss of our brothers and sisters of the Honesdale, PA, Ecclesia, occasioned by the falling asleep of Bro. Ken Dunn. Bro. Ken and Sis. Esther have long been loved by many in the Meriden Ecclesia. Sis. Esther Dunn is the sister of our Sis. Lois Beck.

Last autumn we held another Learn to Read the Bible Effectively seminar in a nearby community. Follow-up classes continue at this time with a small but steady group of friends attending. God willing, we are also looking forward to our Spring Study Weekend on June 7-8, 2008. Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON) has kindly agreed to lead studies for us on "The Life of Jacob." Bro. Dev will also lead a CYC program on that Saturday evening. A cordial invitation is extended to other brothers, sisters, and young people to join us for this study weekend.

Jim Harper

MOORESTOWN, NJ

We are very pleased to welcome to our ecclesia Sis. Faith Ortiz who has transferred her membership from the Garfield Ecclesia, as well as our Sis. Sarah Waite who has transferred her membership from the Oregon Coast Ecclesia. We look forward to our association with them both in the bonds of the truth.

We also commend by transfer our Bro. Kevin Mayock to the love of the brethren at the Worcester, MA, Ecclesia, and pray for God's blessing to be with him.

We greatly rejoice in the baptism of four of our Sunday school scholars on March 23, 2008. HANNAH CHEETHAM and TIMOTHY CHEETHAM are daughter and son of Bro. Rick and Sis. Lynn Cheetham. ERIC MCKELVIE is the son of Bro. Jim and Sis. Carol McKelvie. JOE PEZZULO is the son of Bro. Tony and Sis. Jeannie Pezzulo. These four were all baptized into the saving Name of Jesus Christ on a simply wonderful Sunday morning. We pray for God's rich blessings to be upon them in their walk toward the coming kingdom.

Last spring, we conducted the Learn to Read the Bible Effectively seminar, and subsequently conducted classes entitled "God's Master Plan" for the interested contacts.

We were pleased to have our Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC) visit us in early February of this year, and thank him for his Sunday school, exhortation, and afternoon program on preaching efforts.

Recently, we conducted a series of lectures over a four-week period which addressed current events and Bible prophecy. We thank our Bro. Nigel Small (Echo Lake) for his efforts with one lecture, as well as Bre. Jim McKelvie, Charles Link, Jr., and Jay Mayock, Sr. for their lectures as well.

We have also enjoyed the company of many visitors over the last few months, namely Bro. Tom and Sis. Sally Davis (Pomona, CA); Bro. Peter and Sis. Dottie Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI); Sis. Liz Kohler, Sis. Dorinda Cameron, and Sis. Celinda Harrell (Telford, PA); Bro. Jay, Jr., and Sis. Rebecca Mayock (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON); Bro. Aaron and Sis. Kelly MacAdams (Worcester, MA); Bro. Nigel and Sis. Devonna Small (Echo Lake, NJ); and Sis. Kelsey Lewin (Cranston, RI).

Please forward any future correspondence to the undersigned at 203 Virginia Avenue, Westmont, NJ 08108-2620.

Jay Mayock, Sr.

NANAIMO, BC

One of our long-time members, Sis. Jean Jenkinson, passed away recently. What follows as requested by her husband, our Bro. Don Jenkinson, is the notice of her passing as it appeared in the local paper.

It is with great sadness that we announce the peaceful passing of our dear wife, mother, Nana, and Great Nana, Jean Gordon Bell Barlow Jenkinson, February 11, 2008. Jean was born in Chelsea, London, England, June 3, 1928. She married Donald Jenkinson on July 1, 1950, in Southend-on-Sea, Essex. Jean and Don emigrated in 1956, crossing the Atlantic on the Rue De France luxury liner and traveling by train from New York to Vancouver. They became full-time residents of Nanaimo and raised their three daughters Sharon, Beverly, and Victoria. Jean was a feisty lady and dedicated to her family and all their children. She was baptized into the Christadelphian faith in 1946. Jean was also an active member of the Nanaimo Genealogy Club, specializing in British family history and she enjoyed traveling through many countries. She is survived by her loving husband, three daughters, six grandchildren and three great grandchildren, all BC residents. A special thanks to the staff of the full-time care unit at Berwick on the Lake, who lovingly took care of Mom. Heartfelt thanks also to the staff of Nanaimo Regional Hospital, the paramedics, and especially to the emergency

ward doctors and nurses. We make special mention of our gratitude to Dr. Hepburn and Dr. Rasaiah for the exceptional care and comfort they provided. She is laid to rest at the Cedar Valley Memorial Gardens, waiting in hope for her resurrection at the return of Christ her Lord.

Eric Evans

NEW WESTMINSTER, BC

We will very much miss our dear Sis. Onie Felch, who fell asleep in Christ in her ninetieth year on February 2, 2008. She now rests alongside her husband Bro. Bill, awaiting the resurrection. Sis. Onie and Bro. Bill had been away from the ecclesia for many years, but to our joy and theirs, both returned several years ago. Sis. Onie did what she could to serve in the ecclesia, and the last few years, with great effort, insisted on providing a beautiful flower arrangement from her garden for our meetings.

Arthur Bull

ORLANDO, FL

We were pleased to welcome Bro. Richard Profeta back into fellowship. Bro. Richard has since transferred to the Largo, FL, Ecclesia.

We were blessed with the visits of the following brothers and sisters: Bro. Alan and Sis. Chris Mills, and Bro. Ron and Sis. Sue Walding (Spalding, UK); and Bro. Frank and Sis. Lin Hooks (Coventry, UK). We gratefully thank the visiting brothers for their words of exhortation.

The Orlando Ecclesia is reporting to the body that some of our brethren from the Ocala area will not be meeting with us except on a visiting basis due to health issues and the great distance they had to travel every week. Our Bro. Jack and Sis. Louise Green, Bro. Sam and Sis. Clara Strunk, Bro. Michael Strunk, and Sis. Helen Sticht began meeting together in Ocala on March 2, 2008.

We commend them in their effort to establish another lightstand in the community and ask for the blessing of our heavenly Father in the establishment of an ecclesia in the Ocala area. We will miss their faithful attendance and their encouraging words of exhortation. We pray that God will bless them until our Lord's return. We will be ready to help them with any needs that may arise.

Randy Davenport

PORTLAND, OR

Over the past several months, we have been blessed with many additions to our ecclesia. TRAVIS KIRIAN, son of Bro. Gary and Sis. Mary Ellen, was baptized March 1, 2008. Bro. Sean and Sis. Amanda McLeod and their family have joined us from Illinois, and Bro. Mark and Sis. Aruni Seagoe have joined us from California. We also welcome the youngest addition; Finn Raymond McLeod was born to Bro. Sean and Sis. Amanda on January 23, 2008.

After a hiatus while we were building our hall, we will again be hosting a fraternal gathering October 4-5, 2008, Lord willing. Bro. Christian Russell from California will be speaking. We will send more information as the date gets closer.

Jay Phillips

PRINCE GEORGE, BC

As we begin a new year, we look forward to our annual Fraternal Gathering on May 17-18, 2008. Our speaker this year is Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI), who will speak on "Godly Love". We extend a warm welcome to any who are planning to attend.

Our thanks to brothers who have visited and spoken during the winter season: Caleb Lawrence (Cambridge, ON), and Andrew Jackson (Maple Ridge, BC). Their visits were much appreciated. To any who are traveling through northern BC, please stop for a visit.

Ken Loveridge

SAN FRANCISCO PENINSULA, CA

There have been some changes in our membership since last we wrote. Sis. Kristin Patterson has moved back to Southern California after four years in our midst. We commend her with love to our brethren in the Los Angeles Ecclesia. We were pleased to receive Bro. Robert Rek, formerly of the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith in Salem, OH.

We rejoiced to witness the baptism on September 2, 2007, of JONATHAN SLEEPER, son of our Bro. Ted and Sis. Dolores Sleeper.

Bro. Renato Tafolla fell asleep in the Lord on October 12, 2007. He had been living for some years in Mexico but his family remained in California. We were privileged to see his daughter, ANGELES TAFOLLA-PALMA, baptized on February 24, 2008.

Jim Seagoe

SARASOTA, FL

Our winter numbers continue to be increased by the visits of brothers and sisters from near and far. Along with our winter residents, we have enjoyed fellowship with Bro. Jeff and Sis. Ethel Wallace and Sis. Sharon Ellis (Boston, MA); Sis. Linda Leathersich (Rochester, NY); Bro. John and Sis. Diane Drywood (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON); Sis. Jan Elsea (Norfolk, VA); and Sis. Lynn Sporzarsky (Treasure Coast, FL), with her husband George.

In addition, we were glad to see members of our ecclesia who are now living in other parts of the country: Bro. Cal and Sis. Lucille Gelineau, and Sis. Helen Gibson.

We thank Bre. Terry Cannon (Birmingham Castle Bromwich, UK), and Tom Baldock (Mississauga West, ON), for their words of exhortation.

If you are planning trips to South Florida, either vacation or business, please keep our ecclesia in mind.

James Wilkinson

SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE, NH

I am now the new Recording Secretary of the Southern New Hampshire Ecclesia. Email correspondence may be sent to cubberley@charter.net. Postal correspondence should continue to be sent to PO Box 358, Hollis, NH 03049.

We are pleased to welcome Bro. Bruce and Sis. Pat Waite by transfer from the Oregon Coast Ecclesia.

Frank Conahan

WICHITA FALLS, TX

Since last reporting our ecclesial news we have welcomed around the table of our absent Lord the following brothers and sisters: Bro. Antonio and Sis. Marcia Howell, Sis. Michele Massip, and Sis. Jeanna McLaughlin (Dallas, TX); Sis. Wendy Hicks (Abilene, TX); Sis. Judy Muniz, (Livonia, MI); and Bro. Wesley Booker (Austin South, TX). We thank Bre. A. Howell and W. Booker for their encouraging words of exhortation.

Over the weekend of March 21-23, 2008, we held our annual Spring Gathering at the T4C Camp. Bro. Roy Styles spoke on the vital topic of "Marriage in the Lord". All who attended were reminded of the godly principles which lead to strong marriages as well as strong ecclesial families. We thank Bro. Roy for his labor of love on our behalf, and Sis. Betty for her support in this effort. Once again we were blessed with a wonderful weekend around God's Word, with 158 in attendance.

John A. Clubb

CHS Appeal

The Christadelphian Heritage School, located in the Simi Hills Christadelphian Ecclesia, is recruiting teachers to volunteer for the 2008-2009 school year. Grades are K-12 and classes are Monday through Thursday.

This is an opportunity to serve in a truly meaningful way. While no degree is necessary, this is an ideal opportunity for a young brother or sister just out of college to get teaching experience, as well as retired teachers who would like to invest their experience in assuring our children a solid academic education in the context of our Biblical values.

Room and board are provided.

For additional information please contact Sis Christian Fratello, CHS Administrator, at 310-809-5163 or email at tncfratello@socal.rr.com.

Greg Robinson

Christadelphian Isolation League

The Isolation League now have a website: <http://www.isolationleague.org>, that provides a contact point, details of forthcoming events, exhortations, lectures and Bible studies. The website also provides information on services that the League offers to brothers and sisters. We are currently adding this material sent out to brothers and sisters in isolation over the last five years, and we shall keep the site up to date with new material as it is published.

In order to view this material you need to request access. To do that one must click on the link on the left of the site. The access request form will allow you to set up your own registration code which is "cooperating in love," all in lower case.

Please note, this is not a "public" website; the intended audience is brothers and sisters. Please do not make the information held on the website, or the details of how to register for access to the website, available outside the brotherhood.

It is hoped that the website and its services will be of help to brothers and sisters worldwide in all circumstances, especially those who are isolated from their ecclesia. Anyone needing more information should contact Bro. Matt Barton: matt.barton@isolationleague.org.

Richard Austin

Christadelphian Bible Talks Available Online

Over the last couple years, Andrew Styles has set up a web site for Christadelphian Bible classes in MP3 format for the Livonia, MI, Ecclesia. This site is now available for everyone to use free. Classes can be downloaded or uploaded. So when you have downloaded a few, please take the time to upload some of your favorite studies that are not yet on the website, so that everyone may have access to them. You can find the site at www.Livoniatapes.com.

Jim Styles

Lovers and snakes

In this world of our mortal experience there is a strange mixture of good and evil. In many ways it seems a blighted and faulty world; yet as we increase our experience and knowledge, we become conscious of a wonderful growing persuasion that in one respect the world is a perfect place. This strange extended garden of good and evil, with its devoted lovers and its snakes, its fruits sweet and bitter, its thorns and thistles, and its scorching barrier across the way to that which we desire most, is a perfect training ground for human character. We cannot suggest any alterations that would not in some way spoil it for this purpose.

We find a good deal of joy in this blighted garden, although our experience is so different from that which we think we desire. We become reconciled to the reign of law, and if either in presumption or ignorance we break any of Nature's laws, we realize the folly of complaining when we are punished. Why should we expect God to be less logical in the greater world for which life in this blighted field makes selective preparation? Why not make an effort to grasp and apply the most important principles of life now, remembering that there will come a time when in the most literal and awful sense it will be too late?

Islip Collyer, The Guiding Light

Minute Meditation

“Fool so feelish”

There is a story about a man who became so frustrated that he blurted out, “I fool so feelish.” What he said does not make much sense, but most folks can figure out what he meant to say.

We also can be guilty of saying one thing and meaning something else. We might be like the man in this case who simply mixed up his words. But sometimes we may say something entirely different from what we know to be true because we want to deceive someone.

The prophet Ezekiel tells us about people who came to hear the word of the Lord and said all the right things, but did not mean what they said. God was not fooled, and He told Ezekiel, “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.”

The Lord Jesus was quoting Isaiah when he told the people, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

Talk can be deceiving. Many people say how much they love God, but then by their actions and teachings they prove that they really don’t. We need to make sure that we not only talk the talk, but that we also walk the walk, and that our talk and walk are in harmony with each other.

While we don’t want to use loving words hypocritically or speak of lofty goals falsely, it also is important to be careful that our speech is good rather than evil. In fact, Jesus tells us that it is not what we eat and take into our body that defiles us but what comes out of us, in our spoken word: “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.”

Jesus also warns us that, “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

Solomon has much to say about our mouths. “Do not let your mouth lead you into sin.” He contrasts the mouth of the righteous with the mouth of the wicked by saying, “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked.”

Listening to how someone talks can help us to determine what is inside him. Jesus tells us that “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth

that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.”

The computer acronym GIGO, which means garbage in, garbage out, applies to more than just computers. If we put the wrong things into our minds then wrong things are going to come out of our mouth. In fact, how can it be otherwise? How can we ever expect spiritual words to come from our lips when no spiritual thoughts have been first put into our minds? It is important for us to make sure that we feed our mind with the right kind of thoughts in order for the right kind of words to come out.

Let us avoid “fooling so feelish” by choosing our words carefully. When we speak of godliness, let us act on our words. David sums it up for us when he says, “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.” Let us fill our minds with the kind of thoughts that are true, honest, just, and pure, and then let us act on these good thoughts so that what we say and do will reflect a godly spirit. “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.”

Robert J. Lloyd

***Editor:** “Fool so feelish” reminds me of an old family story. One of the cousins had some bad dealings with a store in town, and she came home to fret about what happened. She sat in the living room brooding and steaming more and more. Finally, she blurted out to all concerned, “The madder I sit here, the longer I get!”*

After which she might easily have thought to herself, “I fool so feelish!”

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

MAY

2-4 Vancouver Island Sisters’ Weekend Nanaimo, BC. “Becoming a Handmaid of the Lord”. Sisters Linda Reding and Beth MacAdams (Worcester, MA). For registration information contact Sis. Iris Brown rayandirisbrown@shaw.ca 250-758-4284

2-4 Central Coast Women’s Weekend Camp Ocean Pines, Cambria, CA. Sis. Kim Brinkerhoff (Pomona, CA): “God’s Beautiful Garden”; Sis. Shirley Barratt (San Luis Obispo, CA): “Walking in God’s Garden”; Sis. Helen Jennings (Pomona, CA): “The Garden Restored”; Sis. Ann Crouse (North County San Luis Obispo, CA): “The Secret Garden (John 15)”. Exhortation by Bro. John Warner (San Francisco Peninsula, CA): “The Garden Tomb”. \$50 non-refundable deposit to secure registration. Contact Sis. Ann Crouse 805-239-3517 RoAnCrouse@aol.com

3 Manitoulin Island, ON Study day. Bro. Ben Saxon: "Do all to the Glory of God"

3,4 Pittsburgh, PA Study weekend. Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI): "Godly Love". Contact Bro. David Pommer thepommers@verizon.net 724-224-7363

16-18 Hartford City, IN Lake Placid Study Weekend, Lake Placid Conference Center. Bro. Jim Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI): "James". Anyone interested in teaching a class for the children please contact Bro. Jerry or Sis. Dorothy Asbury 27 Dogwood Terrace, Maryville, IL 62062 or phone 618-288-5023

17,18 Prince George, BC Fraternal Gathering Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI): "Godly Love"

23-25 New York Metropolitan Sister's Retreat Pocono Manor, Pocono, PA. Sis. Shirley Barratt (San Luis Obispo, CA): "Becoming a Woman of Grace". For complete information and registration contact Sis. Averil Ferguson 718-881-8705 averilpsm23@juno.com

25,26 Sussex, NB Study weekend. Bro. Dale Crawford (Bedford, NS): "Portrait of the Perfect Man — Job, Jesus and the Saints"

JUNE

7,8 Meriden, CT Spring study day. Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): "The Life of Jacob". CYC program on Saturday evening

14,15 New York Fraternal Gathering Bro. Stan Isbell (Houston North, TX): "As a Man Thinketh in His Heart"

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

28 - July 6 Mid-Atlantic Bible School Shippensburg, PA. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK): "A Holy Nation"; teens: "We Have Found the Messiah"; Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON): "The Fate of the Dead"; teens: "Resurrection of the Dead, Who and When?"; Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA): "The Servant and His Songs (Isaiah 40-66)"; teens: "How Readest Thou?". Information at www.christadelphians.net/MACBS

JULY

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

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

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

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

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

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

26-August 3 Midwest Bible School Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "Prophetic Images"; Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON): "The Fate of the Dead"; Bro. James Mansfield (AU): "How the Lord Treated People". Contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 44943 Yorkshire Drive, Novi, MI 48375 248-462-5740 mike.live@gmail.com

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

AUGUST

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

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

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

23-29 Vancouver Island Bible Camp Camp Pringle, Shawnigan Lake, Vancouver Island. Bro. Devon Walker (UK): "Jesus in Prayer" (adults), "Biblical Soap Operas" (teens); Bro. Gordon Dangerfield (Victoria, BC): "In the power of his might (Ephesians)" (adults), "Let this mind be in you" (teens); Bro. Martin Webster (Kitchener/Waterloo, BC): "Jonah,

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the Prophet of the Great Reformation" (adults), "To know wisdom and instruction" (teens). Contact Sis. Wendy Johnsen wendyjohnsen@yahoo.ca #7-3855-9th Avenue, Port Alberni, BC V9Y 4T9, Canada. Tel 250-724-0501 Fax 250-723-9321

SEPTEMBER

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

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

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

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

OCTOBER

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

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

NOVEMBER

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

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 jlwolfe518@sbcglobal.net. Information at www.texasyouthconference.com

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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No. 5

Editorial — Seeing God's Face.....	211
Exhortation — At the Last Supper, <i>Colin Edwards</i>	216
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:	
(16) What it Means to be Children Beloved by God, <i>Tom Barling</i>	219
Bible Study — Little Words that Mean a Lot:	
(9) Offense — Part II, <i>John C. Bilello</i>	223
History — Helen Shiells — A true daughter of Sarah, <i>Gordon Hensley</i> ..	229
Reflections:	
The Prince Returns, <i>Bithiah</i>	237
Tamar the Upright, <i>Ellen Styles</i>	239
Who is "the Mighty God"?, <i>George Booker</i>	241
Bible Mission News — Bahamas; Central America;	
Guadalajara and San Diego; Guatemala and Panama;	
St. Lucia; Faith at Work; <i>Thisisyourbible.com</i>	243
News & Notices.....	253
Minute Meditation — "Be ye angry and sin not", <i>Robert J. Lloyd</i>	256
Coming Events	258

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

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“By their fruits ye shall know them”

We need to have a living faith, not a dead faith. Without works, or action, faith is dead. Jesus put it another way when he said, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” The fig tree that Jesus saw, being covered with leaves but having no fruit, was like a man full of words but no action. We remember that Jesus condemned that tree and it withered away and died.

Jesus is the husbandman of the vineyard. We are the trees. Soon he is coming to see what kind of fruit we have. What will he find?

It’s not enough to be covered with leaves; there must be fruit. It’s not enough to talk a good fight. Paul said he had fought a good fight, and this denotes action. Remember: “Actions speak louder than words.” What are our actions saying?

Robert J. Lloyd

Editorial

Seeing God's Face

After 20 years of servitude in Syria, Jacob prepared his family and fled from his father-in-law Laban, back to the land of promise:

"And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, 'This is the camp of God!' So he named that place Mahanaim" (Gen 32:1,2).

"Mahanaim" signifies "camps" or "armies" and in this case alludes to the two "camps", that of Jacob's family and that of God. Elisha's revelation to his servant, at a later date, stresses the same lesson: Though the opposing forces appeared overpowering, yet if the young man's eyes were truly opened they would behold on his side the armies of heaven:

"Don't be afraid... Those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (2Ki 6:16).

Likewise, David wrote of the angel of the LORD, who "encamps ['hanah' — the same root as 'Mahanaim'] around those who fear him, and delivers them" (Psa 34:7).

And Jesus, facing his sternest trial, could testify to the unseen presence of twelve legions of angels (Matt 26:53), hovering over and protecting him and his flock.

For Jacob, this vision of angels, coming as it did at a time of danger and fear, should have sustained and comforted him. And it did, up to a point. But how far such a vision can override the seeming reality of one's experience, it is difficult to say. We read that Jacob, immediately after seeing the angels, still felt the need to take steps that he hoped would ensure his success. He sent messengers ahead to appeal to his estranged brother Esau, whom he feared (Gen 32:3-5).

True to his lifelong tendencies, Jacob plotted and struggled, or wrestled, with circumstances, all to his best advantage, as he saw it. He demonstrated an interesting combination of trust in God and trust in his own wits, interesting particularly in this: that Jacob is so much like the rest of us. This story is an invitation to us, to see ourselves in Jacob.

"When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, 'We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.' In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups ['Mahanaim' again] and the flocks and herds and camels as well. He thought, 'If Esau comes and attacks one group [or camp] the group [or camp] that is left may escape'" (vv 6-8).

Jacob had just seen the company of angels. Why did he fear?

If we can answer that question, then we can answer the more relevant question: Why do *we* fear? Why? When Scriptures are filled with messages of surpassing comfort and mercy, messages that speak to us: “Fear not, little flock.”

Although he was afraid for his safety and that of his family, Jacob never really doubted the presence and the concern of God. And so he prayed to the God of his fathers, reminding Him of His promises, reminding Him of His past mercies: “Oh God... I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant... [yet] Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother” (vv 9-11).

His prayer was a retrospect of his life: “I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups” (v 10). In remembering past evidence of God’s guidance and comfort in his life, he strengthened his confidence in a present continuance of such guidance. Despite his fear of Esau, Jacob showed faith in God (v 11) and in His Word (v 12). Distress made his prayer fervent, as nothing else could. No insipid, practiced, routine prayer was this; it was real and meaningful.

But still, Jacob continued to make material provisions for his safety: he arranged bribes, and sent emissaries ahead with them (vv 13-21), all so careful and calculated, as he always had been. Was this necessary? Should he have bothered with such matters, should he have even thought of them, if he truly trusted in God?

There are no easy answers to such questions. In the warm security of our homes, nestled in easy chairs, with food aplenty, and the world at bay somewhere outside, the answer comes easily: ‘No, of course not. There was no need.’

But turn us out of our homes, strip from us our supposed security, expose us to the dangers of the world in an immediate, life-threatening sense. Then, *if* we are honest, we may admit that our perspectives would be drastically altered. So it was with Jacob. Let us, who “stand” so casually when all is calm, take heed lest we “fall” when the storms beat upon us.

“That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions” (vv 22,23)

Here is perhaps the best explanation for these confusing verses: The whole company was first of all on the south side of the Jabbok, exposed to Esau and his men. Jacob returned all his family to the north side and relative safety, and then recrossed the Jabbok, and remained on the south side alone, to face the enemy, as he saw it.

There he stayed, alone and watching through a dark night of fear, inner turmoil, self-doubts, and even (perhaps?) doubts about God. Time after time the question would rise in his mind: what will the morning bring? Can any of us, with even the slightest inclination toward a true self-examination, fail to be moved by a contemplation of that night? Can any of us, made as we are of flesh and blood, look upon such a scene and fail to recognize ourselves? “Behold, you are the man!”

Then suddenly, out of that night, a figure approached, shrouded in darkness. His heart leaped; was it Esau? What should he do? At once he was on his feet, advancing and wrestling with the unrecognizable “enemy” (v 24). In the heat and fear of the night he sweated and grappled, as though his life depended on his own strength. But through his desperation came the awakening realization that he would never prevail.

Then, at a touch the “enemy” disabled him totally: his leg was lame to the point of uselessness (v 25). Now there was nothing left to do but cling in abject helplessness to the mysterious figure who had bested him in the struggle. What power was this against which he had been wrestling? It could not be Esau. Could it be God Himself? Still more desperately now, Jacob clung to the being who acted as if to depart:

“I will not let you go unless you bless me” (v 26).

No longer Jacob the wrestler, nor Jacob the clever schemer, he was now Jacob the humble supplicant, begging the most meager crumb from the master’s table: “Please, bless me.”

“The man asked him, ‘What is your name?’ ‘Jacob,’ he answered. Then the man said, ‘Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled or wrestled with God and with men and have overcome’ ” (vv 27,28).

Jacob (meaning the “supplanter”, literally, the “one who takes by the heel”) is transformed into Israel (“the prince with God”). His “overcoming” of God is achieved through humility and prayer, in inverse proportion to a trust in his own strength. In his natural weakness he prevailed and became spiritually strong; the full realization of his own emptiness and hopelessness bound him absolutely to the only true source of strength (2Co 12:7-10). Only then could he find the blessing!

Do we struggle with God? How do we confront our enemies? Do we go through life dividing our time between praying and plotting? Do we ask for help and then scheme in unworthy ways to obtain our goals, giving the lie to all our worthier thoughts? Do we twist and wrestle and worry under every constraint to our own wills, never pausing to remind ourselves that God is in control of everything, and that what we suffer as well as what we enjoy contribute alike to His purpose?

It is so easy to forget the lesson of Shimei’s cursing of David, for David recognized that God had sent the “enemy”, and who was he to ask why? (2Sa 16:10). Likewise, the reply of Jesus to Pilate: “You have no power over me if it were not given to you from above” (John 19:11). Our problem is the same as Jacob’s: how to remember in our troubled hours what we take for granted in our quieter moments, that “all things work together for good to them that love God”, and that “if God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:28,31). Assuredly we shall all come to times when our theoretical belief in such an idea will be put to the test of reality.

This momentous event in Jacob's life is the theme for inspired commentary in other Scripture passages:

"Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing [Gen 32:26] from the LORD and vindication from God his Savior. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face ['Peniel': Gen 32:30,31], O God of Jacob" (Psa 24:3-6).

The experiences of Jacob the struggler had deeply touched the heart of the psalmist David. So he learned, as must we, to see the "face of God" (Peniel) in every experience, and especially in every crisis.

Also in Hosea 12:3-6:

"In the womb he grasped his brother's heel":

Jacob's birth epitomized his early life, a continual struggle for material advantage.

"As a man he struggled with God":

Wherein was his strength? Certainly not in the arm of flesh!:

"He struggled with the angel and overcame him: he wept, and begged for his favor" –

Here was Jacob's only source of strength: a recognition of his personal weakness.

"He found him at Bethel":

a reference to Jacob's earlier vision of angels (Gen 28).

"And there he spake with us" (KJV).

So the inspired prophet Hosea invites us, as we have been doing, to see ourselves in Jacob, and Jacob in ourselves. The experiences of this flesh-and-blood man have direct relevance to us. Do we fear and doubt? Do we vacillate between faith in God and scheming on our own account? So did he! But in his weakness he was drawn finally and completely to God. Let us have the humility and grace, and wisdom, to follow his path.

There is comfort in this thought, that Jacob never attained anything like absolute perfection — he never could bring himself to trust God absolutely — and yet God loved him. And so it may be with us. God has condescended to be known as the "God of Jacob" (the one who "struggled" or "wrestled"), not just the "God of Israel" (the "Prince with God").

"So Jacob called the place Peniel [the face of God], saying, 'It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.' The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip" (Gen 32:30,31).

The "thorn in his flesh," like Paul's, was not removed (2Co 12:7). It remained with Jacob as proof and reminder of his encounter with God. And so we all "limp" through life, our failures and weaknesses (whatever form they take) witnessing eloquently to us of our need, our desperate need, to trust in God alone. We survey

our lives, and we remember the times when we, personally, failed, yet in those failures found God.

As Jacob limped toward his meeting with Esau, the sun rose upon him! The doubts, the shadows, and the fears were gone with the night. He had seen God face to face, and through his weakness found a blessing. Now, when at last he saw Esau, he would still be seeing “God” (Gen 33:10). From now on, wherever he went, Jacob would always see God’s “face”.

Our Father, help us to see Your “face” in all our experiences. Cause the light of Your truth to shine into our hearts, so that — abandoning our own wills and our own strength — we come at last to trust in You alone. In Christ we pray. Amen.

George Booker

The Conjunction of Faith and Action

“I will appease him [Esau] with the present that goeth before me, and afterwards I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me” (Gen 32:20).

Why should Jacob resort to such measures if he left the matter to God? Why not trust to the mollifying effect of God’s action on the mind of Esau? Well, because Jacob, while committing the matter to God, recognized the duty of doing his best to bring about the result he desired. If the steps of those who thus commit their way to Him are directed, may we not conclude that Jacob was moved to take the measures that were needful to avert the impending danger? The result justifies the thought; for Esau, whatever his original intentions may have been, was entirely propitiated by the friendly arrangements of his brother, and the meeting was a meeting of friendship instead of hostility. God has conferred upon man the god-like gift of independent volition, alias free will, within the boundary imposed by surrounding conditions. This limited independence of will is the basis of all God’s dealings with man. Consequently, “providence” is a complex and interesting operation that manipulates circumstances, and so acts through, without setting aside, the natural action of the unconstrained human will. If the objects aimed at were to be accomplished on mechanical principles, the operation would be more direct, and briefer, but vastly less interesting and effective in every way. It would exclude faith on the part of those for whom it is conducted, which of itself would be a fatal flaw; for it is a truth in many relations that, “Without faith, it is impossible to please God” (Heb 11:6)... We shall not err if, like him, while trusting to God’s guidance and cooperation, we humbly and prayerfully resort to the best arrangements our wisdom can suggest, always taking care that none of our arrangements are forbidden.

(Robert Roberts, Ways of Providence)

Exhortation

At the Last Supper

Mark 14 describes the events leading up to the Last Supper, the details of the meal, and the effects of that evening. It is relatively easy to read through the account of the meal without imagining the scene. Thus we fail to realize the emotional drama that unfolded in the upper room. Let's see if we can recreate the scene and thereby learn some of the practical consequences of the events.

The disciples would have made their way down darkened streets to the place where Jesus had instructed them to go. As they climbed the outer stone staircase, they would have wondered about the significance of this meal about which their Master had made several comments recently. At the top of the steps, they would have pushed open the door on its leather hinges and entered into a smoke-filled room. Oil lamps would have cast a warm glow on the rough stone walls. On the floor there would have been a number of hay cushions and woven mats.

Jesus had taken the role of servant at the doorway as the disciples removed their dusty sandals; in this capacity he washed their feet and dried them. There was much embarrassment at this act, but they each in turn submitted to his careful kindness. They rinsed their hands in the water from the jug in the corner, and made their way to sit down. Again, there was some debate about where to sit, or rather where the Master was going to sit, so that they could be close to him.

In the alcove at the side of the main room, two or three women were preparing dishes for the thirteen men. The wood for the fire had been collected earlier, and the vegetables brought in from the villages where they lived. The pita bread had been baked earlier; its aroma, mixed with that of the vegetables, was enticing. Wine in its leather wineskins had been carried up the stairs by one of the disciples and was now being poured into newly glazed mugs and passed around the room.

There was an air of expectancy tinged with fear and uncertainty. The conversation was in hushed tones, and everyone was uncertain about what was going to happen. They thought that they had been planning for the Passover meal. But this was a day early, and it wasn't quite right!

The meal was probably served hot. It resembled the Passover meal, with its bitter herbs and unleavened bread, and its multiple cups of wine to aid digestion. As they ate, they talked quietly amongst themselves. Then Jesus announced that one of them was going to betray him. He gave a piece of bread to Judas, who took it and afterward went out quietly into the dark night.

Initially, each man thought that the betrayer may have been himself. But later, when it finally emerged that the betrayer was Judas, they were understandably filled with consternation and anger at the betrayal.

Jesus continued to teach them, and their eyes would have been drawn to their Master as he spoke to them about his true nature, his sacrifice, and his resurrection. Possibly there was an intensity of commitment, an identification with Jesus, and a sharing in his work that they had never experienced before. Yet even at this moment of heightened awareness, there were still doubts and uncertainties.

Then Jesus took a piece of the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to each of the disciples in turn. He took the last of the wine, blessed it, and passed it around to the disciples. Thus they all shared the wine together. After they had sung a hymn they went out to Gethsemane. At the table and along the road, Jesus taught them many things; surely they listened to him with some fear and trembling.

In many ways this was an ordinary meal, a group of men meeting together to share food, wine, and conversation. At this time of the year, in Israel, it was also customary to meet and have a special meal together. But, in another sense this was a meal like no other!

The timing of the meal was significant. It came at the time of the Passover festival, but not exactly at the time for the great Passover meal itself. In fact, Jesus was to be sacrificed at the very time when the Passover lambs were being killed in the temple courts. However, all the symbolism of the Passover was to be fulfilled in him. His body was the “bread broken”; he was the bread of life! He himself was the Lamb, selected and prepared — the Lamb of God destined to “take away the sin of the world”! He was the lamb, “pure and undefiled”, foreordained from the beginning of time. He was the one who was to be “Christ, our Passover Lamb” (1Co 5:7). However, he was also “the Lamb” to be raised from the dead, to be glorified by being exalted to the throne of God. And the Lamb described by the apostle John in the Book of Revelation: “a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne” (Rev 5:6). He was to be the “first begotten from the dead”, given immortality, never to die again.

These are the things Jesus taught the disciples at the meal table and as they walked through the streets of Jerusalem, out of the city gate, and across the Kedron Brook to Gethsemane (cp John 13:31—17:3).

However, let’s get back to the Last Supper. It was a relatively ordinary meal, yet at the same time a meal alive with high drama. The emotional stakes were high, and the tension was acute. How would we have felt if we had been present?

Would we have been embarrassed that we had allowed the Master to wash our feet? Would we have helped to prepare the meal? Or would we just have arrived at the last minute, hoping that someone else had done everything? Would we have been jostling for position, trying to be on the right hand of the Master, so that we would be included in the discussion? Would we have listened spellbound to the teaching, but secretly hoped it would not involve any serious personal commitment and sacrifice? Would each of us have thought deeply and sadly that it could have been “I” who betrayed Jesus? Would we have shared Peter’s denial, vehemently claiming that we would give all and never deny our Lord and Master?

And yet, I am sure that if we had been there, we would have tried to do what was right. We would have failed to achieve the high standard set by the Master's example. Surely in some way, each of us would have been somewhat like Judas and Peter. Like them, we are frail, erring creatures, prone to sin and failure. The one betrayed and did not seek forgiveness, while the other denied and repented. The one died, but the other lived. Whatever our response to the Master, however, we come to the Lord's Table, whether we have betrayed or denied, whether we have not done what we could, whether we have done what we should not have done. The Lord shares this bread and this wine, and we receive it gratefully. We know that in him, the Lamb of God, we are forgiven, and refreshed and reinvigorated by this meal. It is a simple and ordinary meal, yet it speaks volumes in spiritual lessons.

Colin Edwards (Newbury, UK)

"And they made ready the Passover" (Matthew 26:19)

"With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). Even in his agony he did not forget or neglect his infinite love for them.

"And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you that one of you shall betray me" (Matt 26:21). And everyone said, "Is it I?" — Judas along with the rest. Was there nothing in all those three years that Judas had done that would cause them to suspect, nor in all Jesus' relationships with Judas? What a marvelous testimony to the impartial love Jesus had shown to his secret enemy among them!

"Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted hath lifted up his heel against me!" (Psa 41:9). How could Jesus trust him if he knew from the beginning he would betray him? Clearly it means that he treated him with the same trust that he treated the others. He made no distinction, though he knew what he would do. There is a great lesson for us here in our treatment of others.

There is another reason why the disciples did not suspect Judas. The outward difference between him and them was not as great as we might suppose. Truly they were basically sincere and he was not. But they were very childish and self-centered and uncomprehending — until the shock and sorrow of the cross made them men... And we find that right after he tells them that one of them will betray him, they are quarreling among themselves who shall be greatest in the Kingdom — right at the last supper, when Jesus was in his agony of love and sorrow. They sorrowed, like sympathetic but unrealizing children, when he spoke of betrayal and death, but they were soon too preoccupied with their own selfish rivalry to remember what he had said. It was then that Jesus girded himself with a towel, and washed their feet.

"Having loved his own, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1) — not for what they were, but in faith for what they would be when they grew up.

G.V. Growcott

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (16) What It Means to be Children Beloved by God

Continuing his theme of what is effectively a new life in the Lord Jesus, Paul uses “therefore” at the beginning of Ephesians 5 and implies that all he has hitherto asked of his readers is to imitate God: “Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children.” Thus he provides a reminder that God truly loves His children. As beloved children, they should bear the image of their Father. This reflection takes us back to the stages of creation, where it is affirmed exclusively of man that he was made in the image of God (Gen 1:26). We know sorrowfully that the man and the woman, through their sin of disobedience, forfeited this status, and they became conscious of their nakedness, thereafter associated with sin (cf Rev 16:15). Even so, the Father in His love did not abandon them, but provided a covering for their nakedness (Gen 3:21), as a token of His continuing love. Because of this unquenchable love, His erring people could be adopted back into His family, but only on His conditions. Earlier in these studies, we have dealt with this concept of adoption (see Eph 1:5).

Paul's readers, having thus been graciously granted the status of beloved children, are now called upon to respond to the privilege they enjoy. They should demonstrate they are indeed children by showing they too can “walk in love” (v 2), a love which matches that of their redeemer: “as Christ also loved you”. This is a sure echo of the Lord's own commandment (see John 13:34). To “walk” is a figure of speech which conveys the idea of human behavior (cf Gen 6:9).

It reminds us too of the supreme demonstration of this love, as the Lord himself said to his apostles, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). The terms which the apostle employs to describe the Lord's love reveals his familiarity with the Law: Christ's sacrificial love was “a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God”, an expression he uses in acknowledging the gift received from his beloved disciples at Philippi (cf Phil 4:18). The expression “to God”, recalls the fact that the Lord's sacrificial death was an act of obedience, contrasting with the first sin, an act of disobedience (see John 10:17). Paul, who had received his rabbinical training at the feet of Gamaliel (cf Acts 22:3; 5:34), was thoroughly familiar with the Old Testament and especially the Mosaic Law.¹

Avoiding impurity

Continuing to pursue the theme of the moral implications of their new calling in the Lord Jesus, Paul addresses to his readers an admonition which embraces the speech as well as the conduct of disciples in verse 3: “But among you there must not be a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people” (NIV). The admonition is carried further in verse 4: “Nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which are

not befitting.” Loose talk is becoming commoner in western societies, and it is becoming looser. Some of the Roman writers were very free in their allusions to sexual matters. Indeed, in all generations, talk on sexual matters can be disgusting. As far as believers are concerned, all this behavior is to be banished (v 7): there is to be no sharing of this way of life either in the home of disciples or when they assemble. Jeremiah had much to say about the Jewish world he knew, and there is one expression which sums up the people to whom he witnessed:

“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush” (Jer 6:15; 8:12).

When the capacity to blush, that is, to feel a sense of shame, has gone, the state of a society can become quite uncertain. The atmosphere amongst God’s people should be pure; all that is unsavory should give place to thanksgiving, and an appreciation of God’s grace and of the priceless privilege of being disciples of the Lord Jesus. The apostle then presses home the consequence of any failure to respond to his teaching: “Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience” (v 6). There is no room for argument concerning these matters: God has made perfectly clear what He requires from His servants.

The Lord God is wonderfully forgiving but there is a limit to His patience and this was shown in the days of Noah. We cannot forget the Lord spoke of the time preceding his Second Coming as a period recalling the days of Noah (see Luke 17:26,27,30).

“Children of light”

Following the stern warning of verse 7, Paul uses a highly effective figure of speech: “For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (v 8). Their previous condition was such that it was darkness! There is a similar passage in Colossians, and a vivid one; and we should notice Paul includes himself as a sharer with the Colossians of the same privilege:

“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves” (Col 1:13, NIV).

The Thessalonians also belonged to the day (1Th 5:5). The dark part of the day, when the sun is down, is the time when crimes and shameful deeds are often committed. This is a comparison which frequently occurs in the New Testament; in John 3 we find the declaration:

“For everyone that doeth ill hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works should be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God” (John 3:20,21).

The primary source of light, as the opening verses of Genesis make clear, is the LORD God: “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light” (1:3). So complete an expression of God’s will was His Son, that he became the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5). The first of these verses in John possesses a special interest, as it bears so directly on what Paul tells us in Ephesians: “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness but shall have the light of life.”

It is when we accept the Lord Jesus as our redeemer and our example that we can hope to walk in light. We should note, too, how Jesus uses the figure of “walking” to convey the concept of a way of life. It is a metaphor much exploited by Paul in Ephesians, and in chapter 5 we can refer to verses 2, 8, and 15.

It is carried further in verse 9:

“For the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.”

This is the fruit of the Spirit, so familiar to all readers of Paul, who makes that powerful contrast in Galatians 5, between the (dark) deeds of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit (vv 19-23). The followers of the Lord are called upon to live what we may term fruitful lives; in the beautiful allegory of the vine, the Lord tells his hearers: “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:8). The natural world endorses fully the truth of the Lord’s words: so much depends upon an adequate supply of sunshine for growth and maturing.

Have no fellowship with darkness

But the fruitful life does not come automatically; it has to be cultivated; we need to know what God’s will is (v 10). Humanity can be so easily misled by hollow claims. With his long experience, John gives this counsel: “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1Jo 4:1, NIV). The concept of isolation from the practices of the world is enjoined in Ephesians 5:11:

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even rebuke them.”

“To have fellowship” is by derivation to have things in common, to share. So far from associating with works of darkness, disciples are to denounce them and show them to be what they truly are. Quoting John once more, we have his guidance as to what is true fellowship: “Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ” (1Jo 1:3). The study of this whole chapter reveals the kinship between Paul’s teaching and that of the beloved disciple — a subject which, like so many in Ephesians, could be pursued, and at some length.

The sense of verse 13 is thus brought out by the NIV: “But everything exposed by the light becomes visible.” How true this is: in the full light of day the nature of objects becomes identifiable. Nothing can be successfully concealed from the Almighty, as Psalm 139 so wonderfully declares:

“Even the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day: The darkness and the light are both alike to thee” (v 12) (see also Heb 4:12).

Because of these verities, the apostle calls on his readers to awake, if perchance they have been overcome by sleep:

“Therefore it is said, Awake O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light” (Eph 5:14).

It has been conjectured that Paul is here quoting a hymn, and that may well be the case. In this connection, it is interesting to note that in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 there is a reference to the singing of hymns. The Lord and the

apostles sang a hymn together in the upper room (Matt 26:30). A good hymnal is indeed a veritable treasury and a source of guidance and comfort.

“Examine yourselves”, and “redeem the time”

We can look at verses 15 and 16 of Ephesians 5 together:

“Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

Paul declares that we should examine ourselves, just as he does in 1 Corinthians 11:28, whenever we break bread in memory of our Lord’s sacrificial death. Self-examination is always desirable in the life of a disciple. Sloth and casualness are a denial of the principles by which we can be saved. Moreover, our life is fleeting, and only a vapor. This teaches us that opportunities for service must not be neglected. Nobody recognized this more clearly than our Lord: “We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work” (John 9:4). Long before this, the psalmist had said: “**Today**, if you hear his voice” (Psa 95:7, NIV; see also Heb 4:7).

In view of all this, disciples must redeem the time, for the days are evil. Redeeming may seem a strange concept, but it is clear that what Paul is requiring is activity, a fitting response to our calling with its challenges. Society does not change fundamentally; it is ever astray and its siren voice can beguile the believer. We must avoid foolishness (v 17), and this we can certainly do if we have a proper understanding of God’s will. We must remember the principle which governed the life of our Lord: he came to do God’s will (see Heb 10:7, quoting Psa 40:7). Ideally this should be true of all followers of our Lord Jesus.

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

Note:

1. Paul’s use of the expression in verse 2 can first be found in Genesis 8:21, of Noah’s offering. Subsequently, it frequently occurs to describe sacrifices acceptable to God: see, among many references, Exodus 29:25,41; Numbers 28 is especially helpful in this connection. When an offering was made strictly according to God’s prescription, it was acceptable to Him; this is a lesson for all times.

“All parents know how much their children imitate them. Sometimes with young children it comes as quite a shock when our children trot out phrases, sayings, or actions that exactly mirror what we say or do... Paul tells us to ‘be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children’ (Eph 5:1,2).

“So in the same way that children copy our actions, we need to copy the actions of our greatest role models — the Lord our God and his Son, Jesus Christ. We need to get to know them and be familiar enough with them to imitate them. Children can’t copy something they have never seen, or never taken notice of. Children only copy what is familiar to them. We too are only able to copy what we have seen or observed. So let us follow closely the examples we are given in the Scriptures. Let us become familiar with them and imitate the love we are shown, the love that has so freely been given to us, giving ourselves up as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God just as Jesus did for us” (Robert Prins).

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (9) Offense — Part II

“And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea” (Mark 9:42)

Many years ago I was teaching a Sunday school class comprised of *tween*-age children and I asked them the question: *What does Jesus mean by “offense” in the Mark 9:42 passage?* One of the youngsters immediately blurted out, “That’s when my team has the ball!” He actually wasn’t that far off the mark, because the word “offense” is used in sports to indicate the team that is attacking while the other side is necessarily on the defense. Hence, it was a simple step to tell these children that when they attack someone verbally they are offending them. I am not sure that they all understood exactly the nuances associated with the word “offend” in all life’s circumstances, but no matter — most adults have the same problem, i.e., realizing when they are actually offending someone!

The most offensive man who ever lived

The Lord Jesus Christ probably caused more offense than anyone who has ever lived. Clearly his teachings placed a huge stumbling block in the path of all who heard them. His teachings greatly offended the scribes and Pharisees, because he exposed their hypocrisies and challenged the pseudo-religiosity of their beliefs. The truth of God, as encompassed in the Bible, continues to offend even to this day and will no doubt keep on offending those who practice false religion. Anyone who has preached knows that it is a difficult task, at times, to present the word of God in a truly simple and straightforward manner, while at the same time not offending someone who believes, for example, in the devil or the trinity. Nevertheless, it behooves us to do the best we can to approach our outreach efforts in as positive and non-confrontational a manner as possible. Our Lord Jesus Christ never ever *deliberately* sought to cause offense. When Jesus was asked to pay the two-drachma Temple tax,¹ he could have easily and justly refused, for he was both king and high priest and consequently exempt from such levies. Yet Jesus avoided the confrontation and instructed Peter to go and fish out a double portion of the tax to cover both of them, *“lest we should offend them”* (Matt 17:27).

Nevertheless, the Pharisees were offended by his teaching:

“Then his disciples came and said to him, ‘Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?’” (Matt 15:12, NKJV).

Why were they offended? He exposed their traditions as a mere hypocritical show of religion, while deep down in the depths of their character they were desperate sinners and refused to acknowledge the shortcomings of their behavior. Instead, they made a public show of religious ritual while at the same time they were:

- hating without cause (Matt 5:22),
- neglecting the poor (Luke 14:13),
- faking their fastings (Matt 6:16),
- forsaking the sick (Matt 21:14,15),
- denying the needs of their parents (Mark 7:11),
- showing no mercy in their judgments (Matt 23:23),
- treating their marriage vows as disposable (Matt 19:3-9), and
- desecrating the Temple of God (Matt 21:12),

to cite but a few of their most grievous sins.

Our Lord Jesus Christ soundly and forthrightly condemned such despicable behavior in the strongest language. He called them hypocrites on numerous occasions and also compared them to vipers and serpents. None of these appellations were likely to whitewash the message that he intended for their ears, namely, that they desperately needed to repent of their ways.

Should Jesus have been more tactful in what he said? Would he have received a more favorable response if he had shown shrewd diplomacy in delivering his message? Doubtful! Jesus wasn't running for public office; he was already appointed successor to the throne of David by his heavenly Father. The powerful miracles he performed and the righteousness of his teachings should have been sufficient for the scribes and Pharisees to have given him due respect as their Messiah.

I have heard some say that, since Jesus was forthright in his speech when preaching the gospel message, we should emulate that approach ourselves. In the early history of our community a form of provocative debate was often the style used in public preaching and for confronting issues within the brotherhood. The problem with debating is that it generally fails on two counts. First, if you prevail and win the debate you usually end up embarrassing your opponents and they will then resist your arguments all the more while vehemently seeking to prove their own point. Alternatively, if you lose the debate you will humiliate yourself, which will only serve to further fortify the belief of the one you are trying to convince. We need to fully realize that we are *not* the Lord Jesus Christ, since we are certainly devoid of any possible claims to heavenly authority. Hence, it doesn't behoove us to use intemperate language when preaching the Truth, nor when dealing with internal offense within our ecclesial family. Instead we need to remember our relationship to those with whom we are dealing is best epitomized in the teaching of our Lord:

"For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great" (Luke 9:48).

What is the best way to preach?

The question then arises: What is the best way to approach preaching work so that we don't cause offense, irrespective of whether our discussions are to a public assembly or just in private with an acquaintance? The apostle Paul gives us a strong clue as to how we ought to behave when he told the Corinthians:

"To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1Co 9:22, NKJV).

We need to empathize with those we want to win over, whether it be a brother or sister offended, or a person we wish to interest in the gospel message. Not an easy task, but one well worth our time and effort. Instead of telling people what we don't believe, we need to take a positive approach to preaching the gospel. Instead of telling people they are wrong, or that we disagree with them, how much better would be our response if we told them: "Here is another point of view you might wish to consider."

To a large extent Christadelphians today have adopted this approach in external preaching where the Bible seminar program, in its various modifications, has had some very reasonable success in both witnessing and converting serious Bible students. Far better than the public lectures I sometimes heard as a youth with such confrontational titles as: "Do you believe in the Devil?" or "The trinity is not a Bible doctrine." These are actual titles that I have seen some ecclesias use, and I hope that I haven't offended anyone by repeating them, for I am sure they were used with perfectly good intention. However, the fact remains that the public rarely, if ever, responds to such titles because they inherently put the potentially interested party on the defensive and it either scares them away, or they feel they already know the answer and have no need to attend. Individual lectures on subjects of general public interest have in my experience been more successful. (In this regard, I would be glad to supply some specific titles to anyone emailing me.)

Offense in the ecclesia

Now I want to turn to difficulties that may arise within the ecclesia that can cause offense. Our Lord Jesus Christ had to deal with offense on many occasions, and we can be guided by his teachings to handle difficult situations. Ironically, Jesus' heritage and occupation were an offense to the elders of Israel:

"Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" So they were offended at him" (Mark 6:3, NKJV).

They were incensed that a humble carpenter was trying to tell them how to live. The elders of Israel knew his family and were aware they came from lowly circumstances; hence they found it difficult to believe that our Lord Jesus Christ was worthy of respect. Do we get offended for the same wrong reasons?

The ecclesia is not a social club where membership is restricted to a certain economic and social class, or worse yet governed by those of preferred ethnic or racial origin. Brothers and sisters come from all social and economic backgrounds and bring with them various cultural heritages. It is quite possible that the members of any ecclesia would never be associated with one another in any single worldly organization drawing together people on some compatible social, cultural, or economic basis.

Assuredly, the only common glue that holds an ecclesia together is the bond of the Truth. Therefore it is not uncommon for there to be generational, cultural, or social status offenses caused by personality differences inherent in the backgrounds of brothers or sisters. Younger men may prefer to come to meeting without ties, and

younger women may prefer to wear a pants suit instead of a dress — just to cite a few examples I have witnessed around the Christadelphian world.

Economic circumstances can certainly make it far easier for some to wear Sunday best, while others may only be able to afford a pair of jeans. One can certainly make a good argument for coming to meeting with the best appearance we might be able to afford, for example, in a manner we would dress for a job interview. However, we need also to be careful not to apply our economic status as an absolute standard upon others, for our Lord looks not at the outward appearance, but judges the heart:

“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and say to the poor man, ‘You stand there,’ or, ‘Sit here at my footstool,’ have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?” (James 2:1-4, NKJV).

We should not be offended by another’s dress unless it is plainly obvious that it has been done maliciously or provocatively. A brother or sister coming directly from a blue-collar job to attend Bible class or meeting, even though dressed in work garments, should be commended. On the other hand, coming to meeting on your day off in jeans, because you were too lazy to have your good pants or dress cleaned and pressed doesn’t merit any praise! The same can be said for decorum: a sister may show up in a perfectly good pants suit and find that some are offended while another shows up in a skirt that leaves nothing to the imagination and technically meets some (un)written code of wearing a dress to meeting. Who has actually met a standard that should not cause offense? The bottom line is that we need to be tolerant and not offended by another’s dress as long as it does not blatantly breach reasonable standards of modesty and cleanliness.

“Eating meat” and “observing holy days”

No discussion on causes and cures for real or perceived “offenses” would be complete without considering the exhortations the apostle Paul gave to the Roman and Corinthian ecclesias (Rom 14; 1Co 8). The key issues concerned the nature of the food that one could eat and what days to celebrate as holy.

Clearly some in the Roman Ecclesia believed we should all become vegetarians:

“For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables” (Rom 14:2, NKJV).

This belief was no doubt derived from a strong revulsion to killing any living thing. This is still a strong belief in certain religions in the world, notably among many Hindus (but not all). There can be no valid objection to practicing vegetarianism; it may indeed be even better for your health if a judicious balanced diet is selected. The problem comes about when those committed to such behavior insist all in the ecclesia must do likewise, and then become offended when others do not follow suit. In Corinth the subject revolved around food being eaten that was dedicated to idols:

"As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world..." (1Co 8:4).

It was common practice for Gentile butchers to have their produce blessed, in effect, by the local pagan deities. A similar circumstance could be envisaged today if we eat pizza at a church festival where the food is blessed by the local cleric who does so in the name of the trinity!

Meanwhile in Rome some were offended over which holy days to observe:

"One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike..." (Rom 14:5).

While the text does not say so explicitly, it is probably safe to assume Paul was not talking about observing pagan holidays, which had associated with them various sorts of debauchery. Rather the argument must have revolved around whether or not to observe the holy days that had been traditionally observed under the Law of Moses, e.g., the Sabbath, Passover, Yom Kippur, etc. Obviously, the Judaizers in the congregation had longstanding tradition on their side and may have been very offended at Gentile converts who saw no merit in continuing to observe these holy days.

The discourses of Paul in treating these two causes of offense, namely, in what foods to eat and what holiday celebrations were required, have been the subject of much discussion over the years. There is sometimes the tendency to broaden the lessons taught in the exhortations to the Romans and Corinthians to cover a whole host of perceived instances of offense. We will try to avoid this snare by focusing solely on the general principles that the apostle Paul was trying to teach brethren and sisters through the ages. I will outline them as follows:

- (1) The one who is offended is a *weak* brother or sister: "But he who is weak eats *only* vegetables" (Rom 14:2, NKJV). And "...their conscience being *weak* is defiled" (1Co 8:7).
- (2) The *strong* brother or sister is not to press the righteousness of his or her cause, lest it destroy the weak. Addressing the *strong* brother Paul asks, "But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother?" (Rom 14:10, NKJV). And "Beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak" (1Co 8:9).

While it is unlikely that we would get offended over someone being a vegetarian, or even someone deciding to celebrate a Jewish holiday, the general principles still apply to a myriad of possible things that can cause offense between brethren and sisters. It is also certain that sometimes we will be the *strong* party and other times the *weak*, since we all have different sensitivities depending on the issue! Whenever I am faced by a situation where I feel offended I try to remember the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ:

"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt 5:44, NKJV).

If we take this approach to whatever has been said or done to us, we can never be the offended weak brother or sister. Conversely, when we are dealing with brethren and sisters, it helps to be aware that not all have the same “thick skin” that we may have. This may be especially true of those younger in the Truth, ones newly baptized, or members brought in through public preaching who come from non-Christadelphian backgrounds. In these situations we are dealing with lambs in our flock and it behooves us to nurture the little ones, bearing in mind that our Lord said:

“It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones” (Luke 17:2, NKJV).

The apostle Paul describes the type of character we should have, in dealing with each other, in words far superior to any I could possibly write:

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all” (1Th 5:14,15, NKJV).

(Lord willing, next: A fig tree grows in Brooklyn)

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, Michigan)

Note:

1. The two-drachma tax was the annual tax required of every male 20 years of age and older for the upkeep of the Temple (Exod 30:13; 2Ch 24:9; Neh 10:32).

Special Invitation

For many years, unity discussions have been taking place with Churches of God of the Abrahamic Faith. In the interest of promoting friendship and mutual understanding between our respective communities, we print the following invitation:

*You, your family and friends are invited to the
32nd annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 21-27, 2008.*

Main Speakers:

*Bro. John Pople — “Powerful Lessons Hidden in Mysterious Scenes”
Bro. Scott Tennant — “Micah’s Message to the Modern World”
Bro. Kyle Tucker — “Comparing Spiritual Things with Spiritual”*

*Contact Bro. Brad Rek 330-609-6957 or lisarek8@cs.com
Also visit CGAF.org for additional information
and online registration*

History

Helen Shiells — A true daughter of Sarah



Gold! That simple cry heard around the world ushered in a year that permanently changed the history of California. On January 24, 1848, gold was discovered near Sacramento, setting off a rush that would eventually flood the state with 300,000 fortune seekers. A few months later in that same year, a young woman in Scotland found something more valuable to her than all the gold unearthed in California. Her name was Helen Shiells; she and her family would one day have a large impact on Ventura County, California, and the Christadelphians who lived there.

On an October evening in 1848, she sat in the Waterloo Assembly Rooms in far-away Edinburgh, Scotland, listening intently to a man with a long black beard as he proclaimed his beliefs. The man was Bro. John Thomas, and the things that he said about the Bible captured her attention like nothing she had ever heard before. What she discovered that night would change her life in just as an extraordinary way as the discovery of gold would change California. Barely past her 27th birthday, Helen Shiells would dedicate the rest of her life to the truth that had been proclaimed to her that evening.

The young Scottish woman was not the only one impressed by what John Thomas had to say in Edinburgh in 1848. His powerful addresses there, and in Glasgow the month before, led to the request that he put his beliefs in writing. Out of those requests came *Elpis Israel*, a Christadelphian standard still read today. Helen Shiells would later encourage her friend Robert Strathearn to read the book, and he would be moved by it to be baptized into Christ. Helen continued to share the gospel with everyone with whom she came in contact all through her life, and would be responsible for bringing at least ten men and women to baptism.

The early years

Helen's own baptism had occurred fully 16 years before the name Christadelphian was coined in 1864. She was actively living her faith and attending fraternal gatherings as early as the 1850s. In an article in *The Christadelphian Magazine* entitled "One Hundred Years Ago", written in 1957, Helen is listed as one of three visitors at the 1856 Edinburgh gathering. This vibrant sister was first mentioned in *The Christadelphian Magazine* in 1868, when editor Robert Roberts wrote of visiting her and mentioned her influence on Robert Strathearn.

"Sept. 5 permitted of a pleasant drive for several miles by the seashore, in the company of Bro. Strathearn, on a visit to Harelaw, where Sis. Shiells lives, to

whom Bro. Strathearn owes, in a great measure, the happy circumstance of his enlightenment in the truth.” Roberts also wrote, “Sis. Shiells... possesses an unusual amount of intelligence and excellence of spirit. For many years she has stood alone in the profession of her faith, and the prospect is that she will be still further tried in this respect, but her faith fails not. She has been for years an encouraging instance of faithfulness in small things.” Bro. Roberts’ words concerning Helen’s faithfulness and isolation would be echoed a number of times over the next 40 years of her life.

Leaving Scotland for America

Less than ten years after Robert Roberts’ commendation of her in *The Christadelphian*, Helen Shiells’ strong faith would be severely tested. The first blow came in 1866 when she tragically lost her 12-year-old daughter Margaret. Five years later grief struck again when her husband Francis was killed in a farming accident. And just one month after that, while she was still mourning her husband’s death, her 25-year-old son John would also die. In an effort to deal with her losses she decided to leave Scotland and emigrate to America.¹ Helen’s grief influenced her to leave her native country, but her choice of California as a new home was motivated by her desire to be near one of her children. Helen’s first child, Jane Rosenberg, was living in the small town of Carpinteria, just south of Santa Barbara, California. Jane’s was most likely the first Christadelphian baptism in California; she was immersed in Santa Barbara in 1870.² Jane’s husband Benton Rosenberg, who performed the baptism, would later become a Christadelphian as well.³ In 1872, Helen sailed for California to be with the only one of her seven children who would take on the name of Christ.

**Picture of Sis.
Jessie Rutherford
taken near the
end of her life**



Just prior to her coming to California, Helen had witnessed a baptism in Scotland that also meant a great deal to her. Helen’s many years of preaching to her friend Jessie Rutherford were finally paying off. Sis. Shiells had the following to say about the baptism: “You will be glad to hear that Mrs. Rutherford has embraced the truth and is

going to put on the saving name in a few days. It is a great joy to me. I have known her 19 years, and have tried hard to get her to see the truth, but I was afraid it was water thrown on the ground. I began to despair, but the seed has taken root, for which I thank the Lord. How longsuffering He is. How many years I read to her and implored her to taste and see how good the truth was. You may guess my joy when she sent for me and told me she understood and believed, and loved the truth and wanted to be baptized.”⁴

For the past 130 years the Rutherfords have been a well-known Christadelphian family in Southern California.

Newly baptized Jessie Rutherford and her family joined Helen on the long and dangerous journey to California. Also in the group was another Christadelphian, Helen Shiells' blind sister, Charlotte Lamb. Rounding out the company of travelers were Helen's children, William and Lilius. Before the group left Scotland, the Harelaw Ecclesia had a well-attended "Godspeed" meeting to wish them well.

A home in California

Helen Shiells became part of the small ecclesia in Santa Barbara in the early 1870s that included Robert Strathearn, Isabella Strathearn, Charlotte Lamb, Jessie Rutherford, Jane Rosenberg, and a Bro. and Sis. Fisher. All of these early California Christadelphians had emigrated from Scotland. Much of the heritage that is enjoyed by Christadelphians in California today was made possible by those who moved here from other countries and states, particularly Scotland and Texas.

The Santa Barbara area was Helen Shiells' first home on arriving in California, but in 1884 she and her son James (who had emigrated to California in 1869) left the area for the Santa Clara River Valley. They homesteaded near the town of Fillmore, just on the other side of the hills north of the present day Simi Hills ecclesia.⁵ Two years prior to this the Strathearn family had also moved to this same area. The Strathearns and Shiells had remained close, and it is likely that the Shiells moved there to be near the Strathearns. At any rate, this move would turn out to be a momentous one for the Shiells family: oil ("black gold") would be discovered on their property, eventually making the family wealthy.

About this time they were joined by the first Brinkerhoff Christadelphians, Henry and Jessie, who had been brought to the truth by Robert Strathearn. In 1884 also, John and Elizabeth Reith became Christadelphians through the efforts of Helen's nephew, Bro. John Armstrong, who had recently emigrated from Scotland. It seems that Helen Shiells had a connection to virtually all the brothers and sisters who lived in Ventura County in the 1880s. Helen was mentioned often in *The Christadelphian Magazine* in those years, and always in glowing terms similar to those used by Robert Roberts 20 years earlier.

By the end of the 1880s the number of Christadelphians in California, while still small, was beginning to grow. Besides the seven brothers and sisters in Ventura County, there were 14 members in the Pomona Ecclesia, twelve in San Diego, eight in San Francisco, and a handful in Santa Barbara and Stockton.⁶ With the exception of Stockton, all of these cities have ecclesias today.

In an 1886 letter to *The Christadelphian Magazine*, Bro. Edward Greene (Robert Strathearn's first American convert) had the following to say about Helen: "She is one of our 'bright and shining lights,' and has been instrumental in bringing several of us to see the light!" Her readiness to preach was well known; in 1897 Sis. Elizabeth Reith noted that Helen Shiells "takes pleasure only in things pertaining to the truth. She has been the means of bringing many to the knowledge of the truth, as taught by Dr. Thomas. Surely this is a great honor." Ten brothers



James Shiells stands in front of the home in the hills of Fillmore that was used as a meeting place by Ventura County Christadelphians in the late 1800s.

and sisters had met at the Shiells' home in the hills above Fillmore to break bread, some coming from as far away as Santa Barbara, 60 miles to the west. Meeting to remember Christ at

her home had become a yearly affair, as Sis. Reith would report in *The Christadelphian* in 1898, "Again we have been permitted to hold our annual gathering at the mountain home of our dear Sis. Shiells, at Fillmore, Cal. It is a great joy to our sister to have us gather there, and to us to go. We desire keeping them up till the Lord calls us to the greater and final gathering." Sadly this old home that meant so much to the early brothers and sisters in Ventura County burned to the ground in 2003, during a wildfire that scorched the hills around the current Simi Hills Ecclesial Hall.

The isolation noted by Bro. Roberts in 1866 continued to be a part of Helen's life in America. Sis. Reith also wrote, "Our sister lives here quite isolated from any of like faith, except when one like myself has spare time to visit her." That same year, Helen Shiells herself had this to say about her life in America: "Sis. Reith wrote to you a while ago, telling you that we had a meeting, which is a treat to me, I am so isolated. I seldom see a brother or sister, perhaps once a year. I was wondering when I read in Bro. Roberts' voyage that he felt so lonesome, how he would like to be practically alone for over forty years, as I have been. How thankful I am to our Father in Heaven for all the helps I get with *The Christadelphian* and other books to understand His precious word. I often wonder where I would have been drifting by this time if it had not been for dear Bro. Roberts' faithful adherence to the word of God... I was one of Dr. Thomas's first converts when he was first in Scotland. I am not lonesome, [since] I have nearly all our beloved brother's books."

In 1895 Bro. Cyrus Lewis (who lived in Redlands, California) would help ease her isolation, spending two weeks at the Shiells home in Fillmore. He wrote, "Last fall I took a tour through Ventura County, visiting isolated brethren and sisters. The first I met was Sis. H. Shiells, near Fillmore Station, a true daughter of Sarah, ready to lodge strangers, wash their feet, or do anything she can for the least of God's children. She resides with her son [James] who is a kind man also ready to entertain any who may call, but not in the faith [that is, James was not a Christadelphian]. Sis. Shiells is intelligent and strong in the truth. Being isolated,

she enjoyed very much a visit from one of like precious faith. I stopped with them two weeks, and breaking of bread each first day was enjoyed very much.”⁷

The Fillmore depot as it would have looked when the Shiells family picked up Bro. Lewis in 1895.

The Fillmore depot has been remodeled and restored, but is still standing today.

In the late 1890s Helen would once again lose many of those who were close to her. In 1896 Robert Strathearn, her



daughter Jane Rosenberg, and fellow Ventura County resident Bro. John Reith all died. In 1898 her granddaughter Sis. Ada Olsen died in San Francisco before the young woman had reached her thirtieth birthday. San Francisco, with 35 members,⁸ was the largest ecclesia in California by this time, while Pomona was the largest in Southern California with 24 members.⁹

About this same time, Bro. Robert and Sis. Marion Stocks moved to nearby Moorpark, California. In 1902, Sis. Stocks, writing to *The Christadelphian Magazine* from Somis, California, mentions breaking bread with Sis. Shiells in a memorial service that included Robert Stocks, Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff, and Charlie Seagoe. The difficulty of travel in those early days meant relative isolation for many of the early California Christadelphians. This is highlighted by Marion Stocks' statement that a Sis. Baker living in Santa Paula was "isolated" even though Sis. Shiells lived only about 10 miles from Santa Paula and Sis. Stocks was about 15 miles away.

Sis. Elizabeth Greene had this to say about Sis. Shiells in the 1905 Christadelphian: "Though most of us are in isolation, we manage to get together occasionally, as we did on July 30 at the home of our dear Sis. Helen Shiells, who, though past 84, is still able to contend for the truth as it is in Christ. With few exceptions the most of us have been brought to the truth through her faithfulness. Long may she be spared to work for the Master."

Helen Shiells would be spared from death for only three more years. She spent the last year of her life in Santa Barbara with her widowed daughter Lilius, who had traveled to America with her so many years before. Helen would be buried in the Goleta Cemetery near Santa Barbara, where a large gravestone still proclaims the faith of this lovely sister in Christ. Her death would also mark the end of Christadelphians in Ventura County for 70 years. A few years before she died,

the last of this hearty group of brethren, the Brinkerhoffs, the Greenes, and the Stocks, moved to the Los Angeles area.

The Shiells family

Two of Helen's granddaughters shared Helen's faith, becoming Christadelphians after the Rosenberg family moved from Santa Barbara to the San Francisco area in the late 1800s. Helen's daughter, Sis. Jane Rosenberg, died as a member of the San Francisco Ecclesia in 1896.¹⁰ My great-grandfather, James Cheetham, Recording Bro. of the San Francisco Ecclesia, had this to say about Jane Rosenberg: "She was quiet, gentle, and much respected and loved amongst us; we miss her very much."¹¹ Two of Jane's daughters (Helen Shiells' granddaughters) were baptized the same year Jane died. One of them, Ada Olsen, died in 1898, at only 29 years of age. My great-great grandfather, Bro. William Clark, who had emigrated to San Francisco from Glasgow, Scotland, in 1879, spoke at Sis. Olsen's funeral.¹²

The Shiells family would eventually become very well known in Ventura County. In fact, in a book entitled *The History of Ventura County*, the author says, "Among the prominent families of Ventura County, the members of which have played well their part in its development and in the public affairs of their communities, none takes precedence over the Shiells family."

Helen's sons, James and particularly William, became very prominent citizens of Fillmore, California. In 1884 the two of them, along with Helen, purchased 1200 acres near Fillmore. They originally raised animals there, but later also planted oranges, lemons, and walnuts. They were doing very well financially as farmers, but in 1910, two years after Helen died, their income would be multiplied many times. That was the year they leased 880 acres of their property to the Montebello Oil Company. This oilfield was said to be one of the richest in California at the time. In 1916 they were reported to have "a magnificent income". They used this income to purchase more land in California and Arizona. In a book about famous families in California, it was said, "The brothers own an immense amount of valuable property in different sections of Southern and Central California."¹³

Unfortunately, neither of these men became Christadelphians, instead becoming deeply involved in the Masons and politics. Today, the land the Shiells homesteaded in Fillmore is still known as Shiells Canyon and is still producing oil. The town of Fillmore also named a park and a street after the Shiells family.

In brief repose

Sis. Shiells died in Christ in 1908, shortly after the death of her first convert, Jessie Rutherford. Sis. E.B. Cornwall wrote the following to *The Christadelphian Magazine* at the time of Helen's death: "Our dearly-beloved sister, Mrs. Helen Shiells, fell asleep, June 13, 1908, aged 86 years. She came to a knowledge of the truth in Scotland 52 years ago [actually 60 years earlier], coming here in 1872, 36 years ago, along with Sis. Rutherford, whose death is recorded in the June issue of *The Christadelphian* (aged 87), and who was her first convert to the truth. Since then she has helped eight others to put on the Saving Name — probably many more, directly and indirectly. She has been a subscriber to *The Christadelphian* since its

beginning, and has read all the works of Dr. Thomas and R. Roberts, but her Bible was her daily source of comfort... She will long be remembered by many as a noble advocate of the truth, and [for] her large-heartedness to all, especially brethren and sisters. Those of her home country, who came here in search of health, she tenderly nursed, among whom was her nephew, our dearly-loved Bro. John Armstrong, who died more than 20 years ago (late of Edinburgh, Scotland).

“But now we sorrow not as those who have no hope, but believe that her next moment of consciousness will be in the presence of our Lord and Master, when he returns to raise his sleeping ones to everlasting life. She leaves a family of three sons and widowed daughter, at whose home she died; also numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren, all of whom will miss her helping hand and wise counsel; but none mourn her loss more than the writer, who has been greatly comforted by her when suffering from severe family affliction and bereavement; [she was] ever reminding me that our light affliction, which is but for a moment (comparatively), worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Amen.”¹⁴

Sis. Shiells’ obituary was published on the front page of the Ventura County Free Press. The article had the following to say about her: “She was a strong woman, physically and mentally, as befits those from Scotia’s rugged shores, until a few weeks as active as many women a half century younger... She was a woman of deep religious feeling, a great student of the Bible, which she had read times without number, a Christadelphian in doctrine.” The obituary also mentioned that people had come from as far away as Los Angeles (brothers and sisters from the Los Angeles Ecclesia, no doubt).

Helen Shiells was buried in the Goleta Cemetery near Santa Barbara. Sis. Shiells is still preaching today, as her grave is marked with a large headstone that states:



“Here lies in brief repose
Waiting

the return of the Lord
from heaven

Helen Shiells

1821-1908

Who for 60 years held the faith of
the Christadelphians and died in hope of
a resurrection to life eternal”

A few months ago Helen’s great-grandson, William Shiells Kimble, visited the Santa Barbara Ecclesia in an effort to find out who the Christadelphians were, and why they meant enough to Helen to be mentioned on

her gravestone. He has since learned that not only did the Christadelphians mean a great deal to Helen, but that she meant a great deal to them as well.

While Helen's life was not an easy one, it was a resounding success as she influenced so many others through the faith that she lived. Just as her life was changed by what she learned in Scotland in 1848, the lives of many early brothers and sisters in Southern California were changed by knowing Helen. This remarkable woman truly was a daughter of Sarah and an heir of the promises to Abraham.

Gordon Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

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"One thing we must get clear in our minds is that the fruit is of the Spirit, [but] not a gift of the Spirit. The qualities that make up the fruit are not conferred by the Holy Spirit. Believers have never had the fruit of the Spirit bestowed upon them as they once had the Spirit gifts. If that were to happen it would make nonsense of believers' probations, the whole point of which is to instill these qualities into their characters.

"To have one's character suddenly and miraculously changed by the Holy Spirit (presumably at baptism, or shortly after) would make all the warnings and exhortations of the New Testament about failure a complete waste of Bible space.

"With supernaturally changed characters we would never need to be told what to do and what not to do; it would come naturally. No one would ever leave the Truth. The very notion of God's reprogramming us for righteousness not only flies in the face of Christian experience (meaning it doesn't happen), but it's contrary to the way God has historically dealt with us. God wants our freewill response. And love, the first (and probably the whole) of the fruit of the Spirit, is impossible to program into someone.

"The fruit of the Spirit was never a gift of the Spirit to alter us regardless of our own efforts and intentions. Even those powers that were gifts of the Spirit never made the first century believers righteous. They still had problems and failed" (Colin Attridge, The Fruit of the Spirit).

Reflections

The Prince Returns

A lovely view of the city, isn't it? This is your first trip here? Well, you have a great deal to see, for we have an extraordinary country.

I have seen the sun rise over the Nile and set over the vast deserts to the west. I know where the papyrus grows, waiting to be used by some priest for writing material or by some artisan for mats, ropes or sandals. I have traveled to the tombs of the ancient ones, to the city of the dead. I have wandered through Pharaoh's palaces, partaken of his sumptuous feasts, and heard the whisperings of his servants and the secrets of his counselors.

I have seen Pharaoh with his architects and builders scanning the plans for his great pyramid. The inner walls will be covered with scenes of all his battles, his many victories over his enemies. When Pharaoh dies, his treasured possessions will be moved into the innermost chamber where his mummified body will await the time of reunion with his spirit. Images of the gods and goddesses of Egypt will hover over him for all eternity.

Meanwhile I have seen the people prostrate themselves in the very streets wherever Pharaoh travels, for they consider him a god. I have worshipped with him in his fabulous temples and I, too, have prayed to Egypt's countless deities.

I have had my own servants and teachers. My cedar chests overflow with the best garments, rich in color and fabrics. In addition I have perfumes, spices and ointments from distant market places. My life is one of ease, riches and pure luxury.

I have seen the people in their daily struggles — the poor ever poor, it seems, and the wealthy so very wealthy. I have seen the slaves from Nubia in the slave markets. I weep for a society of silenced peoples. And then there is our rich area of Goshen, where a strange people dwell, the Hebrews. I have seen them toiling under their taskmasters. I understand they have not always been slaves, that they are the descendants of a mighty sheik, Israel, from Canaan. But now our nation is nervous that the Goshen area could be ripe for rebellion. So our leaders have taken control of the people there and forced them to build Pharaoh's treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.

The one called Mosheh? Yes, I know him. He grew up within these palace walls, from a toddler to a child to a young man, then an army officer and a brilliant commander of troops. He was educated in all the wisdom of our land. His men would follow him to the ends of our empire if he asked. Some think he could have been next on the throne. Do I sound proud? I suppose I am. You see, he is my nephew, though much older than I. Yet I know there have been whispers about

him — this son of my eldest sister. Some say he is not really my relative, that my sister adopted him as an infant, that he is really Hebrew by birth.

I do miss him! He was always so much in our lives, so much a part of the daily reports. But he angered Pharaoh and fled the country years ago. We were told that he just vanished beyond the Nile. However, Pharaoh's advisers report that he was sighted recently in Goshen — checking on "his family" and the slaves there. How can this be?

But, forgive me, I have rambled on and not even told you my name. I am Bithiah, youngest daughter of Pharaoh.

It has been months, my friend, since we met. I see your busy life has brought you back to our troubled city. Walk with me and I shall tell you of some very unusual events. Some of our people think the very gods are at war in our land. Look around you. This is not the rich land of your previous visit. Our land is ruined. Indeed, it seems there is one God, Yahweh, in control of our land. And He is not a god of Egypt at all!

You remember we talked about Mosheh, who led our armies and who mysteriously disappeared, like the desert winds? Well, we have learned for certain that he is not of Egyptian heritage, but born a Hebrew of Goshen. My eldest sister has told us of finding a baby in a basket floating in the Nile. She told of a little girl watching from the rushes, who offered to find a Hebrew woman to nurse him. Why would a mother put a baby in a basket and set it afloat? I am ashamed to say. My people destroyed many male children of Israel in an attempt to limit their numbers. But she drew this child out of the water — my "nephew" — and she raised him as her own son. All the whispers were quite true.

Yes, he has returned to Pharaoh's court. I have seen him. But he is nothing like his former self. He isn't dressed as an Egyptian prince or general, and he has no titles or servants. He wears plain clothes, carries a shepherd's crook, and is accompanied by a man he calls his brother, Aaron. The two of them, looking like nomads, march right into the palace and the very throne room, as though they have authority to do so! And the demands they make! They claim Pharaoh must let the Hebrews leave Egypt to worship the God of their fathers. We have suffered terribly for refusing to bow to such demands. Have you not heard any reports? Ah, natural occurrences, you say. I think not! If you had been here you would know better, my friend.

Have you ever seen the waters of a river turned to blood? I did. Every living thing in the Nile died — what a stink! Then Aaron stretched his rod over the river and frogs came out. Do you have any idea, my friend, how high a frog can jump? They were everywhere, even in our beds and ovens! Yet Pharaoh refused to let the Hebrews leave. While the stench of dead frogs was still over the land, there was another infestation. This one was gnats — fleas and lice, followed by swarms of filthy flies.

We kept wondering why Pharaoh just didn't let these people go. Clearly the gods of Egypt were no match for the Hebrew God. All the priests' prayers and ceremonies did no good. The misery continued with pestilence on the cattle and then boils on humans and cattle. What agony! Pharaoh promised to release the Hebrews, and then changed his mind. What kind of a man can experience such anguish and still think he and his gods are in command?

Mosheh had told Pharaoh and his officials that they and all Egypt would learn that the earth belongs to the LORD, Yahweh. He even says his God put Pharaoh on the throne so that the Name of the LORD would be proclaimed in all the earth.

What could Egypt's gods do? They are worthless. But Pharaoh still refused to learn his lesson. And so more calamities came to our land: rain, huge hail, thunder and lightning. Then came the scourge of the desert — the locusts. The ground was black with their armies. They left absolutely nothing green. I saw it all. But still Pharaoh refused to let the Hebrews go to honor their God. The latest plague was only last week, my friend. Surely you heard of the thick darkness, like an enormous sandstorm, that swept through our land for three days. We couldn't go anywhere or even see anyone. It was horrifying.

Pharaoh has told Mosheh and Aaron to get out of his sight and they have told him they will never appear before him again. However, there was one last dreadful message of doom, and we wait for it to fall. The firstborn of every household will die. This is because Pharaoh stubbornly refuses to release the LORD's firstborn — these Hebrews — children of Israel. Pharaoh and all Egypt will then surely know the God of the slaves reigns supreme.

I have seen all of this. Now I wonder what else Yahweh will show us.

Bithiah

[Editor's Note: How does Bithiah's story end? We cannot know, but perhaps the "dull, dry" genealogy of 1 Chronicles 4:17,18 gives us a clue.]

Tamar the Upright

The story of Tamar is found in Genesis 38. It is a tale of great inspiration and encouragement for all who love the promise of the covenant. Tamar was the daughter-in-law of Judah. Her name means "palm tree". In the Song of Songs, Solomon describes his beloved wife in many endearing terms, including "Thy stature is like to a palm tree..." (Song 7:7), no doubt indicating her uprightness. As we shall see, Tamar is revealed not only as upright, but as possessing a deep and unquenchable love for the promises of God.

Tamar's first husband Er was slain by the Lord because of his wickedness. Er's brother Onan refused to raise a seed to his slain brother; consequently, the Lord slew him also. Under the principles of God (as solidified in the law of Moses), the land inheritance was virtually equated with the eternal inheritance. If you respected and loved your land inheritance, it suggested that you loved and pro-

tected your eternal inheritance, the coming Kingdom of God on the earth. This is why Abraham surveyed his land inheritance in a very literal way. God told him, “Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it: for unto thee will I give it” (Gen 13:17). Moreover, Naboth and his sons died rather than sell their land inheritance to wicked king Ahab (1Ki 21:3,12-14).

Although we don’t know a lot about Tamar’s background, we can assume she was a Canaanite. Judah took a Canaanite for his wife; probably he took a wife for Er from the Canaanites as well. Evidently Tamar came to love the promised inheritance. When she saw that Judah’s last son, Shelah, was not given to her in order to have a child to preserve her inheritance, she formulated her own plan to lay hold of it. We know the story. Tamar put her very life on the line in order to have a child to preserve her place in the line of promise. She played the harlot with her father-in-law, Judah, to obtain the inheritance and was commended by Judah himself, in his confession: “She is more righteous than I” (Gen 38:26).

Tamar realized that obtaining the land inheritance was equal to inheriting the earth. This lesson provides a powerful exhortation for us to treasure, “Lay hold of” the promise. We are to passionately love the covenant promise of eternal life, which was very much a family issue in the Old Testament and, in its spiritual application, remains so to this day.

The key exhortation is: “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called” (1Ti 6:12). Nothing worth gaining comes easily, as this faithful woman found when she “fought” for her inheritance — valuing it more than life itself. We must do the same.

In the process of time Tamar gave birth to twin sons, Pharez and Zarah. Pharez signifies “a breach”, or “to break forth.” He was given this name because he asserted himself in birth before his twin brother Zarah, whom he supplanted. Thus he is accounted as the natural firstborn of Judah. We point out this fact because of the numerous times in Scripture that the faith of the firstborn child is exceeded and supplanted by the faith of a later child. Examples abound: Isaac over Ishmael, Joseph over his brothers, David over his brothers, Jesus over Adam, and many others.

Of great interest is the fact that Tamar’s son Pharez is given high marks in Ruth 4:11,12. When the people bless Boaz and Ruth they say, “May your house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the children that the Lord will give you by this young woman.” Consequently Tamar not only loved the covenant, but apparently she taught this principle to her sons and Pharez is listed in the line of Jesus (Matt 1:3). Even more remarkable is the fact that at the occasion of the birth of Obed, the son of Ruth and Boaz, the genealogy is picked up beginning with Pharez! Such notable names are mentioned as Nashon, “a prince of the tribe of Judah”, Salmon, the husband of Rahab (and probably one of the spies who searched Jericho), Boaz, Obed, Jesse and David (Ruth 4:18-22).

Thus the Lord preserved the line of the Messiah through a faithful Canaanite woman by means of unusual circumstances. Tamar was essentially a single mother:

we are told that Judah “knew her again no more” after the birth of Pharez and Zarah. Yet that awkward situation did not deter her from instructing her sons in the way of God. We learn that a difficult situation need not prevent us from loving the covenant and teaching it to our children.

We will close with a remarkable list of comparisons regarding the lives of Tamar and Ruth:

- (1) Both Tamar and Ruth bore sons by means of a deliberate and designed attempt to preserve their inheritances.
- (2) Both women incurred risks to gain children.
- (3) Both women were Gentiles.
- (4) Both women were with child by men of an earlier generation (Tamar was Judah’s daughter-in-law and Ruth was married to Boaz, of Naomi’s generation).
- (5) Both sons, Pharez and Obed, are mentioned in the line of the Messiah and appear as men of faith.
- (6) Both sons were conceived through the faith of their mothers.

These wonderful reflections draw our minds to the words of King David, “Marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well” (Psa 139:14).

Ellen Styles (Ann Arbor, MI)

Who is “the Mighty God”? (Isaiah 9:6)

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6).

Who is the child who bears this wonderful name, or names? There can be no real question for any Christian that the final and perfect fulfillment of this prophecy is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, to most orthodox Christians, there is no real question that the names “Mighty God” and “Everlasting Father” can apply to the baby Jesus. Of course, those who know the truth of the Bible on this subject cannot accept such designations at face value. So there must be explanation and exposition, probably delving into the relevant Hebrew words and their usage elsewhere.

Hebrew scholars, who agree generally that the prophecy was (and still is) about a coming Messiah, do not believe:

- (1) that Jesus was the child, or
- (2) that the Messiah, if and when he does come, will be in any literal sense “Mighty God” and “Everlasting Father”.

As Christadelphians, we would disagree with them on Point 1, but nevertheless — since we do agree with them on Point 2 — we can find some real help in their suggested explanations of this verse.

Following the Soncino Books of the Bible, it may be noted that the seeming series of names or titles may all be intended as simply one name or title. An earlier example of such an elongated name is found in the immediately preceding chapter of Isaiah: Maher-shalal-hashbaz (Isa 8:1).

The Soncino commentary suggests that the names or name in Isaiah 9:6 might be read all in one, and only a bit longer than Maher-shalal-hashbaz. A reasonable transliteration would be “Pele-ya’ats-gibbor-el-abi-ad-sar-shalom”. Longer, no doubt, but if we split it between the “el” (“god”) and the “abi” (“father”) we just might manage, with practice, to say it all.

Furthermore, and still following the Soncino commentary, we may suggest that the name be translated:

“The wonderful counselor, the mighty God, IS the everlasting Father OF the prince of peace.”

Some of these same “names” are combined elsewhere in Isaiah. For example, the LORD God is referred to as “Wonderful/marvelous (‘pele’) counselor/planner (‘etsah’, derived from ‘ya’ats’)” (Isa 25:1; 28:29).

Thus, when the whole “name” is read in reference to another person, it should not be inferred that the child — in this case, the Messiah — possesses all these attributes, but rather that he is understood to act for the Being, Yahweh Himself, who does possess these attributes.

In the same vein, the later Jewish Study Bible, published by the Jewish Publication Society, adds the following:

“Semitic names often consist of sentences that describe God; thus the name Isaiah in Hebrew means ‘The LORD saves’; Hezekiah, ‘The LORD strengthens’; in Akkadian, the name of the Babylonian king Merodach-baladan (Isa 39:1) means ‘the god Marduk has provided an heir.’ These names do not describe that person who holds them but the god whom the parents worship. Similarly, the name given to the child in this verse does not describe that child or attribute divinity to him, contrary to classical Christian readings of the messianic verse.”

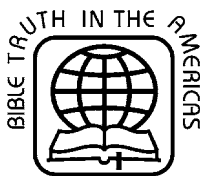
Something like this might be useful in understanding, and explaining, what can often be a “wrested Scripture”, Isaiah 9:6.

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Sleeping at the Foot of the Ladder

*Alas, we make
A ladder of our thoughts,
Where angels step —
But sleep ourselves at the foot.
Our high resolves look down upon our slumbering acts.*

C.A. Ladson



Bible Mission News

Bahama Update

We are pleased to report another visit by CBM Canada workers to help conduct Learn To Read the Bible Seminars with the ecclesia and interested friends on both New Providence and Grand Bahama.

Bro. Nathanael Abel and Bro. Dave Styles led the seminars on New Providence on February 26-28. Three sessions resulted in an average attendance of 31 per session.

On Grand Bahama two sessions resulted in an average of 18 per session. Six attended the memorial meeting on Saturday.

Ted Hodge, Jr.

Recently Bro. David Styles and I had the opportunity to travel to the Bahamas and present some Bible seminars. We traveled to Nassau first and did three nights of seminars on Genesis (Abraham to Joseph). The turnout for the seminar was good, with about 35 interested friends in all. Sis. Penny brought her entire family to the seminars, and they showed a keen interest in the material. Sis. Penny also did a wonderful job organizing and providing all the refreshments with the help of her daughter Tami. It was so encouraging to see so many people eager to hear God's message. The audience knew their Bibles well and had many insightful comments and questions.

The second phase of the trip took us to Freeport, Grand Bahama. There we looked at the book of Daniel and really focused on the prophecies in Daniel 2, 7, and 8. The group of attendees there were so eager to learn and, even though the material was difficult at times, they really seemed to grasp it. On Saturday, after four hours of seminars, we held a memorial service with the small ecclesia in Freeport. It means so much to this group to have brothers and sisters come and visit them and share the emblems with them. They are working hard to maintain and develop a lightstand in the Bahamas under difficult conditions. Overall, I think the trip benefited David and me as much as it did them. It is a real spiritual boost to preach in an area where people are so receptive and excited about the Bible. Please contact Bro. Ted Hodge for information about these short trips that can be taken and what can be accomplished in such a short time.

Nathanael Abel

Central America

A Visit to Three Countries in Central America

December 22, 2007 – January 8, 2008

El Salvador

The annual year-end conference in El Salvador was attended by around 115 brothers, sisters, young people, and children. Visitors to the conference included two from Quito, two from Mexico, eight from Costa Rica, two from Guatemala, one from Canada, and two from the United States. The event was very well organized by the San Salvador brothers and sisters. Studies were provided for the adults and two groups for the teenagers (younger and older). The fellowship and interaction among the different groups was the outstanding benefit of the conference. For those who had not experienced being with such a large number of brothers and sisters, it was particularly valuable. Those from Guadalajara and Quito made particular mention of this to me.

Costa Rica

Year-end activities were held in the ecclesial hall over the period December 28 through 31. Bro. Dennis Paggi and I shared presenting the studies during this time. The only other visitors were Bro. Jorge and Sis. Carmen from Quito, who thoroughly enjoyed their time with the brothers and sisters. The attendance at all of the events was very encouraging.

The ecclesia of 50 brothers and sisters meets in its own hall in Santa Barbara, just three blocks from the town center. Santa Barbara is 18 kilometers (11 miles) from the capital, San Jose. The small town of 25,000 inhabitants is surrounded by coffee plantations, many of which are being replaced with ornamental plant nurseries. Coffee has been Costa Rica's main export for decades but has now been replaced with more profitable crops and high-tech industries.

Guadalajara, Mexico

The growth that has taken place here since my last visit two years ago was very impressive. The ecclesia has increased from two to 15, with two more close to baptism. The potential for further growth here appears to be very good, with fertile ground amongst the families of the existing members. There was a very good attendance at the four studies presented on "Having the Mind of Christ".

Guadalajara is Mexico's second largest city with a population of over six million in the greater metropolitan area. With a very pleasant climate and friendly people, there is a lot to like in this large city located 540 kilometers (335 miles) northwest of Mexico City.

There is much work to do in preaching the gospel and supporting the existing ecclesia here. May it be the will of our Father to continue to bless the effort here in Guadalajara.

*Gordon Dangerfield
Linkman, Costa Rica*



Inside the Costa Rican ecclesial hall after a Bible class.

Guadalajara and San Diego — Partner Ecclesias

As of November 1, 2007, the Guadalajara, Mexico, and San Diego, California, Ecclesias commenced a partnership program. This program is fully endorsed by the CBMA, and will provide mutual encouragement for both ecclesias through the interchange of information by means of letters/emails, ecclesial newsletters, photo displays of ecclesial events, etc. Members of the San Diego Ecclesia are also willing to travel to Guadalajara for short-term visits. The brothers will give exhortations, Bible classes, and lectures, while the sisters will lead sisters' classes as well as support members and encourage visitors in many ways. The Guadalajara Ecclesia now has 14 members, and the San Diego Ecclesia has a membership of approximately 80. Since the country of Mexico and the state of California are neighbors and the distance between the two ecclesias is relatively short, there should be regular visits during the year, which in the case of most other Latin American ecclesias would be much more difficult. A few of the San Diego members speak Spanish and thus will be able to minister the word without translation. Also, some of the Guadalajara members speak English and will be able to translate talks by the San Diego brothers from English to Spanish. In addition, of course, a great benefit will be the fellowship generated between the two ecclesias.

The first visit undertaken by members of the San Diego Ecclesia to Guadalajara took place in November 2007, from Thursday the 22nd to Sunday the 25th. Bro. Howard and Sis. Pam Schlottman, along with Bro. Martin and Sis. Kathy Owen, supported a variety of ecclesial activities. They were encouraged by the hospitable welcome they received from the members and friends in Guadalajara. Bro. Howard gave a study on serving brethren Friday evening to the brothers in English;

this was translated by one of the local brethren, Gabriel López. Bro. Martin, who has Spanish language abilities, gave the Sunday exhortation on the readings in 2 Timothy; Sis. Mary Mejía of the Guadalajara Ecclesia reviewed the typed Spanish text of the exhortation beforehand. These are two of many examples of the practical mutual assistance that took place in just a few days.

The Thursday evening Bible class, Saturday evening lecture and Sunday activities were attended by between 25 and 30 (members and friends) while eight brothers attended the Friday evening class. Bro. Don Luff was also present on behalf of the CBMA during the visit of the San Diego brothers and sisters, to help introduce the program and give advertised talks.

We commend the San Diego Ecclesia for its initiative, and also for following reasonable protocol, that is, contacting the CBMA first and presenting a proposal for approval. This allowed for coordination of the program by the CBMA so as to achieve what we hope will be maximum benefit for both ecclesias in an orderly, progressive manner. We look forward to God's blessing on this partnership, which has already borne fruit.

Don Luff
Linkman, Guadalajara

Guatemala and Panama — Fellowship and Hospitality

In a recent visit to the ecclesias in Guatemala and Panama, to support them in their weekly ecclesial activities and preaching efforts, we were very much encouraged by the fellowship. Although the ecclesia in Guatemala City and the two ecclesias in Panama (Panama City and Colón) have not increased much in numbers in recent years, all three ecclesias are stable.



Guatemala ecclesial hall

Unfortunately, two of the older brethren of the Guatemala City Ecclesia fell asleep in the Lord last year, leaving the membership at six — four brothers and two sisters. We were pleased to have ecclesial activities on three of the five days we were in this city, in addition to other conversations, Bible readings and phone calls. The brethren are well prepared to carry out the work of the ecclesia. One of the positive aspects for the ecclesia right now is that one brother's daughter is preparing for baptism. Something new for the ecclesia since our last visit is a fresh new appearance to the rental location: the street-face wall has been repainted and clear lettering makes it look very inviting.

Conditions for both ecclesias in Panama have improved during the last year. We were pleased to see that members who had not attended well for some time were out again on a regular basis. The Panama City Ecclesia has also gained three members from the United States. The Colòn Ecclesia regularly has three or four visitors at their meetings.



**Bro. Luis and Sis. Vanessa Sobers
(Colon, Panama)**

We also spent a day with Bro. Jay and Sis. Llori Gibson of the Panama City Ecclesia. Jay's parents, Bro. Noel and Sis. Trudy Gibson, were some of the original missionaries in Panama in the 1950s. Jay, Llori, and I enjoyed a nice evening meal together, but the greatest pleasure was the fellowship of the daily Bible readings that lasted over two hours.

Besides a Bible class and a special lecture at the Colòn Ecclesia Hall, we enjoyed the hospitality of Bro. Luis and Sis. Vanessa Sobers for two days. Luis is a tugboat engineer on one of the big tugboats that push the oceangoing vessels into place before they pass through one of the several locks in the Panama Canal System. He had a few days off work and the three of us enjoyed each others' company.



**Bro. Jay and Sis. Llori Gibson
(Panama City, Panama)**

The climax of our stay in Panama was a joint fraternal, which saw three cars full of attendees from the Colon Ecclesia traveling across the isthmus to the Panama City Hall on the last Sunday. Twenty-one of a possible 24 members were present from the two ecclesias for the breaking of bread, luncheon, and lecture.

The encouragement from these fraternal gatherings is a real boost to these relatively small ecclesias with few brethren in Panama. We felt very uplifted after our visit with the ecclesias in Guatemala and Panama.

Don Luff
CBMA Latin American Committee



Fraternal at Panama City hall; 21 of 24 members were in attendance.

St. Lucia

The following is taken from a report by the Stonells regarding their Caribbean visit earlier this year.

We've just arrived in St. Lucia, after nine days in St. Vincent. We feel our time there was very worthwhile, and there's certainly potential in that area. We hope and pray that others will go and encourage those who are seeking the truth of God's Word.

It was very rainy and quite hot while we were there. The guesthouse, though quite a nice place, had no screens on the windows or doors. We had a mosquito net over our bed, but we couldn't go to bed as soon as it got dark, and we couldn't keep the windows and doors shut. Consequently, we made quite a feast for the little predators of the evening! Some of the houses, such as the place where we stayed last time, are at a higher elevation, where there doesn't seem to be the same problem. The last couple of nights the mosquitoes got inside the net somehow

— we don't know what we were doing wrong. We survived, albeit with quite a few little red bumps on arms and legs; they say it comes with the territory!

We went to see one of my correspondents, named Enold, yesterday. She is a young woman who lives in Troumaca, more than an hour's journey from town by bus. We rode up and down hills, and around a seemingly endless succession of hairpin bends. The horn was in good working order, I can tell you, and it's a good job too, because if anyone had been hurtling toward us at the breakneck speed we were going... well, I wouldn't like to imagine the results. The views were spectacular, though. It really is beautiful, with countless bays of white sands, fringed with palm trees and many hills, and little towns and villages tucked in between, mostly consisting of small houses perched on rocks or the side of hills.

When we finally arrived in Troumaca we had a class lasting more than an hour, with four ladies. One of them fell asleep almost immediately, and started to snore (in her defense, she had told one of the other ladies she wasn't feeling well). The other three, however, were very attentive. One of them, Melva, was very keen and said she had taken the 26-lesson course already and wanted the next course. For some reason I hadn't heard from Enold for a while, but she said she wanted to continue studying. She has taken both the initial course and the 40-lesson course. The third lady, who was Enold's cousin, also wanted to sign up for a course. All in all, we felt it was very worthwhile, despite the lady who snored, and then got up and left during the closing prayer. At least, we couldn't say she was bored with the class, since she didn't hear any of it.

When we got back into the main town, Kingstown, we talked to quite a few people at the market, and many of them asked for a correspondence course. We've had the opportunity to talk to quite a few really friendly people, who have a great respect for God's Word. It's so refreshing!

Robert and Maggie Stonell

Faith at Work

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

The Broughton, Jamaica, Ecclesia has recently embarked on a number of events and activities. As you well know, feeding members is something that, for the most part, we do — and take for granted — in our meeting halls here in the US and Canada. But in certain countries it is much more difficult.

In this case the cost of a refrigerator and stove, at a cost of about \$360 US, would serve the ecclesia well. There is adequate space for these appliances, and there have not been any security risk or history of vandalism at this location or in the surrounding area.

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

CBMA/CBMC Publicity

Thisisyourbible.com Website

We are pleased to announce that, effective June 1, we will be introducing our next generation www.thisisyourbible.com. We've been working on the new site for almost a year now, and we are now satisfied that it will be a successful replacement for its predecessor.

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

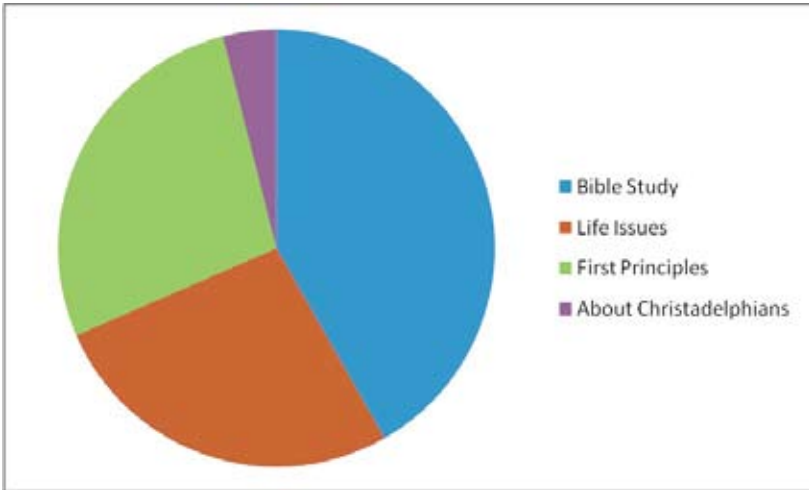
This month we concentrate on the statistics from the "Submit a Question" feature on the website. You can see the questions keep our answering brothers pretty busy, although since the questions fall into roughly the same categories, they are beginning to build libraries of answers. The following chart and graph demonstrate the types and numbers of questions since the website began. Have we reached this many people any other way recently?

Questions submitted to www.thisisyourbible.com

Report Period	Bible Study	Life Issues	First Principles	About Christadelphians	Total Questions
2006	160	101	111	12	384
2007	819	564	528	61	1,972
January 2008	65	28	48	9	150
February 2008	57	20	47	15	139
March 2008	59	29	32	13	133
April 2008	53	46	49	9	157
Total	1213	788	815	119	2935

Distribution of Question Types 2006 to April, 2008

Bible Study:	41%
Life Issues:	27%
First Principles:	28%
About Christadelphians:	4%



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
- 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

Why it is called "good news"!

"It is not historical scholarship which is needed for the understanding of Paul, and neither is it the insight of genius. It is despair. Paul did not preach for scholars, not even for philosophers; he preached for sinners. He had no gospel except for men whose mouths were stopped, and who were standing condemned at the bar of God" (James Denney).

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

(For tax ID numbers please contact the Editor)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

News & Notices

BEDFORD, NS

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

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

Ronald A. A. Hill

BRANTFORD, ON

With sadness we report that our dear Sis. Jean Tackaberry fell asleep peacefully on March 25, 2008, at the age of 93. We will miss her in many ways. Jean was baptized on July 8, 1931, in Brantford, ON. She married Bro. Harvey Clarence Tackaberry of Lions Head on April 13, 1946. During the war Harvey was sent to CO Camp where he was a cook. He fell asleep on February 12, 1986, at the age of 80. Jean taught Sunday school for many years in the George Street hall. Memory verses were a staple of the classes, followed by Bible-based stories and lessons. Jean had one child, Sis. Patricia Jennings, and two baptized grandchildren, Michael and Allison.

During March and April we held a series of five special lectures at the local university campus on first principles and prophecy; we were blessed with a number of visitors each evening. God willing, in May we are planning a special effort on the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel, with an exhibition and presentation by our Bro. Paul Billington titled "Israel and the Bible: A Challenge to the World." We are also having a good response to our first principles seminar which began last fall, with an average of 10 in attendance each week. We pray our Heavenly Father will continue to bless the witness of our lightstand in Brantford.

Daniel Billington

CRANSTON, RI

With sadness, yet in hope, we report the falling asleep in Christ of our Bro. Douglas McArthur on March 2, 2008, and our Sis. Christine Calise, the wife of Bro. Ray Calise, on April 16, 2008.

It is, however, with joy that we announce the baptisms of two of our young men, MICHAEL MATTESON on March 16, 2008, and MICHAEL PETRARCA on April 13, 2008.

We have received in fellowship from the Treasure Coast, FL, Ecclesia, Bro. Dennis and Sis. Tiffany Virguetty. Also, we have transferred to the South Florida Ecclesia Bro. Dwane and Sis. Yolanda Ford.

The following brothers and sisters are no longer walking in the Lord with us: Cole Chilinski, Mark Ficocelli, Barbara Machado, Mary Tucker, Alicia Waters, Beverly Wilkinson, and Jack Rocha.

We thank the following visiting brethren who took part in our spring series of Bible talks on the theme “The Gospel of Your Salvation: the Potential To Save Lives”: Bre. Jim Dillingham (Hudson, NH), Stephen Davis (Stoughton, MA), and Jim Harper (Meriden, CT). Our brothers also brought us the word of exhortation and led the adult Sunday school class.

We have been blessed with the fellowship and ministrations in the Word with Bro. Jonathan Burke and his sister wife, Diane, of the Taipei, Taiwan, Ecclesia. Bro. Jonathan led the CYC Bible Study Weekend here at Cranston. There were 80 CYC members and young adults, including thirty of our own young people. He also gave a public Bible talk midweek, before conducting the Spring Bible Study on the following weekend at the Westerly, RI, Ecclesia.

Paul Haughton is the Recording Brother. His address is 148 Missouri Drive, Warwick, RI 02886-8119; telephone is: 401-739-3410, and email is: pnhaughton@cox.net.

Paul Haughton

GEORGETOWN, GUYANA

In February we shared with the family the loss of Mrs. Semple, the wife of Bro. Clifford and mother of Bro. Anthony.

The ecclesia celebrated with Sis. Eleze Bailey her fiftieth birthday through a thanksgiving service after the memorial service in New Amsterdam, Berbice.

In March, we attended the Guyana Bible School with Bre. David Styles and Matthew Tovell as speakers. It was an uplifting and rewarding experience for all with excellent talks.

We learned that Bro. Charles Bunyan had fractured his leg. We benefited from the visit of Bro. Seechan and Sis. Shammie Autar, who fellowshipped with us for a few weeks prior to leaving for the USA where Bro. Seechan was to receive medical care. We welcomed Bro. Clive and Sis. Christine Drepaul from the USA for a five-week visit. Bro. Clive and Sis. Christine devoted their visit to fellowshipping with the brethren in Berbice.

In April, we celebrated with Sis. Amy Washington her one hundred and first birthday with a thanksgiving service at her residence. We reminisced with her about life in the truth and how she came into contact with the Christadelphians. Sis. Amy remains an inspiration to us all for her long life naturally and spiritually.

Anthony Semple

JASONVILLE, IN

With sadness we report that Sis. Mary Higham fell asleep in the Lord April 16, 2008, at the age of 96. Sis. Mary was born in Scotland and came to America at the age of seven. She was baptized in Detroit in 1928 at the age of 17, making her a Christadelphian member for over 79 years.

Her late husband, Bro. J. Ashley Higham, was recording secretary at the Detroit, MI, Ecclesia for many, many years. He and Sis. Mary hosted a virtual “Who’s Who” of visiting Christadelphian speakers and lecturers. Later she served the Jasonville, IN, Ecclesia in several capacities, and was the secretary of the Midwest Bible School for several years. She was the mother of Sis. Lois Plew, with husband, Ted, and Bro. James Higham, with wife, Dale (Ann Arbor, MI). She was also the grandmother of Sis. Rebecka Adams, Sis. Susan Hatch, Bro. Samuel Plew, and Sis. Jessica Brinkerhoff,

and had 10 great-grandchildren, including Bro. Brian Adams, and Sis. Kayte Hatch (Largo, FL).

Ted Plew

SARASOTA, FL

Our ecclesia continues to enjoy the company of our brothers and sisters who are here for the winter, as well as those enjoying a vacation in this area.

In the month of March, we welcomed around the table of the Lord the following: Bro. Clifford Adams (Atwood Lake, OH); Bro. George and Sis. Trudy Bell, Sis. Pat Jennings, and Sis. Dawn Reese (Brantford, ON); Bro. Ralph Coy (North Industry, OH); Bro. Dick and Sis. Kathy Kenneway, and Bro. John and Sis. Priscilla MacAdams (Wachusett, MA); Bro. Gordon and Sis. Edith Macfarlane, and Bro. Shawn and Sis. Marnie Snobelen (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON); Bro. Scott and Sis. Hayley Macfarlane (Cambridge, ON); Bro. Josh and Sis. Tiffany McInturff (Hudson, NH); Sis. Deb Mindorff (Calgary, AB); and Bro. Jamin and Sis. Kate Wigzell (Enfield, South Aust.).

We are grateful to Bre. Cooper, Luff, Snobelen, and MacAdams for their words of exhortation.

James Wilkinson

Kitchener/Waterloo Temporary Change in Location

The Kitchener/Waterloo Ecclesia is changing locations for a few weeks. Our normal hall is undergoing renovations.

Starting June 15, 2008, we will be meeting at the Stanley Park Community Centre at Ottawa and Franklin in Kitchener.

We will probably be there until the end of August.

If anyone has questions, please contact Bro. Paul Brokaw at 519-576-0249; or brokaws@rogers.com.

Paul Brokaw

"We are brothers"

Abram said to Lot, *"Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers"* (Gen 13:8).

"We are brothers." A thousand times since Abraham, and another thousand times since God revived Abraham's faith in these last days, men have become blind to this truth and its deep eternal obligations. Many a wrangle about trivialities of mundane level and many a bickering about spiritual truth of massive unimportance would have been stillborn if only this simple whole-some truth had been written in larger capitals in home and ecclesia.

(Harry Whittaker, Abraham: Father of the Faithful, pp 30,31)

We ought not to make any conditions of our brethren's acceptance with us but such as God has made the conditions of their acceptance with Him.

(Matthew Henry)

Minute Meditation

“Be ye angry and sin not”

It has been said, “Never argue with a fool. He will drag you down to his level and beat you with experience.” Comparable advice can be found in the book of Proverbs, “Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.” It means that when tempted to argue a point with someone who seems to lack good sense, we are more likely to get ourselves into trouble than to win the argument.

In a heated argument it is easy to say things we will later regret. We all would do well to remember the timeless words of advice: Keep your words sweet in case you have to eat them later. Jesus warns, “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give an account for every thoughtless word they utter. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” Many have found to their sorrow that they cannot take back the obscene language or hurtful, hateful things they never meant to say until they became enraged.

We are responsible for what we say — even in an argument when we are upset. Paul admonishes us, “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” Phyllis Diller once quipped that what this kind of advice means is, “Never go to bed angry — stay up and argue it out.” This surely is not what Paul meant. He means that being angry is not necessarily a sin, but that, as we all know, many sins are committed when one gets angry. It is better not to stay angry for long because it can get us into trouble. When the children of Israel made Moses angry he spoke unadvisedly with his lips. As a result he was kept out of the Promised Land.

Anger is only one letter away from danger. When we are angry we must be in control of our words and actions. We are responsible for what we say and do when upset. The best advice is to count to ten and delay reacting. Force yourself to be quiet. Take a walk, have a cold shower, or do whatever it takes to cool off, because it is important to guard how we behave when angry. Will Rogers observed, “People who fly into a rage always make a bad landing.”

Arguing can become a way of life if we are not careful. We can argue with our family, with our coworkers or schoolmates, and with our neighbors. A common trait among young people is to argue with their parents. Sometimes Bible discussions with non-believers become arguments. “Argue” and “anger” have more in common than just beginning with the letter “a”. It is not unusual to become angry in an argument. This anger is never wise. The one who loses his temper in an argument loses more than just his temper. Paul advises Timothy, “A servant of the Lord must not argue. Instead, he must be kind to everyone, teachable, willing to suffer wrong, and gentle in refuting his opponents. After all, maybe God will allow them to repent and to come to a full knowledge of the truth.”

In life, things happen, and everyone gets angry sometimes. Since Paul says that it is possible to be angry and not sin, we must be on our guard when angry so that we do not sin. The Psalmist tells us, "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day." So God gets angry, and we know that God cannot sin. Jesus was angry when he cleared the moneychangers out of the temple, but he did not sin. So it is also possible for us to be angry without sinning, if we keep control of our temper. Don't say or do anything for which we will be sorry later. We need to stop and think before putting our mouth in gear, and our body into action. No doubt Moses wished he could have taken back what he said and did when he struck the rock in a fit of anger.

David counsels us, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." His son Solomon says, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Let us follow this advice by being less argumentative and controlling our anger. As Solomon tells us, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city."

Robert J. Lloyd

"Answer not a fool..."

The book of Proverbs is full of apparent contradictions, in which one statement is set against another with the obvious intention that they should be compared and balanced, for the one is incomplete without the other... One of the more famous and obvious of these paradoxes is given in Proverbs 26:4,5, in which apparently contradictory statements are set side by side: "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool accordingly to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit."

It has many times been the subject of mirth that the writer seems to be contradicting himself. But what kind of intelligent person could unconsciously make such an obvious error? He is clearly challenging our attention, and inviting us to see all round the subject. In the first statement, for example, the effect on the one who responds to the fool by imitating his foolish speech is in view. In the second, it is the effect on the fool himself. If you reply to foolish men in the same vein, you only become "like unto them". Rather, answer as his folly deserves, and you may have some hope of making him see the silliness of his words, and so save him from thinking himself very clever...

Perhaps if we consider a real situation it may help us to see the wisdom of Solomon in action. A believer may sometimes find his faith under attack from an ignorant and belligerent opponent, who confidently affirms things he knows little about, based on false assumptions. As a result the believer may be provoked into an angry and heated response. Yet this would only be descending to the level of the other's foolishness. It would, indeed, be "answering a fool according to his folly." Better far would be a patient response appealing to the reasonableness of faith, without personal venom or injured pride, which may help him to see that he is not really as clever as he thinks.

Len Richardson (Balancing the Book)

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

JUNE

- 7,8 Meriden, CT** Spring study day. Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): "The Life of Jacob". CYC program on Saturday evening
- 14,15 New York Fraternal Gathering** Bro. Stan Isbell (Houston North, TX): "As a Man Thinketh in His Heart"
- 27 - July 5 St. John's, NF, Campaign** Bro. Peter Forbes (Glenfield, UK): "Gospel Cameos in Genesis". For more information and to register online: register.explorethebible.com
Contact person: Bro. Jim Keating 709-753-3578 jkeating@nf.sympatico.ca
- 28 - July 6 Mid-Atlantic Bible School** Shippensburg, PA. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK): "A Holy Nation"; teens: "We Have Found the Messiah"; Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON): "The Fate of the Dead"; teens: "Resurrection of the Dead, Who and When?"; Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA): "The Servant and His Songs (Isaiah 40-66)"; teens: "How Readest Thou?". Information at www.christadelphians.net/MACBS.
(NOTICE: MACBS is fully booked and only taking names for a waiting list.)

JULY

- 4-7 North Battleford and Saskatoon Ecclesias, SK** Shekinah Study Weekend. Bro. Bernard Burt (Coventry, UK): "Lo, I Come — In the Volume of the Book It is Written of Me". For information and registration contact Sis. Laura Jackson, RR#1, North Battleford, SK S9A 2X9 t.Jackson@sasktel.net 306-246-4808
- 6-12 Southwest Bible School** Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry, UK): "Built Together in Him" (adults), "A Holy Nation" (teens); Bro. Maurie Beale (Wanganui, NZ): "Six Lessons from Olivet" (adults), "God's Faithful Young People" (teens); Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "Wonders of the Kingdom" (adults), "What Jesus Really Taught" (teens). Contact Bro. Joe Hill 512-288-0353, 11110 South Bay Lane, Austin, TX 78739, joehill@io.com. Forms at www.planofgod.org/SWCBS/swcbs.htm
- 12-18 Manitoulin Island, ON: THE NEW Manitoulin Family Bible Camp:** Theme: "The Kingdom of God — Past and Future". Bro. Jim Cowie (Brisbane, AU): "Cameos of the Kingdom" (adults), and "Events Subsequent to the Return of Christ" (teens); Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): "David: A Character Study of His Friends and Foes" (adults and teens). For additional information, please contact Bro. Mike Moore michael.l.moore@rogers.com 519-756-0175
- 19-27 Eastern Bible School** Ascutney Mountain Resort, Brownsville, VT. Bro. Stan Isbell (North Houston, TX): "Pillar and Ground of the Truth: Finding our Role in the Body of Christ" (adults), "Samson: Freefalling to Faith" (teens); Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT): "Pentecost Revisited" (adults); "The Time Will Come When They Will No Longer Endure Sound Doctrine" (teens); Bro. Devon Walker (Manchester, UK): "Jesus in Prayer" (adults), "Biblical Soap Operas" (teens). Contact Bro. Peter Dixon peter@tecbs.org
- 20-26 Pacific Coast Bible School** Idyllwild, CA. Bro. Maurice Beale (Wanganui, NZ): "Encounters with the Lord"; Bro. Anthony Whitehorn (Maidenhead, UK): "A Life

Worth Living"; Bro. Jim Styles (Livonia, MI): "Galatians: Salvation by Grace, Not Works of Law". Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065 mail@gelineau.org, or Bro. Gary Patterson garympatterson@hotmail.com, or website www.californiabibleschool.org

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

26-August 3 Midwest Bible School Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "Prophetic Images"; Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON): "The Fate of the Dead"; Bro. James Mansfield (AU): "How the Lord Treated People". Contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 44943 Yorkshire Drive, Novi, MI 48375 248-462-5740 mike.live@gmail.com

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

AUGUST

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

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

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

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

SEPTEMBER

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

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

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

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

OCTOBER

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

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

NOVEMBER

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

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 jlwolfe518@sbcglobal.net. Information at www.texasyouthconference.com

THE CRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 71

July, 2008

No. 6

Editorial — ‘When Lame Men Dance’	263
Exhortation — Touching, <i>George Brown</i>	268
Exposition — Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians:	
(17) Paul Completes His Survey of a Disciple’s Obligations,	
<i>Tom Barling</i>	272
Bible Study — Little Words that Mean a Lot:	
(10) Hope, <i>John C. Bilello</i>	275
Apologetics — The Hard Questions:	
(28) Providence: How Can I Sense God’s Presence?, <i>David Levin</i>	280
Youth: A Baptism in Austin Leander	
A Letter Requesting Baptism, <i>Hannah Hill</i>	285
Hannah: A Name to be Favored, <i>Ethan Joel Bearden</i>	285
Welcome to the Family, <i>Fred Bearden</i>	288
History:	
President Truman and the State of Israel, <i>Adam Booker</i>	289
SPECIAL: Washington’s Battle Over Israel’s Birth,	
<i>Richard Holbrooke, The Washington Post</i>	294
Bible Mission News — La Paz, Bolivia; Lima, Peru; Santiago, Chile;	
Cordoba, Argentina; Thisisyourbible.com; Faith at Work	297
The Stone(s) the Builders Rejected, <i>Louise Birchall</i>	302
News & Notices.....	305
Minute Meditation — How Much Do You Care?, <i>Robert J. Lloyd</i>	308
Coming Events	309

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Editor: George Booker

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What time is it?

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

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

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

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

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

It probably is.

George

Editorial

‘When Lame Men Dance’

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The proper use of tools

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

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

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

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

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

'When unprepared brothers teach'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A simple test

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Where did the Mutual Improvement Classes go?

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

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

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

When a lame man *did* dance

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

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

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

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

George Booker

Notes:

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

Exhortation

Touching

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

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

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

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

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

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

What the Scriptures say

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

Here are some uses of “naga”:

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

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

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

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

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

Touching the sacrifice

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

The touch of healing

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

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

The touch of comfort

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

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

What does Jesus do?

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

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

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

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

The father's touch

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

“When he came to himself” (v 17a).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The touch of cleansing

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

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

Touching his body and his blood

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

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

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

George Brown (Austin Leander, TX)

Exposition

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:

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

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

"Children..."

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

Continuing his instruction to children, Paul says:

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Fathers...”

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

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

“Slaves...”

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

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

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

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

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

"Masters..."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (10) Hope

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ten years later Bro. Robert Roberts wrote:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

surance that our own hopes will ultimately be rewarded:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Notes:

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

Apologetics

The Hard Questions:

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

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

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

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

How do we decide what is providential?

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

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

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

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

Can we determine what is/is not providential?

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

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

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

Asking the right question

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

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

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

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

Properly perceived providence

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

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

Eagles’ wings only?

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

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

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

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

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

(Next: Dealing with Disillusionment)

David Levin (Baltimore, MD)

Take a little honey

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

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

Charles Lamb

Youth

A Baptism in Austin Leander

A Letter Requesting Baptism

Dear Christadelphians,

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hannah: A Name to be Favored

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

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

Other notable names in the Bible include:

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

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

Eli, the high priest comes to her:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hallelujah. Amen.

Ethan Joel Bearden

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

Welcome to the Family

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

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

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

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

Fred Bearden

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

(Hymn 146, James Burns)

History

President Truman and the State of Israel

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

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

Israel, without Christ in the world

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

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

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

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

Despite this, they are still God's people

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

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

Did Truman choose Israel, or did God choose Truman?

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

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

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

Doubts and misgivings

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

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

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

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

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

Opposition to Truman's choice

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

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

"In your mother's womb"

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

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

"I am Cyrus!"

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

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

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

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

The hand of God

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

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

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

Adam Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

SPECIAL: Washington's Battle Over Israel's Birth

*By Richard Holbrooke
The Washington Post
Wednesday, May 7, 2008*

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

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

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

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

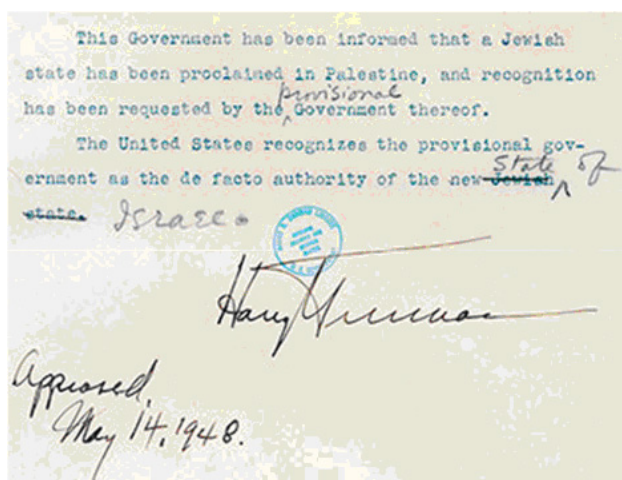
Beneath the surface lay unspoken but real anti-Semitism on the part of some (but not all) policymakers. The position of those opposing recognition was simple — oil, numbers and history. “There are thirty million Arabs on one side and about 600,000 Jews on the other,” Defense Secretary Forrestal told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

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

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

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

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



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

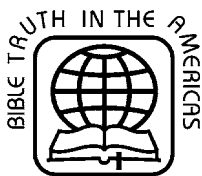
But to this day, many think that Marshall and Lovett were right on the merits and that domestic politics was the real reason for Truman's decision. Israel, they argue, has been nothing but trouble for the United States.

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

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

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Bible Mission News

La Paz, Bolivia — Lectures and Visitors

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

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

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

Lima — The First Lampstand in Perú

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

Santiago, Chile — Braving the Elements

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

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

Córdoba, Argentina — A Promising Future

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

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

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

Thisisyourbible.com Website

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Want to help?

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

*Sis. Jan Berneau
CBMA/CBMC Publicity*

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

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

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

Faith at Work

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

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

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

CBMA/CBMC Publicity

The Stone(s) the Builders Rejected

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

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

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

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

This wonderful find reminded us of the times of Nehemiah:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Louise Birchall (London, ON)

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

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

(For tax ID numbers please contact the Editor)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.
Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

News & Notices

AUSTIN LEANDER, TX

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

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

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

Fred Bearden

BEDFORD, NS

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

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

Ronald A. A. Hill

DETROIT LIVONIA, MI

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

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

Jeffrey Adams

GUADALAJARA, MEXICO

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

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

Don Luff

SEATTLE, WA

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

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

Anthony Ball

TORONTO CHURCH STREET, ON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rick Hill

VERNON, BC

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

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

David Zantingh

Camp Hashawha

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

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

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

David Fertig

Minute Meditation

How Much Do You Care?

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

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

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

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

Jesus tells us, "And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward." James wrote, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." We must care for the needs of others. No matter how well we know our Bibles, when we tell others of our faith, they observe how we treat them and think, 'I don't care how much you know until I know how much you care.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

JULY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

26-August 3 Midwest Bible School Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "Prophetic Images"; Bro. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON): "The Fate of the Dead"; Bro. James Mansfield (AU): "How the Lord Treated People". Contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 44943 Yorkshire Drive, Novi, MI 48375 248-462-5740 mike.live@gmail.com

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

AUGUST

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

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

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

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

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

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

SEPTEMBER

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

7-12 Adult study week: The Bible school with a difference. Wildwood Manor, Ballinfad, ON. Topic: Zechariah 8-14. For information about the workbook or to register please contact Bro. Bob and Sis. Joy Jennings (bobnjoy@vif.com) 519-754-0902 or Bro. Martin and Sis. Lois Webster mjwebster@vif.com 519-442-0544

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

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

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

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

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

OCTOBER

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

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

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

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

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

NOVEMBER

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

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

DECEMBER

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

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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Special Issue THE WOMEN OF MATTHEW 1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(1) Introduction	315
(2) Tamar (Genesis 38)	320
(3) Rahab (Joshua 2; 6)	322
(4) Ruth	329
(5) Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11; 12; 1 Kings 1)	339
(6) Mary (Matthew 1; 2; Luke 1; 2)	346
(7) The Scarlet Thread	355
Appendix: The “Gaal”, or “kinsman-redeemer”	362

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Editor: George Booker

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Harvesting in the Fields
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The Women of Matthew 1

(1) Introduction

We begin with what might seem a rather difficult (and unpromising) section of Scripture. “Difficult” it is surely... what brother, doing a Sunday morning reading, wants to be assigned the genealogy in Matthew 1:1-17?

But “unpromising”? *Never*. It is, as we shall see, one of the most “*promising*” portions of the Bible.

Are genealogies important? Well, they are to me if they are mine. And they are to you if they are yours. And *all* Bible genealogies are important because they deal with God’s people, and their families. And families are terribly important because it is, most often, through them that truths and hopes and values are passed along from one generation to the next.

Genealogies are also important because they serve to establish rights of inheritance. Land, and property, and other assets are passed along from parents to children and grandchildren.

And this genealogy in Matthew 1 is very important because it is the genealogy (at least one genealogy) of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Matthew 1:1: “A record of the genealogy...” (NIV), or... (KJV): “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham...”: Literally, in the Greek, this is “biblos” (Bible) of the “genesis”. A new Genesis, a new beginning, a new “book”: all pointing to a new “creation”, a spiritual creation, that culminates in Jesus Christ!

One of the most marvelous verses in the whole Bible is Matthew 1:1: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”

Think about it for a minute. There it sits, at the very beginning of the New Testament. Anybody can find it. Anybody can remember where it is. No searching the memory banks for a “good verse” to use. No flipping through pages, muttering, “Now where *was* that verse?”

When you think about it, this *is* pretty much *the* beginning for almost everyone except Christadelphians: “I don’t bother much with the Old Testament, of course,” they say. “Too much dull history, and lists of names. The New Testament is all I need.”

“Fine,” we say, “Let’s go there.”

And now that one has begun at the so-called “beginning”, the message of this single verse — at the very crossroads of the Bible, the bridge between Old and New — is breathtakingly simple: Here, at the very beginning, the jumping-off place, of the New Testament, the reader is actually directed to look back at the Old: *‘Halt!’*

Proceed no further until you look back and understand *why* it is important that Jesus Christ *is* the son of Abraham and the son of David.

And right away, the reader can be introduced to the promises — resurrection and eternal life on the earth, the Kingdom of God, and the throne of David, and the Second Coming. Some of the most positive, and fundamental, teachings of the Bible.

And, if you have a memory like a sieve, or can't remember a single thing under pressure, how do you get to those promises? No problem. Alongside Matthew 1:1 in your Bible margin, simply write: (a) Abraham: Gen 12 and 13 (and Gal 3:16,27-29 if you want to be adventurous); and (b) David: 2Sa 7 (and maybe Isa 9:6,7 and Luke 1:31-33).

Now you are off and running!

Overview

Matthew 1 traces Jesus' lineage forward from Abraham, through David. It emphasizes the great Jewish covenants and the progression of God's purpose, finally fulfilled in Jesus, who is the seed of Abraham and the king of Israel.

Both David and Abraham received the promises of God with faith and joy (Matt 22:43; John 8:56). As Bro. Harry Whittaker wrote in *Enjoying the Bible*: "How *they* would have rejoiced to read this 'dull' chapter!"

Think of the analogy of a wealthy family (this analogy is actually used in Galatians 4). All the children receive a generous "inheritance" (or at least their share is laid up in trusts or the like, for their use at a later date). But the children, as they grow up, also willingly and eagerly go to work in the family business, doing their own part to help the family enterprise to grow, and making wise and prudent decisions about the "investments" of the company, not just for themselves, but especially for their own children and grandchildren.

Here in Matthew 1 is a lengthy list of names, a list that can make for very dull reading. But if we make it personal, it comes alive! Read the genealogy as though it were your own family history...

(...And it is: for "if you belong to Christ, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promises": Gal 3:16,27-29.)

When a Bible genealogy is read that way, it is immensely exciting. It is as though you suddenly discover that you are "heir" to a vast fortune (and what a property: the whole world in fact: Gen 13:14,15; Rom 4:13; 2Sa 7:12-16!) through an obscure branch of the family tree that you never knew about before. Just think: if you learned of this possible "inheritance", how excited would you be to read and reread that "dull", "dry" list of names, just to be sure that it did in fact lead finally to you! And then how eagerly and seriously you would go to work at the family's enterprise, knowing that one day it would all belong to you.

There are 42 generations in the list of Matthew 1 — three groups of 14 each.

It is actually an artificial, or contrived, number. Several generations are omitted to arrive at the total of 42 (check out the marginal references at v 8, for example: three generations are skipped there alone).

So the first question is: Why 42?

- (a) There were 42 stations/camps in the wilderness (Num 33), pointing to a complete journey from “Egypt” (the land of darkness) to “Israel” (the land of promise).
- (b) Prophetically, there are 42 periods of tribulation and affliction (time, times, and half a time equals 12 months plus 24 months plus 6 months, or 42 months) (Rev 11:2; 12:6,14; 13:5; and cp. Dan 12:7,11,12), leading up to the coming of the Kingdom!

So it looks as though 42 represents a full and complete cycle, from death to life, from exile to the kingdom, from darkness to light, and in this case especially from the first great promise to the final, wonderful fulfillment of that promise:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad!” (John 8:56).

Second question: Why three groups of 14?

- (a) First of all, and simply, 14 days doubled was the lunar cycle, the waxing and waning (the growth and the decline of the moon’s light). So 42 days would be 1 1/2 cycles, thus: (1) the first 14 “days” (waxing, to fullness): up to David, the Kingdom of God given; then (2) the next 14 (waning, decline): from David to Jeconiah, the Kingdom of God taken away; and finally (3) from Jeconiah to Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God restored, and increased to its fullness again.
- (b) One other significant 14: On the 14th day of the first month, the Passover was slain (Exod 12:6). The last and greatest king of Israel, Jesus himself, must first be the Passover lamb, slain on the 14th day.

Another point: Even though there are supposed to be 42 generations in this list, they simply cannot be found.

Let us take a look: Start with v 2, and count. If Abraham is #1, then we begin to count: Isaac #2, Jacob #3, etc. Then David (at the end of the first cycle) is #14. So far, so good.

Now start the second cycle. But you can’t count David again. He was #14; he can’t be #15 also. So Solomon must be #15. Then counting, we come to Jeconiah (at the end of the second cycle), who is #28. Still okay.

Then we start the third cycle. But you can’t count Jeconiah again either. He was #28; he can’t be #29 too. So Salathiel, or Shealtiel (NIV), must be #29, and we continue counting. Shealtiel is #29, and then we count again, and — here’s the surprise — Jesus is #41!

I’m fairly certain I (we) didn’t make a mistake. We didn’t leave anyone out, nor did we count extraneous names, or count anyone twice. Apparently there are only 41 generations. What do we make of this?

So, how does Matthew (the inspired writer of this gospel) arrive at 42? A couple of possible answers:

(1) Jesus is 41st, and Christ is 42nd, being “born” twice, the second time being his “birth” from the tomb.

Or, even better...

(2) Perhaps “Jesus” alone is #41, and the multitudinous “Christ” is the 42nd and last generation, the “seed” of Isaiah 53:10,11, and the “generation” of Psalm 22:31 — all of those believers given life through him!

Thus “All of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **And if** you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed [Matt 1:1,2], and heirs according to the promise!” (Gal 3:27-29). This is your genealogy too!

How can this be that we all are a part of Jesus’ genealogy — and heirs to all the promises that were fulfilled through him?

The answer is also here, in Matthew 1, this time vv 20,21 — where an angel of the LORD tells Joseph in a dream: “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus [Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means “He who will save”!] because... **he will save his people from their sins.**”

This profound statement comes at the end of the genealogy, very significantly. We have seen a brief list of “his people”. We are being reminded that (whatever their sins, and they were many!) **they**, Jesus’ ancestors (men **and women**) will be saved from **their** sins. And they will be saved through the sacrifice of their descendant.

This redemptive work of Jesus Christ would be efficacious (effective, and powerful) for those who come after, those who are baptized into his name, thus becoming the greater spiritual “seed of Abraham”. This redemption is so powerful that its influence will reach back into time, to the very beginning, to all those men and women (ancestors and otherwise) who looked forward in faith to the One who was to come, the Messiah. They believed that, when he finally came, he would be one of them, of the human race. Essentially, he would be one with **all mankind**, but especially he would belong to Israel and the royal line of Judah. Through him, and their faith in him, and the God who had promised them such wonderful blessings, they would be saved from their vile bodies, from their grossest sins, from their lives of falling short. They would be made, or remade, fresh and new, and perfect and immortal. For they were **“his people”**! Because of their faith, they belonged to him, and thus to his God and Father.

This, then, becomes our starting point to review the lives of the five women who are mentioned in this genealogy — Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and (last, and most extraordinary of all) Mary the mother of Jesus.

What makes them special? Or, to put it another way (and since Mary is quite obviously necessary for the story itself), why these first four particularly? And

why not Sarah or Rebekah or Leah? (Surely they — if no others — were more important to the line of Abraham than the ones who *are* mentioned?) Some points worth noting:

- (1) Of the four, three were Gentiles, and the fourth (Bathsheba) was, first, the wife of a Gentile (Uriah the Hittite).
- (2) Quite significantly, all were guilty (or at least presumed guilty) of serious sins involving sexual matters — incest, adultery, prostitution, and fornication. Every one of these sins would throw shadows upon the lineage (and legitimacy) of their sons, and this would in turn cast doubt upon their seeds' right of inheritance. And this is implied in a passage that is *all* about inheritance!
- (3) All these women would have “secrets” in their lives, and thus, through them, Judah (the royal family of all Israel) would have “skeletons” in its closet as well! Shouldn't they just have been hidden away, like the crazy old aunt in the attic, and never mentioned in proper society again? Here in the beginning of the New Testament, where Jesus himself is being introduced, these family embarrassments are brought front and center, for all to see! (“He will save *his people* from *their* sins!”). As if to say, ‘No question! *If* Jesus can save *this bunch* from their sins, then he can surely save you and me!’
- (4) And, finally, beyond this, this genealogy would remind its readers of some of the biggest questions of all, involving Mary and Joseph, and the conception and birth and ancestry of Jesus. (But the exploration of this will have to wait until later.)

All this suggests that, when God intervenes in the affairs of sinful man, when He sends His Son to perform the greatest work the Father could ever arrange, then certain assumptions, and certain “truths”, may be turned upside down! First of all, the greatest “righteousness” (the sort that wears white robes, and dwells in palaces and temples) may be shown for what it is — *sin!* Then, the greatest “sins” (real or imagined) may become, by God's grace and the covering His Son provides, the only true *righteousness!*

“For [God] hath made [Jesus] to be sin for us, who [the antecedent refers to Jesus, of course] knew no sin; so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21).

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3).

Jesus was conceived and born in human flesh. He was, in short, a man. He was tempted in all points like his brothers. He was a possessor of “sinful flesh”, or “flesh of sin” — born into a family of sinners, and himself accused of the most dreadful sins. Yet he did *not* commit sin, and thus his life, and his death, and his resurrection, marked the most marvelous victory imaginable over the flesh and sin and death! This was something no angel could have done, but it was what a perfect man, a man of faith, who was also the Son of God, could do.

And this is also part of our story...

(2) Tamar (Genesis 38)

Matthew 1:3: “Judah [became] the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was TAMAR.”

Genesis 38:1: By contrast to the righteous Joseph (Gen 37; 39), Judah voluntarily leaves his family, and then goes to live with the Canaanites. Unlike Joseph, he *chooses* association with the “world”, and this is the beginning of all his problems.

V 2: Then he marries a Canaanite, just as his uncle Esau had done. Like Esau, he seemingly despises his “birthright”. (Notice: there is no conversion story for his wife, she apparently remains outside the Abrahamic covenant.)

V 6: Now Tamar enters the story. She is married to Judah’s son Er. She certainly seems to be a Canaanite also (since these were the people Judah was living among: vv 1,2).

Vv 7-9: The wicked Er dies. Then his brother Onan lies with Tamar to raise up seed to his dead brother. Here is the Levirate law: Deuteronomy 25:5-10, the first time it’s invoked (*see Appendix: The “Gaal”, or “kinsman-redeemer”*). He avoids giving her the “seed” by which she could conceive. He disregards his father, his brother, and Tamar (treating her as an object for his lust, and nothing else).

V 10: Onan also dies, the object of God’s wrath.

For Tamar, there is the sorrow of bereavement twice, at an early age, but it seems that her character is developed through trials.

Then she realizes that she is being neglected, or ignored, by Judah her father-in-law: ‘Why has he forgotten me?’

V 11: Judah is now afraid to give his third son (Shelah) to Tamar, according to the Law. Sending her to her father’s house for a long time (“until my son grows up”) seems to be equivalent to dismissing her altogether: ‘I want nothing to do with you at all!’ Thus Judah neglected the need to perpetuate Abraham’s “seed”.

Here is a key to understanding: *Tamar the Canaanitess is much more concerned about the covenant-seed (and thus, evidently, about the covenant promises) than is Judah the son of Jacob!*

V 12: “After a long time Judah’s wife... died.” The “long time” means Judah has no intention of giving his third son to Tamar, and now his wife has died (so it seems there are no more children either).

Vv 13-15: In a second case of “hidden identity” in the family history of Abraham (cp. the Leah-Rachel switch in Gen 29), Tamar “plays the part of a harlot”. It is not in her nature to do such a thing; she forces herself. Nevertheless, she risks being treated as a prostitute (and thus she puts her own life on the line) in order, secretly, to perpetuate the family line of the Promised Seed.

Tamar takes upon herself the shame of presumed sin. What an example for us.

And, especially, what an example for Jesus too, when he looks back to contemplate the stories of his ancestors.

V 16a: What a contrast! Judah seeks to satisfy himself in sin; but Tamar is seeking a promised seed.

Vv 16b-18a: Tamar has the foresight to ask for a pledge (a means of identifying herself, and Judah, later). The pledge consists of a signet ring, a bracelet (“cord”: NIV), and a staff. These would be the ancient Mideast equivalent of all a person’s identification and major credit cards.

- (a) The signet ring was the means by which a wealthy man gave his guarantee, i.e., a seal in soft wax that would harden, and mark a paper or letter as coming from him.
- (b) The staff might have had an insignia or other mark by which Judah himself could be identified.
- (c) And especially, there were the “bracelets” or “cord”, from a Hebrew root word “pathal”, meaning to entwine or wrap around. (This will become very significant later.)

In giving up his “identity” to the “prostitute”, Judah is like Esau, who sold his birthright for a meager supper (a porridge of lentils, according to tradition).

V 18b: “So Judah slept with her, and she became pregnant by him.”

Vv 19-23: Right after this, the woman disappears. Let us call it “The Mystery of the Vanishing Prostitute”.

V 24: Several months later, when Judah finds out that Tamar is pregnant, he (now, it would seem, all “righteous”) wants to see her killed for disgracing his family.

Vv 25,26: *Who is righteous, and who isn’t?* Tamar uses Judah’s own property to prove he is the father of her children. Judah’s sin is unmasked, and her righteous (if rather unorthodox) plan — to preserve and perpetuate the royal lineage of Abraham through Judah — is revealed. Judah can only confess, “She is more righteous than I.”

Vv 27-30: The midwife took a scarlet “cord, or thread” (cp. v 18: the “cord” of Judah!) to mark the firstborn. Quite possibly, this was the same “cord” Judah had given her nine months earlier, and an emblem by which the royal family of Judah could be identified.

Here are the first mentions of “the scarlet thread” of the house of Judah. It will be seen again, and hinted at again and again, as we continue through the story of this family of Jesus. It seems to signify the legitimacy of one’s ancestry, and one’s claim to property and other rights of inheritance. It is even possible that, like a Scottish clan tartan, the pattern and scarlet color became part of a fabric, a flag or ensign, or a special garment. These would mark out the family of Judah ever after. This is not the last we shall see of the “scarlet thread” of Judah...

Though the story is brief, Tamar comes across as a righteous and far-sighted woman. Even though a Gentile, she sees the promises afar off, is persuaded by

them, and embraces them (Heb 11:13). She does whatever it takes to associate herself with them. By her faith in action she shares in Judah's inheritance, although he concedes it rather reluctantly at first. Here, the Gentile is clearly seen to have greater faith than the Jew.

Judah's loss of two of his three sons is restored by the birth of twins through the Gentile Tamar. Thus, in the future, the loss of two thirds of Israel in the last great tribulation (see Zec 13:8) will be made up by Christ's Gentile bride.

This incident seems to change Judah's attitude and conduct toward his brother Joseph. Where earlier Judah had been foremost in selling Joseph into slavery (Gen 37:26-28), he now begins to see that Joseph (as well as Tamar) is more righteous than he. In his later dealings with Joseph, Judah seems to take the lead again, but this time in confessing and seeking Joseph's forgiveness for himself and for his brothers (Gen 44:14-16).

Also, it may be that Tamar is the means by which Judah is reminded of the wonderful inheritance *he* has in the promises to Abraham! And so he is prepared to repent and seek for protection from Joseph, who becomes *his* "kinsman-redeemer"!

As for Tamar, there is perhaps a little New Testament echo of her firmness of faith, and resolve, and refusal to be turned aside from claiming *her* inheritance in Abraham, in Matthew 15:22-28:

"A Canaanite woman [like Tamar!]... came to him, crying out, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.' Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, 'Send her away [like Judah sent Tamar away], for she keeps crying out after us.' He answered, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.' [And you... why, you are just a Canaanite!] The woman came and knelt before him. 'Lord, help me!' she said. He replied, 'It is not right to take the children's bread [the inheritance of Abraham] and toss it to their [Gentile] dogs.' 'Yes, Lord,' she said, 'but even the dogs [such as I] eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered, 'Woman, you have great faith! [Greater than that of these Jews here!] Your request is granted...'"

Gentiles we may be — and women (many of us) — but like Tamar (and like this other Canaanite woman) we know that even the "bread crumbs" of Abraham's inheritance are worth more, to Jew and Gentile, male and female, than the greatest banquet the "world" can provide.

(3) Rahab (Joshua 2; 6)

Matthew 1:5: "Salmon [became] the father of Boaz, whose mother was RAHAB."

Joshua 2:1: The two Israelite spies went to Jericho and entered the house of Rahab the "prostitute" ("zanah", the same word as used of Tamar: Gen 38:15,24) — it is the ordinary Hebrew word for "harlot").

There should be no question about this word. However, a number of writers (including Josephus, the rabbis and certain Christian commentators) have taken pains trying to show that Rahab was an innkeeper and not a harlot. The well-respected Bible commentator Arthur Pink, in his desire to mitigate the stigma attaching to the word, states that Rahab was an “ex-harlot” and that, at the time of the visit of the spies, she had reformed. (His actual words are: “...not that she was still plying her evil trade, but that formerly she had been a woman of ill fame, the stigma of which still clung to her.”)

However, there is no verse in Scripture to support such a statement. Rahab is referred to as a prostitute, or harlot, in the New Testament also, in Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 (the Greek is “porne”, from which is derived our “pornography”).

The question for us is: Why should anyone bother hiding the fact of Rahab’s “profession”, or “cleaning up” the story? If our tendency is in that direction, then we should perhaps remember the Pharisees, who judged always by outward appearance and would not come close to anyone whom they considered to be a “sinner”. Unfortunately for them, this set up a barrier between them and the man Jesus, for Jesus was not afraid of those who came from “the wrong side of the tracks”. One old expositor writes of Rahab:

“Here dwells an unfortunate woman. She has had no spiritual advantages — no Sabbaths, no Scriptures, no teachers — and yet in the base atmosphere of a Jericho, in the heart of that poor harlot, like a fair pearl that lies within a rough shell among the weeds and rocks at the bottom of the sea, there is found precious faith, faith that finds utterance in a good confession (v 11). Here is encouragement for those who are called, in the providence of God, to [preach] where worldliness and frivolity, and pride and bitter opposition to the truth prevail. Here, too, is encouragement for those who [preach] in uncouth regions, where sin and ignorance seem to shut out hope of blessing. Let missionaries and visitors in alleys and courts, in attics and cellars, which seem like nests of blasphemy and impurity, take heart. The unholy atmosphere of gin palaces, and even of houses like that in which Joshua’s spies sought refuge, cannot... nullify the Gospel message.”

Probably the two spies meet her at a well outside the city walls, entering the city gate in her company (as many others had done) so as not to arouse suspicion. Only later would they discover that she, of all Jericho, had faith in the God of Israel.

Joshua 2:2: But others suspect these men of being Jews, or are at any rate suspicious of any strangers in the area, perhaps because of the nearness of the people of Israel. Rahab determines to “save” them, even if it means telling a dangerous “lie” to the king of Jericho himself.

Was Rahab wrong to tell such a lie?

Lying is generally treated as a sin (Lev 19:11; Eph 4:25; Prov 12:22). Rahab is praised for her great faith in befriending Israel (Heb 11:31; Jam 2:25), but not necessarily for lying.

Nevertheless, it may also be said there seem to be some exceptions, in very limited circumstances, to the general rule that lying is sinful:

- (a) The Jewish midwives lie about the delivery times of Jewish mothers, so as to save the lives of some babies from Pharaoh's soldiers (Exod 1).
- (b) During war the Jewish army pretends to retreat from Ai, but sets an ambush to attack the fighting men of Ai when they come out of the city to pursue the fleeing army (Josh 8).
- (c) Hushai's profession of allegiance to Absalom (2Sa 16) was a lie too, but apparently allowable because a state of war existed.
- (d) In fact, even the spies themselves were telling a sort of lie by pretending to be what they were not!

Only later do the spies discover that Rahab believes in the God of Israel:

V 9: She demonstrates faith that God will fulfill His promises.

V 10: "We have heard...": But this had been 40 years before. Probably Rahab wasn't even 40 years old. From whom had she heard? Her parents? And so she begs for their lives to be spared also (vv 12,13).

V 11: Repentance, fear, respect. "Our courage failed"; "Our hearts melted": a complete disavowal of natural self.

"For the Lord your God *is* God in heaven above, and on earth below." An absolute profession of faith in the One True God, the God of Israel.

Such a confession is, apparently, made by the family of Rahab only, out of all the families of Jericho. In cultures, and among peoples, that believe in a multitude of "little gods", their profession, of one unique and great God, is a most significant statement of faith!

Question: Why do *we* believe? Because of what the One True God has done with and for His people Israel.

Vv 12,13: And now she begs for mercy, when the Israelites come (as they surely will) into their own Promised Land: "Remember *me*, and my family!" Her plea is pathetically like that of the "thief on the cross" (Luke 23): "Lord, remember *me* when you come into your Kingdom!"

In fact, *her* whole confession of faith is very much like *his*, although she is a prostitute, and he is a thief (and perhaps a murderer).

Both statements of faith recognize that God's people will receive His great and precious promises, and that those promises involve a special Land and a special Kingdom. In short, they accept "the gospel (good news) of the Kingdom of God"!

There have been others whose sins, though great, were forgiven, and other "murderers" who found mercy in time of need. Some of them are also among the Lord Jesus Christ's "own people", here in the genealogy of Matthew 1, and also among

us today. May we never close the door, or turn a cold shoulder, to some seeker of God because we don't care for his past life, or the way she dresses, or the way he talks. "Whom God *can* cleanse, you must not call common or unclean!"

Joshua 2:15: Rahab's house is within the walls. Archaeologists tell us the walls of Jericho were approximately 20 feet wide, and houses (they are called casemate houses, or apartments) were built inside the walls. Some of these had windows that were accessible from the outside of the city, but at a considerable height above the ground.

Vv 15,16: Rahab lowers the spies down from the window by a rope, and tells them, "Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you." This would be to the west, the opposite direction from the camp of Israel. Presumably they were to hide there until their pursuers went off in the wrong direction.

"The Mystery of the Scarlet Cord"

Vv 17,18: Unraveling a mystery, step to step. Where have we seen a scarlet cord (or thread) before?

- a. Genesis 38:18: Judah gives Tamar a **cord** (part of a garment?) as token of his identity.
- b. Genesis 38:28: The midwife (at Tamar's direction?) uses a **scarlet cord** to identify the firstborn of Tamar's twins, i.e., the one who will receive the birthright.
- c. And now, a **scarlet cord** is used to mark out Rahab's house, and her family, for special protection. (Clearly this is reminiscent of the Passover in Egypt, where the **scarlet** blood of the Passover lamb marked the doors of the Israelite houses.)

"Cord" here (actually, "line" in the KJV) is the Hebrew word "tiqvah", the same word for "hope". "Tiqvah" is a word used often of the hope of having children (esp **Ruth** 1:12,13), and the hope, placed in future generations, that they will carry on and fulfill the aspirations of their parents and grandparents.

"Ha Tiqvah" ("The Hope") is the national anthem of the State of Israel. Today, the Israelis sing...

*"While yet within the heart, inwardly,
The soul of the Jew yearns,
And towards the vistas of the East, eastward,
An eye looks toward Zion...
Our hope is not yet lost,
The hope born of two thousand years,
To be a free people in our land,
In the land of Zion and Jerusalem,
To be a free people in our land,
In the land of Zion and Jerusalem."*

For us, who are the spiritual "Israel" of God, our hope is not lost either, so long

as our eyes look eastward, toward Zion, and look upward, expectantly, for the Coming One, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

“Tiqvah” is from a root meaning to twist, to bend, and thus to tie together. To have hope in another is to tie oneself to that person. To have hope in God is to tie oneself to Him, to trust in Him, no matter what happens.

“Tiqvah” expresses a shared hope in the fulfillment of God’s special promises, fulfilled in and by the Messiah of the tribe of Judah. This “tiqvah” binds together husbands and wives, and parents and children.

The “scarlet cord” of Judah, like a clan tartan or a royal crest, marks out the family as special. Its possession, its use in one’s garments, or on a flag or ensign flown from a house, marks out the bearer or holder as *belonging* to the royal family. It demonstrates legitimacy, property rights, and ultimate inheritance.

Such an emblem, or family crest, is never cherished so much as when the royalty to which it points is unrecognized, and as yet unrealized, in the eyes of the world. Then it is a very special hope indeed.

This was the “scarlet cord” of Judah.

And finally, we also have...

“The Mystery of the Hidden Lovers”

Here, we suggest, is one of the great hidden “love stories” of the Bible. It requires some sleuthing, some detective work, to bring to light...

First of all, what do we know for sure?

- (a) One of the two spies (who are unnamed in the narrative) gives Rahab a “scarlet cord”.
- (b) This scarlet cord was clearly visible from outside the city walls of Jericho, was easily recognizable by the Israelites, and, like the Passover blood on the doorposts in Egypt, guaranteed protection to the householders.
- (c) When the great trumpets of war sounded (cp. the seven days of trumpets at Jericho with the seven last trumpets of Revelation 8:2,6), and the walls of the great city fell down. Joshua sent the two spies back to rescue Rahab and her whole family (Josh 6:20-25).
- (d) “And [Rahab] lives among the Israelites to this day” (Josh 6:25).
- (e) And finally, (Matt 1:5) Rahab marries Salmon, the prince of the house of Judah.

That’s what we do know. Here’s what we don’t know for sure, but how reasonable it is. Put in the form of questions:

- (1) **Was Salmon one of the spies?** Possible answer: The earlier (twelve) spies sent into the Land, at the beginning of the 40 years, were the princes of the tribes (Num 13:2,3). So, was a similar method used at this later time? But which tribal princes would be sent this time? Since Judah’s prince (Caleb) and Ephraim’s prince (Joshua) were the only two to bring back a good report at that earlier time, why shouldn’t these two later spies come from the same tribes? And if

so, then the prince of the tribe of Judah was almost certainly Salmon!

- (2) **Did Salmon (the great-great-great-grandson of Judah and Tamar) carry with him the ancestral garment (with the scarlet cord) that marked him as the heir and leader of the tribe of Judah?** Answer: Why not?
- (3) **Was this, then, the scarlet cord he gave to Rahab, to protect her life?** Answer: Again, why not?

After the victory was won, and the Land was liberated, then the prince Salmon married the woman he'd fallen in love with, Rahab! Thus the former prostitute became the princess of the tribe of Judah, and an ancestress of the royal line. She left her old way of life, came in faith to the God of Israel, and grasped the scarlet cord offered by the prince of Judah. That cord, taken in faith, became her "Pass-over", her "covering blood" — binding her forever to the Hope of Israel. [Some of the foregoing was suggested in a talk by Bro. Ken Wubbels.]

Here is our hidden love story, with a wonderful ending. Harlot no longer, her sins are forgiven. Like Tamar, another "Gentile", Rahab (of Jericho) becomes a "Jewess" by faith in the promises, and a bride and a mother in Israel. She and her children are bound up in the scarlet cord of shared hopes, from one generation to the next.

Lessons

- **Acts 10:34,35:** "God does not show favoritism but accepts men [and women] from every nation who fear him and do what is right."
- **Hebrews 11:31:** "By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient." In the great "faith chapter", the harlot Rahab occupies a place of honor, right next to Moses (see Heb 11:23-29). She is justified by her **FAITH!**
- **James 2:25:** "In the same way [as Abraham: v 23], was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?" In James' letter, the harlot Rahab occupies another place of honor, right after Abraham (Jam 2:21-24), the man of faith and the friend of God! And here, she is justified by her **WORKS! What company she keeps!**
- **Prostitutes:** Tamar (by a one-time circumstance, and by appearances) and Rahab (by a longstanding lifestyle) were "prostitutes". They also symbolize the nation of Israel. They were like Israel was (Ezek 16), and like Israel is today also; they were seeking after other "lovers" (such as material advantages or political alliances) rather than the true God. But repentance, and faith demonstrated by works, set right all wrongs. "These are *my* people," says the Lord Jesus. "I will save them from their sins." And he will say it yet again, when he returns.
- **John 4:** Is this an echo of Rahab's story? Here was a Samaritan woman, a sinner, whom Jesus, the prince of the tribe of Judah, met by a well outside a city. Her life was far from pure and holy: she had had five husbands, and the man she was with then was not her husband! But this woman, suspicious, jaded, calloused by sin, was intrigued, challenged, convicted, taught, won over, and

converted by a Jewish Savior. In listening to him, she came to understand that “salvation is [only] from the Jews” (John 4:22). She drank, from him, the spring of water welling up to eternal life. Her life was changed forever.

- **Was this trip necessary?:** Was the spies’ visit to Jericho necessary? Evidently God had already planned that the walls of the city would fall down, and Israel would overwhelm the city. So why *did* the spies need to go there? The answer is plain: for the sole purpose of finding Rahab and her family. The royal family of Judah depended on their visit. The lineage of the Lord Jesus Christ would not have been complete without Rahab. The worst of sinners, the most degraded of persons, may be a living “stone”, essential to the building of God’s holy eternal temple. Do we believe this?
- **Judging:** Let us be careful how we “judge” others. Can we ever assume any particular person is not quite the type God wants? (Or do we sometimes decide that a particular person is not quite the sort *we* want?) Who are we to discriminate? Who are we to judge another man’s servant?
- **“Show kindness to me!”:** Like Rahab, each one of us will need, one time or another, to plead: “Show kindness to me.” We may never have kept a house of prostitution. We may never even have entered such a house. But in the hidden rooms of our “hearts” we have played out wicked thoughts, and committed terrible sins. “Lord, deal kindly with each of us.” “Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.”
- **Hebrews 13:2:** “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.” The two spies were “angels”, or “messengers”, sent from Joshua (and God) to find the woman Rahab. In this context, cp. Hebrews 13:4: “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.” Rahab’s bed was anything but pure, and there was every reason to expect that she would be judged, and condemned, along with a city destined to be destroyed utterly. But the God of Israel sees beyond the surface. The “sexually immoral” may be forgiven. And their marriage beds may be made “honorable”. From such beds came the ancestors of the Messiah. From such beds, even today, come future “kings and priests” and “a holy nation”.

We are, all of us, anything but “holy” and “honorable” and “pure”. But Jesus Christ our “husband” loved us so much that he laid down his life, and shed his scarlet blood, and tied us to him by a cord of blood and suffering and sacrifice. He bought us from Sin, and bound us to himself by the nails that bound him to the cross. ‘I don’t care where you came from, or what you did. I care only that you love me! Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of my hands. You are my signet ring, you are my treasured possession, you belong to me! Follow me!’

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Eph 5:25-27).

Thanks be to God — and His Son — for this indescribable gift.

(4) Ruth

Matthew 1:5: “Boaz [became] the father of Obed, whose mother was RUTH.”

Ruth 1:1: The story is set “in the days when the judges ruled”, and “there was no king in Israel” (Jdg 17:6). There are two possible meanings here: (1) that there was no human king, at this early stage, as we know; and also (2) that GOD, who should have been considered king nonetheless, was not respected as king.

Thus it was a time of great wickedness, both institutionally and individually.

The story of Ruth presents an ideal example of individual faith, in the midst of a society in which prevailed equal parts indifference and wickedness.

In contrast to most of the stories of the Judges, this is a story of ordinary people going about private lives, in a quiet corner of history. Yet they were, some by birth, and others by character, the unrecognized royalty of Israel.

V 2: In a time of great trial (a famine in the Land), Elimelech and Naomi left the Land of Promise. It was a step toward falling away, with sad consequences. It began a downward spiral: they went to Moab for a while (i.e., to sojourn), then they decided to remain there, and finally their sons married Moabite women.

Vv 3-5: “Now Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.”

Moab was a land of idolatry, a land close in miles (30 miles away), but remote in mind.

The irony is that they went to Moab to prosper, and be safe. But in Moab all the men died, and the women were reduced to poverty.

Is this a punishment? The Bible does not say so specifically, though we might be driven to that conclusion by the circumstances. Yet, even if the story describes a serious failure of character, and a whole series of bad life decisions, nevertheless out of the failures and sins, God can, by His wonderful providence, bring about great good, salvation, and the furtherance of His purpose in the earth. What a great God we worship!

V 6: “When she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there.” There is “famine” in Moab, but there is life in Israel, and “bread” in Bethlehem (the name signifies “the house of bread”). Naomi has endured much hardship, and terrible loss, but she still believes in the God of Israel.

There is a thin line between despair and faith, between death and life, between anger with a God who causes (or allows) suffering, and trusting in a God who chastens His children. Naomi stood on that line and looked both ways, and she

chose to return home, the “prodigal daughter”: ‘In my father’s house there is food in abundance; why do I remain here in the land of the Gentiles?’

Vv 7-14: Naomi offered her daughters-in-law the chance to stay in Moab, or to go on to the new land of Israel.

(Vv 11,12: “If I should say, I have hope [Heb. “tiqvah”: the same word as “cord”, the hope of children] — i.e., to have other sons, who might marry you — would you wait for them?” (It was clearly out of the question.)

[Here is a passing allusion to Deuteronomy 25:5-10, and the Levirate law, of raising up seed to the dead brother. This will be important later in the story of Ruth.]

V 14: “Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her.” The depth of our conviction must be measured not just by what we grasp (‘She *knows* the Truth’), but also by what we are prepared to let go of! Orpah had been willing to go, but not to “let go”. Bethlehem was in her eye, but Moab was still in her heart.

And (as with Lot’s wife and Sodom) Orpah’s heart pulled her body back to Moab. When offered the choice, Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and returned, to Moab, the land of false gods and false hopes, and (ultimately) death.

V 15: “Look,” said Naomi, “your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.” Like Naomi and Orpah, Ruth also stood at a cross-roads, looking both ways. What would she choose? The rest of her life hung in the balance.

Charles Spurgeon wrote: “We have come to a turning point in the road. If we turn to the right mayhap our children and our children’s children will go that way; but if we turn to the left, generations yet unborn will curse our names for having been unfaithful to God and to His Word.”

Vv 16,17: But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.”

She chose Naomi’s life and Naomi’s God. She chose an unseen Land and an unseen God!

“Your people will be my people, and your God my God!”: It was an echo of the great Abrahamic promise, perhaps the greatest of promises: “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan... I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God” (Gen 17:7,8).

Ruth would know that even Abraham, the father of all the faithful, had been an “alien” coming to a strange land, as she was about to be. The God who offered *him* an everlasting possession of that Land would offer it to *her* as well! Ruth sold all

that she had to “buy” these promises, and thereby she showed that, despite her Moabitish roots, she was a “daughter” of Abraham.

“Where you die, there I will die... and there I will be buried”: She might well have added: ‘And there I will be raised up again!’

With this compare the words of Jesus. He had been multiplying the loaves and fishes and feeding the multitudes, and many were following him, and listening to his teachings. But then, in John 6, he began to tell them some very hard sayings. After that, gradually and then in increasing numbers, his followers began to leave him. So, with his closest disciples near him, he asked them: “Will you go away?” [*Like Orpah did?*] But, along with Peter, they reply: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!” (John 6:66-68). Is there any real choice, no matter how hard the road?

Along with Naomi, Ruth now set out on the last leg of her journey: Abraham had been called to leave:

- (a) his country,
- (b) his people, and
- (c) his father’s house (Gen 12:1).

Ruth had already left: (c) her father’s house (when she married Mahlon),
(b) her people (by converting to the God of Israel?), and
now she leaves: (a) her country (Moab) to go to a new country.

An important question is suggested by Deuteronomy 23:3: “No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation.”

Was this a problem? Consider the possible explanations:

- (1) Ruth, being a “convert”, was now no longer a Moabite.
- (2) The restriction of the Law applied only to males.
- (3) Ruth was the 11th generation from Moses. — *a real stretch, and a rather artificial and legalistic answer.*

Or (by the way, I like this one best!)...

- (4) ***The Lord God of Israel was (and is?) prepared to make an exception even to His own Law for one who truly believes in Him. The Law of faith is greater than the Law of exclusion. Are there other Bible examples of this? Do WE believe God can do this? Is it wrong to believe that God can do this?***

Later, the specter of Deuteronomy 23:3 (and some of these related questions) may have occupied the minds of the people of Bethlehem, and Boaz, and the unnamed near-kinsman, as we shall see. (‘Do we really want someone like this in Israel?’ ‘I’m afraid she’s just not our sort.’)

Vv 19-23: Several days journey would have brought them home to Bethlehem. The women asked: “Is this the Naomi we once knew?” There had been a great change, due to her sufferings and her bereavements in the land of Moab.

Naomi (signifying “pleasant”) said, “Call me Mara” — bitter! But she had *not* abandoned her faith. And life is full of startling developments. Out of her sorrow and bitterness there would come, surprisingly soon, new beauty and joy and life. It is as though the narrator pauses while a still, small voice whispers in our ear, “Just wait and see what happens next...”

“I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty” (Ruth 1:21). “There is a marvelous dramatic irony about this, for, had she but known it, Naomi returned more full than when she went out. How could she realize that every word of God’s glorious promises to Abraham was going to be fulfilled through this helpless but devoted stranger returning with her from Moab?” (Harry Whittaker).

Think of the Jews who stand on the seashore, between the “devil and the deep blue (red?) sea”! God tells Moses, and Moses tells them: “Stand still! And see the salvation of the LORD!” Sometimes all we can do is stand still and wait. In the fullness of time, God will act on behalf of His people, who believe in Him.

Ruth 2:1: “Now Naomi had a relative on her husband’s side, from the clan of Elimelech, a man of standing, whose name was Boaz.”

If Elimelech and Naomi had a wealthy kinsman all along, then why did they go to Moab in the first place, instead of going to him for help? What foolishness it is in the hour of weakness and need to forget the “near kinsman” who is strong and able to help! And when we need help, to whom do we turn? to everything and everyone *except* the One who has promised, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” We have a “near kinsman” who holds the key to the universe and all of its treasure. Let us go to his fields, and humbly work there, and ask for and wait for his blessing. It will surely come.

V 2: And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, “Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor.” Naomi said to her, “Go ahead, my daughter.” There was poverty in the household, two widows with no visible means of support. Ruth, the daughter of a hated race, and only a proselyte at best, shows a wonderful knowledge of and dependence upon the Law, which allows special privileges for widows: i.e., to glean in the fields during harvest. She represents the anxious person in search of truth; forsaking her old companions and her “gods”, she leaves all, and is not ashamed to put on the apron of the “gleaner”.

Ruth did not need to keep her poverty a secret; and it was that very poverty, and how she dealt with it, that brought her to the attention of her rich kinsman.

And what about us? When we are weak (and when we know it!), then we may begin to find strength in the Lord, whose strength is perfected, and finds fulfillment, in our weakness. Frail vessels of clay we may be, but we can take our vessels to the place where the riches and glory of our Father are dispensed, and there we can ask for our share.

For the second time in these chapters, we are reminded of the Canaanite woman who approaches Jesus. A member of a hated Gentile race, she still needs his help.

Being “unclean”, she doesn’t mind likening herself to the unclean dogs that eat crumbs falling from the children’s table. Like the dogs, she is a “gleaner” too, taking what scraps are available to her. Even the bits of bread that fall from the Master’s table are a blessing. And Jesus commends the great faith of the Gentile woman. For didn’t he count such Gentile women among his “grandmothers”?

V 3: “So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.”

“As it turned out...”: i.e., apparently, by chance. But was it really chance? Or was it the overruling providence of God, God working in mysterious ways, to perform His wonders?

How strange it is, but what a revelation for us. The entire redemptive purpose of God in Christ seems to hang on such an apparently trivial circumstance. In the life of the believer, the dividing line between random chance and God’s design is so thin that it can scarcely be drawn or discerned. In short, we might ask: what *isn’t* according to the design of God?

Vv 4-8: And in the fields of Boaz, Ruth came to the attention of her rich kinsman, and met him and talked with him.

V 9: “Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and drink from the water jars the men have filled.” To us also, our “Boaz”, our “strong man”, says, “Abide in my fields”; don’t stray away. “Remain with me” (John 15:4).

V 10: At this, Ruth bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, “Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me, a foreigner?”

There is such a charming modesty here. Ruth doesn’t realize how attractive she is...
how noble is her devotion to an old woman...
how exalted is her choice of an unseen God...
how impressive is her diligence in gleaning...
how touching is her intelligent meekness and sincere thankfulness.

There is no false pride in Ruth. One has the feeling that she isn’t the sort to spend hours in front of a mirror, or fretting about clothes and makeup, or scheming how to attract attention to herself. Rather, she’s the sort you’ll find in the study, or the kitchen, or the garden, or teaching the children.

It is interesting to note that nowhere is Ruth called “beautiful”, like some others in the Bible. But the good man Boaz, a rich man who might have commanded the attention of all sorts of beautiful young women (and their families), noticed her right away. He was impressed, not by her outward beauty (though, for all we know, she *may* have been quite beautiful). Instead he told Ruth (v 11), “I’ve been told all about what you have **done**.” Compare Christ’s words to the ecclesias: “I know your **works**.”

Ruth was the perfection of the “virtuous woman”! Later Boaz called her just that, a “virtuous woman” (Ruth 3:11).

V 12: Ruth had come to the Land of Promise, to seek refuge under the wings of Almighty God. This is an allusion to the cherubim in tabernacle and (later) in Temple. Many of David's psalms would echo this language (Psa 17:8,9; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4; etc). And David's greater son would speak of his yearning to take Jerusalem under his wings, as a mother bird protects her chicks. Here especially, "wings" signify the arms of a husband and protector, as he overshadows his beloved under his arms and in the folds of his garment. (This language will recur again in the next chapter also.)

Vv 15-17: Ruth proved to be the most diligent of gleaners. She was not only intensely grateful for what she was given, but she labored long and hard to make the most of the gift.

Vv 19,20: Now, through her daughter-in-law Ruth, Naomi once again saw God's providence: There *was* a "near-kinsman" (Deut 25 again), a "redeemer", to redeem their property, to marry Ruth, to care for Naomi, and to raise up "seed" for Naomi, her family, and (what turns out to be) the royal line of Judah.

Vv 21-23: Her advice to Ruth: "Stay close to the One who is blessing you. Be patient. Don't stray or wander away from him" — *like I did from God!*

Ruth 3 outlines Naomi's plan.

Vv 1-4: One day Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for? Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."

All this suggests the preparation of a bride (Psa 45:10-14), and/or the purification of a Gentile woman (Deut 21:10-14). In the New Testament, washing and new garments also symbolize baptism and conversion. All this is essential to the story of redemption. "The bride has made herself ready."

Was Naomi's plan for Ruth "indecent"? No, but it was (potentially) dangerous, for it could have appeared to be immodest or unseemly. Perhaps it was, also, a carefully thought-out and carefully measured "indiscretion". It was as if Naomi planned to put Ruth into a mildly compromising position, in the hope and expectation that Boaz would "save" her out of it.

Some background might help here. By custom, Boaz would sleep (fully clothed) at the threshing-floor during the harvest, the better to guard his crops. Also by custom, a servant might sleep nearby, at his feet.

Vv 5-9: "Spread the corner of your garment over me!" (Literally, it is the same word as "wing" of 2:12.) Coming from Ruth, this was a request for protection, a marriage proposal.

Moreover, these are echoes of the past. Where have we seen this before — a special garment, a special fabric, a special emblem belonging to a great prince of the tribe of Judah? Perhaps this is not so obvious here, as in the earlier stories of Tamar (with Judah), and Rahab (with Salmon?), but it is quite possible under the circumstances.

‘Take me under your wing, under your care. Make me a part of the ongoing redemption story of your people and your tribe. May the scarlet thread, the thread of faith and blood, bind me to you, and both of us to the people of faith, generation by generation. May your God be my God. I will live and die with you, and our seed will bind us with the “cord of hope” to the promises of the past and the glorious expectation of the future.’

V 10: “The LORD bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor.”

Boaz was not young at all. He showed dignity and restraint under these circumstances.

V 11: “And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character.”

“A woman of noble character” (NIV), “a virtuous woman” (KJV). These words suggest force of character, and strength of faith. In the Old Testament, this phrase is applied to Ruth and to no one else.

Thus, “Don’t be afraid”: Virtuous women may sometimes be found in situations, through no fault of their own, which might naturally expose them to suspicion (like Ruth with Boaz on the threshing floor). If their former behavior has been uniformly virtuous, then they have every right to be absolved of any suspicion. It is true: all sins may be forgiven. But the blessing (freedom from suspicion) is more than forgiveness; it is the continuing value of a virtuous life.

Vv 12-14: “Although it is true that I am near of kin, there is a kinsman-redeemer nearer than I. Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to redeem, good; let him redeem. But if he is not willing, as surely as the LORD lives I will do it. Lie here until morning.” So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, “Don’t let it be known that a woman came to the threshing floor.”

Many a faithful Gentile “Ruth” lies asleep at the feet of Jesus (the “Boaz”, or “mighty man” of the Jews), awaiting the “morning” of resurrection, when he will stand in the “gate” of the great city and proclaim her for his very own.

Vv 15-18: Boaz also said, “Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out.” When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and put it on her. Then he went back to town. When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, “How did it go, my daughter?” Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her and added, “He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, ‘Don’t go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’” Then Naomi said, “Wait, my daughter,

until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.”

Thanks be to God that His Son (our “Boaz”, or strong redeemer) did not rest until the matter of our redemption was settled. Relieved and happy are we when we hand over our worries and anxieties to the Lord, in the certainty that he will bear the burdens for us: “Cast all your cares upon him, for he cares for you.”

Ruth 4: As outlined in Leviticus 25, the “Gaal” or “kinsman-redeemer” did three things:

1. He bought back the land that had been sold out of the family to pay debts, or left in disuse; then he returned it to the family, and put it into service again (Lev 25:23-27). ***Boaz was prepared to do this, as we see in Ruth 4 here.***
2. He saved his brethren out of poverty and bondage (Lev 25:47-53). ***Boaz would do the same in caring for Naomi as well as Ruth.***
3. And he preserved the family by raising up seed to the “brother” who had died without children (Deut 25:5-10). ***Boaz was prepared to do this as well, by marrying Ruth.***

[For more detail, see the Appendix: The “Gaal”, or “kinsman-redeemer”.]

In all this, Boaz is one of the most beautiful types or patterns of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament:

- 1) Jesus as King of Israel will bring back God’s land from the Gentile, and establish it as the basis of God’s Kingdom for ever.
- 2) He will redeem his brethren, Jew and Gentile, out of bondage to sin and the poverty of death. By his life and death, he paid the price of redemption for all who believe in him.
- 3) As the Lamb of God, and the bridegroom, he will “marry” his bride, those who through faith in him will bring forth fruit to God in His Kingdom.

Notice that God’s plan of salvation involves:

- 1) His Land: There is no eternal life apart from God’s land (as Abraham understood perfectly: Gen 13:15-17).
- 2) His people: “I will be their God and they will be my people!”
- 3) His “bride”: Nothing else, in this world or the world to come, so perfectly expresses the Love of God as the love of a husband for his cherished wife. All of God’s work, since the beginning, has been to prepare a special “companion” for Himself, for all eternity. “They will be my jewels, my special and precious possession,” He says.

In carrying through to the end of the story, one obstacle remains in Ruth 4: the unnamed nearest-kinsman. He must be offered the opportunity to “redeem” the land, the family, and the woman Ruth. Boaz does this, and the nearest kinsman refuses his obligation.

Why?

- a. Is he prejudiced against Moabites? Is he afraid of the Law (Deut 23:3) that excludes them from God's congregation? (*But God has cleansed; so who are we to call common or unclean?*) **Boaz is not prejudiced. How could he be, since he is himself the descendant of the harlot Rahab?**
- b. Is he not prepared to risk his own inheritance (v 6)? (*But where is that inheritance now? Vanished.*)
- c. Is he afraid of God's "curse" that seemed to have fallen on the family of Elimelech? (*But Boaz is not afraid. And neither is Christ, to bear the "curse" of being our kinsman-redeemer. "He will save his people from their sins."*)
- d. Does he lack faith to see **her** faith, and act upon it? (*If so, he disappears from Israel, still without a name, in contrast to v 10.*)

In all this, the unnamed kinsman is like the Law of Moses, which, though given by God, cannot (because of human weakness) provide the means to complete God's plan of redemption. While the Law of Moses should have been the agency to develop faith in others, it all too often caught its followers in a trap of prejudice, fear, and doubt. True faith had to be found outside the Law, as Paul argues in his letters to the Romans and the Galatians.

Ruth 4:5: Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property."

Please consider this alongside Christ's little parable in Matthew 13:44, the treasure hidden in the field:

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."

Ruth was the real "treasure in the field". Boaz was the one who discovered what a "treasure" she was, and then set about buying, or redeeming, the field (meanwhile seeming to conceal the true value of the "treasure" Ruth). The kinsman with the prior claim gave up the "treasure" along with the land, not realizing its value.

In this sense consider also Proverbs 31:10: "A wife of noble character [a virtuous woman] who can find? She is worth far more than rubies." **Thus our "Boaz" sells all that he has in order to buy the "field", i.e., to redeem the Land of Promise, and in the process to claim us as his "special treasure".**

V 12: "May your family be like that of Perez, whom **Tamar** bore to Judah." This is a remembrance of Tamar, the earlier Gentile bound into the royal family of Judah. May her fruitfulness (both naturally and spiritually) be yours!

V 13: Ruth, who had been childless for years, now (immediately?) conceived and gave birth to a son, Obed, who would perpetuate the line of the tribe of Judah.

Vv 18-22: The little genealogy at the end of the Book gives the real reason for the inclusion of this lovely story in the Bible. It connects the Book of Ruth with the

great king David, and with the special genealogy that leads, at last, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Scarlet threads, threads of blood bind together portions of Scripture, promises with fulfillments, and generation with generation in hope and love.

Lessons:

- Elimelech and Naomi left the Land of Promise and went to Moab. But God can overrule for good even the bad decisions of His children, if they have faith in Him. After all, God became, through His Son, *our* “Kinsman-Redeemer”.
- Ruth makes a hard choice, a long journey, and demonstrates faith in adversity. She desires the spiritual crumbs that fall from the Lord’s table, and she gleanes in the fields of the Lord. She is, in short, a Gentile who becomes a Jew in faith, a faith enlivened by works.
- ‘Where is God anyway?’ The unseen providential Hand of God guides, protects, chastens, and blesses at the last. God is active even in ordinary lives of ordinary people. After all, no one can really be considered ordinary who is destined to rule in the kingdom with the Messiah of Israel.
- Malachi 3:16,17: “Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. ‘They will be mine,’ says the LORD Almighty, ‘in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him.’ ”
- Boaz (signifying strength) is the provider, the kinsman, the redeemer, the Lord of the harvest, and (finally) the Bridegroom, who spreads his arm/wing/garment of protection over the Gentile bride who comes to him in faith.
- Imagine, for just a moment (and it can only be our imaginations, because we can’t tell for sure if it really happened), we see an old woman in Bethlehem:

They put the sleeping bundle of life into my arms and as I gazed upon him through aged eyes, I remembered... I remembered another baby a long, long time ago. I, the new mother, had placed my son in another pair of old arms; and I remembered how Naomi’s face had glowed with joy at the sight of him, my little Obed.

And now, much greater in years than Naomi had been, I, Ruth, widow of Boaz, held my seventh great-grandson, David. I remember it all now, as I gaze upon this new bundle of life, this my latest great-grandson, David. David, son of Jesse, son of Obed, son of Boaz and Ruth, son of Salmon and Rahab, son of Abraham, and son of Israel.

And I have the strange and powerful feeling, at what must be nearly the end of a very long and full life, that something fresh and new and wonderful is just beginning.

(5) Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11; 12; 1 Kings 1)

Matthew 1:6: “David [became] the father of Solomon, whose mother had been URIAHS WIFE.”

2 Samuel 11:1: “At the time when kings go off to war,” David stayed at home, and sent someone else. [“Here am I, Lord; send **Joab!**”]

David had business to take care of, but instead of doing that he lounged around the palace, bored and susceptible to temptation.

While Joab and his army were busy besieging and capturing Rabbah, the fortress of the king of Ammon, David’s own “fortress” was being besieged and captured, in a matter of minutes, by a woman! “Better a man who controls his own spirit than one who captures a city” (Prov 16:32).

The woman in the case

Bathsheba was the granddaughter of Ahithophel, David’s close and trusted counselor, and the (much younger: 2Sa 12:1-3?) wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of David’s mighty warriors (2Sa 23:34,39). Although a Gentile, Uriah (signifying “the light of Yahweh”) was evidently a devout convert to the hope of Israel (cp. 11:11).

Question: How “innocent” is Bathsheba?

Was she deliberately exposing herself in the courtyard of her house, in order to seduce the king? **Or** was David “spying” (in a quite improper way) upon an innocent event?

If it were the former, then David could have sent a warning to Bathsheba of the dangers of such an activity. Instead, he sent to “find out about her” (v 3).

V 3: The servant asks, “Isn’t this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” as if to say, ‘Don’t you know she’s a married woman? You should leave her alone.’

V 4: Probably David hoped to learn that she was unmarried. But the knowledge that she was married did not stop him. Even the punishment for the sin of adultery was put out of his mind; he **had to** have her!

“She came to him.” She must have known what his invitation meant. Couldn’t she have refused? Even if she didn’t understand his intention until she got to his private chambers, couldn’t she have resisted, and protested most strenuously?

An interesting comparison: consider how the righteous woman Abigail turned aside the temper and the anger of David by kind, carefully-chosen words when he contemplated, not adultery that time, but murder? The account is in 1 Samuel 25:21-35. Knowing that David was coming with his soldiers to kill Nabal, Abigail got together food and, with her servants, went to meet David. Bowing down before him, and presenting him with the food, she reminded him of his God and his anointing, and of the type of man, righteous and kind, that he was known to be:

“Please forgive your servant’s offense, for the LORD will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my master, because he fights the LORD’s battles. Let no wrongdoing be found in you as long as you live. Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my master will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the LORD your God. But the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling. When the LORD has done for my master every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him leader over Israel, my master will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the LORD has brought my master success, remember your servant” (1Sa 25:28-31).

And David gratefully said to Abigail, “Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands” (vv 32,33).

In all of this, Abigail could have been a model for Bathsheba.

David was an honorable and honest and good man: his faults were rooted in an emotional, impulsive nature. Bathsheba could have made an appeal to his well-known and beloved character: ‘You are a man after God’s own heart. Surely you must realize how wrong this is. Think about what you are doing.’ Such an appeal would surely have turned him aside (as it had when Abigail made it in the earlier case) from a terrible sin undertaken in the impulse of emotion. If Bathsheba had made such an appeal successfully, then afterward she would have won the same gratitude as David showed toward Abigail on that earlier occasion.

On the other hand, Bathsheba is characterized by the prophet Nathan, in his parable, as a “little ewe lamb” (2Sa 12:3). The “lamb” did not, after all, “cook” and “eat” the rich man, but the other way around! So, while there seems to be blame on both sides, where is most of the blame? On David’s side? But by what proportion? In the last analysis, does it really matter exactly how much guilt is assessed here, and how much there? *We should be grateful that we don’t have to judge.*

“A man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself. Blows and disgrace are his lot [and many were to come upon David], and his shame will never be wiped away” (Prov 6:32,33b).

Question: Did the sight of the woman **cause** David to sin? Such an assessment is easy to make (‘He/she **made** me do it!’ ‘I just can’t control myself. There’s something about him when he comes into the room...’)

Such excuses are not much different, really, from the silly parody that points out the false doctrine: “The devil **made** me do it.” But of course **he** didn’t. **We** cause ourselves to sin.

Did the woman *cause* David to sin? No. The right answer is found in James 1:14,15: “Every man is tempted when, *by his own evil desire*, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

Although it may *suggest* the idea, no external temptation or outside stimulus can really *cause* a man to commit sin. His own lust is the true cause.

2 Samuel 11:4: Then “she went back home.” Now everything would be forgotten, except...

V 5: ... “*I am pregnant.*” Such complications! Was *this* simple chance, or was it by God’s design? As Moses told the children of Israel on one occasion: “You may be sure that your sin will find you out!” (Num 32:23). Fig leaves couldn’t hide the sin of our first parents, and no “fig leaves” of our own contriving can truly hide our sins either. It is so foolish to try.

Vv 6-8: Now (for those familiar with modern politics) there follows a cover-up of the first magnitude. Quite often, as we have seen, the cover-up is worse than the original crime. The sin must be concealed, even (as it turns out) at the expense of even more heinous sins. This is the first step down the slippery slope. What a tangled web we weave...

V 9: *But Uriah* (hearing the palace gossip? and what was the point of his being called back on such short notice anyway?) *does not go home.*

Vv 10,11: When David was told, “Uriah did not go home,” he asked him, “Haven’t you just come from a distance? Why didn’t you go home?” Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord’s men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!”

What a reproof and a reproach it was to a man like David. But his guilt tied his tongue from responding.

Vv 12,13: Then David said to him, “Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. At David’s invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. In the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master’s servants; he did not go home.

A second attempt to cover up also proves futile. Was it because Uriah made sure it didn’t work? Did he *know*?

Vv 14,15: In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. In it he wrote, “Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die.”

David takes the last and ugliest step down into the swamp of sin. The ill-considered but *momentary* sin of passion leads inexorably into the *cold-blooded, calculating* sin of murder. Now even more people (and especially Joab) will know of David’s scheme. How many times will David pay for this in years to come? (Did Joab keep

the letter for purposes of blackmail?)

Vv 16-25: The risky plan actually “works” (if that’s the right term), but at what a price! Other innocent men die as well (v 24).

Vv 26,27: “When Uriah’s wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife, bearing him a son, but the thing David had done displeased the LORD.”

The mourning for Uriah could have lasted as little as seven days (cp. 1Sa 31:13; John 11:17,31). Then would come the hasty marriage of David and Bathsheba. (Very hasty it was, but not quick enough, of course. People can always count, and servants can talk. By now, many people would know, or strongly suspect, what had actually happened.)

Now for Bathsheba, and the other side of the ledger:

Like Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth (but with decidedly different motives on *her* part), Bathsheba is now initiated into the royal line of Judah. *Why her, and not some “more righteous” wife of David, like Abigail, for example?*

Bathsheba plays a part in both Matthew’s genealogy, through Solomon, and in Luke’s, through Nathan, another son of hers (1Ch 3:5). She is thus the mother of *both* the sons of David found in the genealogies of the Lord.

The first three women in Matthew 1 were treated by many as outcasts, “sinners”, but they were justified by their extraordinary faith. Her situation is somewhat different, and her sin serious and beyond question, but may not Bathsheba have been justified also, by a great faith?

Some considerable time passes, not just a few months, but more than several years. How do we know? Right after the “child” in question (i.e., the first child, the one conceived in the adultery) dies (a punishment to David and Bathsheba), God gives them another son, Solomon (2Sa 12:24,25). But we know also (from 1Ch 3:5, so it would seem), that Solomon is not the *second* son born to David and Bathsheba, but the *fourth*. [As for the “seventh day” of 2Sa 12:18, on which the child died, this will be dealt with in just a moment.]

This “small” point helps us to see that the grief, illness, and other consequences of his hidden sin (described by David in some of his psalms: 6, 32, 38, and 51) were not short-lived. They lasted as much as several years, and took a terrible toll on him. The ensuing repentance, outlined in 2 Samuel 12 (and described by David in Psa 32), was not a simple and easy fix! Reading this Bible narrative quickly, as we sometimes do, may convey the first impression that everything happened much quicker and easier than it really did.

Perhaps several years later, we come to...

2 Samuel 12:1-4: Like some of Christ's parables, Nathan's parable was a suitable way of conveying unpleasant truths to closed ears, and unwilling minds. By his parable Nathan used subtlety to 'take the barricades', that is, to breach the mental defenses men build up carefully around themselves, to shield themselves from contemplating the consequences of their sins. *Even David built up such defenses.*

An interesting side-note: Archeologists have shown how David and Joab must have used the hidden, secret passageway from the Gihon Spring up into the city, to capture Jebus or Jerusalem (2Sa 5:6-8). In the same way the parable of Nathan, like a "thief in the night", sneaks into the heart unexpectedly and accomplishes its purpose.

V 4: "Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

The phrase "a traveler" suggests that such lust was not the constant companion of David. It was just a passing thought, that should have been sent packing immediately, but instead was allowed to hang around.

Vv 5,6: David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

Here is the wrong way to listen to the word of exhortation: i.e., with an eye as to how it applies *to someone else*. David's first emotional reaction (he is often emotional) is to cry out, "Kill him!" (Similarly, Judah had immediately sought the death of his daughter-in-law Tamar, having forgotten entirely any sin of his own.) But David's first reaction is followed, quickly, by the more measured "Restore fourfold", which is what the Law required for this specific offence (Exod 22:1).

V 7: Now Nathan springs the trap: "You are the man!" And there comes to David the sudden, lightning-bolt realization: "I **am** the man!" Such a paradigm shift, or attitude adjustment, must come to each of us from time to time when reading the Bible, when it suddenly dawns upon us that a lesson hidden to our eyes and hearts for perhaps years, has been brought home with powerful effect: "**It IS I!**"

I ought to say, "If that never happens to you, then my guess is you're not really paying attention. Why bother reading, in the first place, if the warnings, parables, and examples of the Bible never have anything to say to you? And so one of the most important questions we can ask ourselves as we read the Bible is, "Lord, is it I?" And sometimes, the answer we each "hear" is, "Yes, you are the man", or "the woman"! We can count on it.

Vv 7b-9: 'I made you king over all Israel. Knowing your weakness for women, I gave you many wives. It was not enough! Now the enemies of the LORD gloat over this vile sin, blaspheming the name of the God you pretend to serve.' *Nathan was a prophet, and his prophecy is still true today.* (In what other nation could a religious man speak thus to a king?)

V 13a: David's nobility and honesty of character reassert themselves. "*I have sinned.*" Now he makes no excuses, and no pathetic pleas for mercy. There is just a plain humble admission of the awful truth.

A remarkable thing happened as soon as the words left his lips.

V 13b: "The LORD has taken away your sin!" Although possible years had passed in the darkness of unrepented sin, and illness and worry and fear had followed David, *it is just as simple as that! There IS mercy with the Most High!*

Nevertheless there are limits to what God's mercy can do.

V 14: "The child will die": Which child? The child of the adulterous union, now probably several years old. (Remember: some considerable time has passed, as we discussed earlier. This means the "seventh day" of verse 18 is not the seventh day of the baby's life, but probably the seventh day since the parable and the pronouncement of Nathan.)

Lesson: Sins may be forgiven, and still have terrible and far-reaching consequences. This was only the beginning: "The sword will never depart from your house!" (v 10): David would pay fourfold (cp. v 6):

1. Bathsheba's son...

But even the death of Bathsheba's child would not truly close this chapter of David's life. Next there would also be:

2. Amnon,
3. Absalom, and
4. Adonijah.

These last three would die (victims of lust and greed and hunger for power), in part because of the subsequent events David's adultery, like a pebble tossed in a still pond, set in motion.

As we think back on the genealogy and the lessons of Matthew 1, we remember 2 Samuel 12:10 again: "The sword will never depart from your house": It would reach all the way to Golgotha. See the words of the prophet Simeon to Mary and Joseph in the Temple: Luke 2:28-35 (v 35 esp: "A sword shall pierce your own soul also").

The "scarlet thread" of sin and suffering (and the consequent need for a true sacrifice for sins) would stretch down the ages, from mother to child, and mother to child again, generation after generation. It would continue until it reached the cross, and there it would all be wrapped up and done away with.

We think once again of Matthew 1:21: "He shall save his people from their sins." Jesus would take upon himself the burden of the sins of others, even those of his own family.

V 24: *Theirs had been a particularly terrible sin (and sins, plural). But once it was forgiven, the book of account on David and Bathsheba (at least for this incident) could be closed, and blessings could come, such as the perpetuation of the royal line*

of the Messiah through two adulterers. For God chose one of Bathsheba's sons to sit on His throne, and to build His temple. Even more extraordinary, another of her descendants will sit on God's throne forever, and build His eternal temple.

Now notice a special comparison, among all four of the women of Matthew 1:

- a. Tamar had two husbands. Both died, and she was still childless. Instead, a prince of the tribe (Judah himself) raised up a godly seed to continue what would become the royal line of Judah.
- b. Rahab had had many “husbands”, fornicators and idolaters, but no child. Again, a prince of Judah (Salmon) married her and raised up a godly seed in the royal line of Judah.
- c. Ruth had a first husband who died, leaving her no children. Once more, a prince of Judah (Boaz) married her and raised up a godly seed to continue the line of Judah.
- d. Now Bathsheba, married to Uriah but childless, marries David the king of Israel, and even after their adultery becomes the mother of the next king, and a progenitor of the royal line of Judah.

So those who *seem* to have been barren women are all given seed, after their first “husbands” die, by a prince of Judah!

The final chapter in Bathsheba's history: 1 Kings 1

Here we reflect on the later character of Bathsheba. At a time of crisis for the throne of Israel, she showed great faith in the promise of God to her son Solomon. When David was on his deathbed, and the succession was uncertain, it was Bathsheba who went to the aged king:

“My lord, you yourself swore to me your servant by the LORD your God: ‘Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne’ ”
(v 17).

Then, vv 29-31: “May my lord King David live forever!” What a marvelous hope is bound up in this wish! “Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were *dead* in transgressions — it is by grace you have been *saved*” (Eph 2:4,5).

Despite her past sins, Bathsheba (her name signifies “daughter of the *oath*, or the covenant”) proved to be a woman of faith. Her faith in her coming descendant, the promised Messiah, was shown by her deeds in seeking David's rightful selection of Solomon for the throne. This secured her rightful place in the lineage of the Son of God: As Peter preached to the Jews, “God had promised [David] on *oath* that he would place one of his descendants on his throne” (Acts 2:30).

Bathsheba made sure that the right son of David would be chosen.

Finally, Proverbs 31. There is a tradition that King “Lemuel” (signifying “belonging to God”) is simply another name for Solomon, and therefore that the “king's mother” in that verse is Bathsheba. If this is so, then consider the weight of her words in **Proverbs 31:1-5**, especially:

V 2: “Son of my vows”, i.e., the promised son, dedicated to God. As if to say, ‘Since you have forgiven my sin, I dedicate my son, this Solomon, to you.’

V 3: “Do not spend your strength on women”: Bathsheba’s motherly counsel was born out of her own bitter experiences. (Sadly, it appears Solomon did not heed her warnings.)

Nevertheless, the “scarlet thread” of hope, binding together generation after generation of the tribe of Judah, is sufficient protection even for an adulteress (just as it was for a harlot).

The rest of us, conscious of our own sins (even if less spectacular), and disregarding any (presumed) “righteous works” (could such works make up for our sins?), may say, “Thank God it is so.”

The one who saves “his people” from their sins will save us from our sins because we, you and I, are “his people” too!

(6) Mary (Matthew 1; 2; Luke 1; 2)

Matthew 1:16: “Joseph [became — not the father of Jesus, but...] the husband of MARY... of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.”

First, in Luke 1, we begin by reading “between the lines”.

To paraphrase an old rabbinical saying:

People marry for four reasons: for passion, for wealth, for honor, or for the glory of God. If they marry for passion, their children will be given over to their own passions, and will grow up stubborn and rebellious. If they marry for wealth, their children will learn to be greedy. If they marry for honor, their children will one day become proud, ambitious, and ruthless. But if they marry for the glory of God, then their children will be righteous, and they will preserve Israel.

Our story begins in Nazareth, a little town of no special consequence in the hills of Galilee. It was a village like many others, with simple people going forth to labor in their shops or work in their fields. The men would pause to discuss the weather, or perhaps the news of the latest Roman outrage. Women drew water from the well at the town square, stopping a while to chat with their friends, to learn perhaps who was ill or who had had a baby. Children played in the dusty streets, sometimes ignoring their mothers’ calls and the approaching darkness.

When the Sabbath came, all activity ceased, and families dressed in their best clothes and gathered at the old stone synagogue. There the grandfatherly rabbi read, with carefully measured phrasing, from the Holy Scriptures, and offered his simple exhortation for the week. He was not an eloquent speaker. Nor was he

a subtle expounder of legal details, like the teachers from Jerusalem who passed through occasionally on their way to some place more important. But he was well respected, even loved, for his honesty and kindness. He was faithful and diligent in teaching the boys of Nazareth, preparing them to assume their positions as men in the congregation of Israel.

A special announcement

This particular Sabbath he had a special announcement, a little something extra to enliven the proceedings. It was not a total surprise to his listeners, but then, in a village like Nazareth, very few things were secret: *‘Joseph, son of Jacob the carpenter, having brought a satisfactory dowry, desires the hand of Mary, daughter of Heli, both being of the house of David. May God bless their union.’*

The following week was a time of joyful celebration. It was a time for older folks to relive their youth, and for the very young to dream of the future. The old songs of love and marriage were sung again. That most romantic of the scrolls, “The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s”, would be remembered and read, and listeners would thrill to the rich exotic poetry of love, sensual yet spiritual, truly a mystery. The loving eyes of family and friends would see Joseph in the young shepherd, and Mary in the beautiful Shullamite: *“How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful!... Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon [part of the “scarlet thread” of our story]; your mouth is lovely... there is no flaw in you... You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride; you have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much more pleasing is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your perfume than any spice!”* (Song 4:1,3,7,9,10).

“No flaw in you”

In those days, and for those people, marriage was a sacred covenant, and a token of God’s love for Israel His bride. It was an enacted parable teaching the necessity of purity in the bride, of faithful devotion to one Master alone: “There is no flaw in you... a garden locked up, my sister, my bride; you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain” (Song 4:7,12).

Betrothal was a quite formal and binding engagement. It was a legal contract sealed, before witnesses, by a dowry or purchase price. It was, in fact, a marriage under law; the young woman was now a bride and a wife, although a “suitable interval” (as much as a year) must elapse before the marriage could be consummated. However, if her betrothed were to die during this period she would be, under law, a widow with guaranteed property rights. And if she were unfaithful, the law would have no mercy. Single women who sinned might have their shame mitigated with payments or dowries and hasty marriages; but she would be an adulteress, and the sentence could be death by stoning.

There were yet months and months until the marriage could be finalized, but Mary could close her eyes and see it all: the procession as the bridegroom comes to the house of the bride, to carry her away to his own home; the virgins or “bride’s maids” with their lamps to light the way. Then would come the joyous marriage

feast, the special wedding garments, the wine of joy. It would all come true for her and her beloved. God had indeed richly blessed them.

Before consummation of the marriage, there must come the months of waiting, preparation, and anticipation. In the meantime, ever present as a reminder, was the memory of that pledge of purity already taken: to have and to hold, to forsake all others, to cleave only to her husband, to be “a garden locked up, a fountain sealed” (Song 4:12).

Much of our lives can be a waiting, an anticipation of something better, something different. How often has it happened that “fate” or “chance” has intervened, and that which we hoped for, which we had reason to expect (a new job, an award, a marriage proposal, a “windfall” profit), was snatched away, and we received instead something else altogether different? This is what happened to Mary.

An unexpected visitor

Luke 1:26-28: No greater honor had ever been bestowed upon a woman than was Mary’s lot, but it was an honor that carried an awesome responsibility. It would mean the shattering of other cherished dreams and desires. Her life would never be as simple and pleasant as she had had reason to expect a short while before.

When she saw the angel, Mary began to “wonder” or “consider” (v 29, RSV) in her mind what sort of greeting this was. It was of course a trifle disconcerting, even frightening, to be visited by an angel in the midst of an ordinary day. Mary’s fear was overridden by her curiosity and quiet reflection.

No matter what happened to Mary, she paused to consider, to ponder, to reflect. She is one of the great “spectators” in the Bible. We thank God for Mary and her example. When she stops to consider, then we are compelled to do the same. When she stands still to see the salvation of the Lord, we too halt in our headlong rush through overcrowded lives, and pause for a moment with her. We catch a little of the infinite wonder in the calm, clear eyes of this young woman, an attitude molded by careful Bible study and frequent prayer. Like her, we learn to treasure in our hearts the sayings we hear (Luke 2:51). Like her, we “ponder” them (2:19) in the stillness of the night so that, when the storms of life beat upon us, like her we will be strong in faith.

Vv 30,31: “The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.’” To find favor implies a request answered, and we could conclude that this young, pure Jewish woman may have been praying, though never really expecting a favorable answer: ‘May I be the mother of the Messiah.’ This would be in keeping with one traditional Jewish view of Isaiah 7:14: that a virgin would marry and then conceive (by natural means) a son who would become the Messiah, but not literally the Son of God. Since Mary and Joseph both belonged to the house of David, perhaps such thoughts had come to her.

Up to this point the Holy Spirit had not been mentioned. Mary might reasonably have concluded that this special child would also be the son of Joseph.

Even as she pondered these words, Gabriel continued: “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.” The Son of God! Even great king David was never so called. Would her son be somehow greater than even David? Perhaps the thought staggered Mary so that she scarcely heard the rest of the great promise: “The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.” Son of David, of course (2Sa 7:12-14,16; Psa 89:29,36), and heir to his fallen throne, he was also the “Son of the Most High.” What can this mean?

“How will this be?” Could this great thing happen to Mary even without her “knowing” Joseph (v 34)? Now Gabriel speaks plainly: *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God... For nothing is impossible with God”* (vv 35,37).

The language of Gabriel calls to mind the words of Genesis describing the creation itself. The Spirit of God “overshadowed”, or moved upon, the face of the waters to bring forth life, as a mother hen brooding over her eggs and then her chicks. It is a picture of vast creative power, coupled with the sweetest tenderness and love. It is a picture of a God who sustains all things by His omnipotence, who acts as and when He chooses, and no man can understand, much less question, His prerogative. It is also a picture of a God who is a Father, who pities His children, who lavishes mercies unnumbered upon those who can never hope to repay Him. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us.”

This view of the Messiah’s conception, which we as Christians take for granted today, was by no means as certain to the faithful Jews of Mary’s day. But the message she received would also give additional weight to Isaiah 9:6,7, the companion passage to Isaiah 7:14. Now, in light of Gabriel’s announcement, it might be read: “To us a child is born; to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called... ‘Wonderful in counsel is the Mighty God, **who is the everlasting Father** of the Prince of Peace.’ Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.” (Evidently, this passage has been read this way by some learned rabbis: see *Tidings*, June 2008, pp. 241-242.)

V 38: “The maidservant of the Lord”: Mary responded to this great message without hesitation. She revealed an extraordinary grasp of the Scriptures for such a young girl: “I am the Lord’s servant... May it be to me as you have said” (v 38). Mary knew the passages in the psalms in which the Messiah is called the son of God’s maidservant (Psa 86:16; 116:16). Immediately, she made the connection, and gave her consent to become the mother of God’s Son, a consent that was essential to His purpose.

A veil is now modestly drawn over the scene. Of the actual conception Luke tells us nothing, and we must conclude that such knowledge is too sacred for mortals. How was this miracle accomplished? In the language of modern science, what was the “genetic code” begotten of such a union? Prudence, and some sense of the Divine majesty, counsel us to explore no further along these lines than Scripture expressly warrants. Perhaps Psalm 139 gives us an insight into this greatest of all

mysteries. God manifest in the flesh. David (and, prophetically, Jesus) says:

*“For you created my inmost being;
You knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place.
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,
Your eyes saw my unformed body.
All the days ordained for me were written in your book
Before one of them came to be.
How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!” (vv 13-17)*

Blessed among women?

The veil is lifted, and we see Mary again, but in some sense a new person now, touched by the Almighty, never to regain the naiveté and innocence of her youth. Her faith had been great, but now she could feel the great change that had come upon her, a change that could not be hidden for long even if she wanted to hide it. What doubts must have come upon her! How would she explain her condition? Whom should she tell, if anyone? Who would believe her? Would even her beloved Joseph believe? And those words of the marriage song, once so fitting: would they now mock her? “No flaw in you... a garden locked up... a fountain sealed...”

The calling of the Lord is seldom an unmixed pleasure. Mary was uniquely “blessed” among women, but blessings are not always enjoyable. Sometimes they can be downright unpleasant.

“Oh, to do some great work for God!” Haven’t we all said that? However, the great works described in the Bible often included imprisonment, slavery, torture, or (as with Mary) scandal and gossip (like Tamar and Rahab), which she was destined to experience to a degree which we can scarcely appreciate, living as we do in such libertine times (where sin is scarcely ever noticed or mentioned). Do we really want to be blessed by God, like the first Joseph was “blessed” in a foreign prison, or like Jeremiah was “blessed” in a foul pit, or like Mary was “blessed” to be shunned as an “unwed mother”, or an “adulteress” (like Bathsheba)?

We can be such silly, shortsighted people. We want the cheers, but not the tears. We love the spotlight, but not the shadows. We want to wear the crown without carrying the cross. We want to sit with Christ on the mountain while the crowds listen worshipfully, but we do not want to venture into the dark garden where men weep and wrestle with the serpent of self, its tempting whispers filling their own minds.

All these things have a place in God’s plan. It is written that we must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). Even this might not be so difficult if we could choose the time and place of our trials, but that, too, is in the hand of God. Each believer must be prepared for a Gethsemane of God’s own choosing, suited to him or her alone.

Can we trust in the One who caused the great pain and still believe that He can bring blessing out of suffering?

Whenever and wherever the trial comes, there can be only one response, the one we have just heard from Mary's lips: "May it be to me as you have said." "Thy will be done."

Her life was lived for the glory of God, and her children were righteous. Her eldest son learned much from his mother. In the hour of his trial, his prayer was an echo of hers: "Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Mary married, and lived, for the glory of God. As the old rabbis said, her son was righteous. Her son preserved Israel.

Luke 1:39-45: Mary went to Elizabeth, receiving confirmation of the angel's words.

Vv 46-55: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me — holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."

Mary's song of rejoicing and thanksgiving contains allusions to about 25 Old Testament passages. Here was a young woman (probably only 14 or 15) who nevertheless had extensive knowledge of Scripture. She was no ordinary young woman, yet in some ways she was ordinary.

There is the exhortation. She did not know she was someone special until that day Gabriel brought his message, and like Ruth she set off on a long journey. For Mary it was a journey to Judah and back, to Bethlehem and Egypt, to Nazareth yet again, and finally over 30 years later to a hill outside Jerusalem, where her heart would break. But until that fateful day of the angel's revelation, Mary's life had only been one of waiting.

Her waiting had consisted of reading, meditation, service, worship, and prayer. She had laid herself at the throne of God. She had waited. And then, as the Almighty cast about for an instrument to fulfill His purpose, a "vessel" fit for His hand, she was there. She was ready, as best she could make herself, and she was willing to be used. An ordinary girl? Yes, but at the same time a very extraordinary girl. Are we ordinary, or are we special?

There were no "kings" in Nazareth, no generals, no great scholars, just ordinary people like you and me. God chose them, as He chooses us, investing the ordinary with great holiness, so that no flesh should boast in His presence. He chooses

people, but not because they *are* special. Rather, He chooses people whom He can *make* special.

The angel spoke to Mary, but he also speaks to us: “You have found favor with God” (Luke 1:30). Almost before we asked, even though we do not deserve it, we have found favor with God. Not even a sparrow falls to the ground unnoticed by God, and we, His children, we are worth many sparrows (Matt 10:29,31).

It is not difficult to believe that God exists, but sometimes it is difficult to believe that He takes personal notice of “little people”. Nevertheless, He takes time off from balancing the stars of heaven and directing the courses of nations to care for every one of us poor, weak, common creatures. He guides and protects them, and at last He rights all wrongs. The story of Mary should be a gentle reminder that no one is too small or insignificant for God’s notice, if he or she has faith.

Luke tells Mary’s story more than Joseph’s, but Matthew tells Joseph’s story more than Mary’s. The two together give us a complete picture.

Matthew 1:18: “She was found to be with child.” It sounds as though Mary did not reveal the past events to any but Elizabeth and Zechariah until her condition was known. Her silence was the result (we may suppose) of equal parts modesty and faith; modesty in speaking of such an intimate matter, and faith that God would reveal His purpose when He chose, and to whom He chose.

It must be pointed out that the last phrase of Matthew 1:18 (“through the Holy Spirit”) does not describe what was known immediately, either by Mary’s parents or by Joseph. This is certain because of what follows in the narrative. The addition of this last phrase is Matthew’s explanation, by which the link is made to the foregoing genealogy (especially with v 16) and to the succeeding prophecy (v 23).

What should Joseph do now? Joseph is a “righteous man” (v 19). What does a “righteous” man do when confronted with the “obvious” sin of another? Does he “righteously” rebuke, and punish the sinner? “To the full extent of the law!” How often we hear that cry of righteous zeal, or its equivalent, today! A wise man once remarked: “Every man wants justice for others, and mercy for himself.”

Sometimes God tests our reactions. Are we too quick to pass judgment? Are we eager to stand up for our rights? Are we as eager to cover another’s sin? We have all known the brother (maybe we see him in the mirror every morning) who is quick to judge, who relishes the role of ‘the righteous arm of the Lord’ in dispensing His judgment, but who is aghast at the suggestion that he can dispense God’s mercy. ‘God can forgive, but we do not have that prerogative.’ ‘We must make this sinner a public example, so others will be discouraged from doing likewise.’ ‘God may have mercy on her, but that is for Him to say, not me.’

Joseph was not that sort of man; he was “righteous”, with all the qualities of strength, decency, and mercy (but none of the harshness and arrogance) that the word may imply.

This description seems an intended contrast with two of Joseph's ancestors who are listed in the genealogy of Matthew 1:

- (1) Judah was all for putting to death his daughter-in-law Tamar for "playing the harlot". His "righteous" zeal was interrupted only by her proof that he had been her consort; that he, in fact, was guilty and she was innocent. He was only lying with a harlot, while she, on the other hand, was fulfilling the Mosaic law of succession and inheritance as best she could (Gen 38:24-26).
- (2) David, a man after God's own heart, was anything but "righteous" in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah, compounding adultery with murder. But, later, when told of the theft of a little ewe lamb in Nathan's masterful allegory, he burned with zealous fury: "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die!" (2Sa 12:5), he cried. How flimsy his "righteousness" really was, he soon found out to his surprise. *"Thou art the man!"*

If the lessons of the genealogy are pursued a bit further, Joseph was in fact much more like two other of his ancestors:

- (3) Salmon "covered" the past sins of Rahab the harlot by marrying her.
- (4) Boaz married Ruth the Moabitess even though she had been rejected by the nearest kinsman.

V 19b: Joseph "did not want to expose her to public disgrace... he had in mind to divorce her quietly." Casting about for a solution, Joseph, on his own, decided on the easiest and most merciful approach: he would "divorce" Mary quietly, allowing her to go away and, as he imagined (in his ignorance) at this point, marry the father of the child.

The parallels between this incident and that of John 8:1-11 are obvious: a woman discovered in adultery, an "open-and-shut" case, hasty condemnation on the part of some, but tender mercy from the only one in a real position to judge. Joseph would not "throw the first stone", and neither would Jesus.

It is not too far-fetched, indeed, to suppose that the whole matter of the woman taken in adultery may have been contrived by the Lord's enemies to discredit him. It is almost certain that, as Jesus grew in popularity, his enemies made secret investigations into his early life and heard rumors about the peculiar circumstances of his conception.

Suppose that, when confronted with the question as to the woman's fate, Jesus had said, 'Yes, let her be stoned.' The retort would have immediately come, 'Then what should be done with your mother?' For Mary was a betrothed woman at the time of Jesus' conception.

Other such base insinuations in the chapter may be seen in the same light: "Where is your father?" (John 8:19); and "We are not illegitimate children [as some are]" (v 41).

There was no bond of fleshly descent between Joseph and Jesus. Nevertheless, the actions of both in similar circumstances surely suggest that Joseph was a wise choice to act as the human "father" of Jesus, and that something of his character made an impression upon the little Son of God in his earliest years.

V 20: After he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”

Both Mary and Joseph were asked by God to accept the disgrace and shame of a couple who have “sinned”. Joseph was told to name the child (v 21), an act that would be interpreted by all as an admission of paternity. (This would also be taken as an implicit admission that he had lied in previously asserting his innocence, as has been suggested above.)

In the eyes of the people, then, either Joseph was a weak man who could not control his passions, or, worse yet, a fool tricked into raising another man’s son. (Because of Mary’s three-month sojourn in Judah, the tongue-waggers could make a strong argument for the latter view.) Such matters would not be soon forgotten in a small close-knit country village.

God could have made it easier. He could have smoothed the way, but He did not. Mary must now gather her belongings and go quietly to the house of Joseph. She would go with relief, certainly, that her beloved no longer doubted her, and that he was one with her in understanding the marvelous revelation of God. But she would go also under the disdainful eyes of her friends and relatives, and perhaps the sorrow of her parents, which she could do nothing to alleviate. For Mary and Joseph there would be no happy wedding, no bridesmaids, no feasts, no laughing children, no gifts and good wishes. The cloud of suspicion was made worse because there could be neither repentance nor explanation, only passive endurance: “But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called” (1Pe 2:20,21).

God saw to it that His own Son was provided with sterling examples of such traits in his childhood. Jesus was “called” to follow the pattern of meek suffering in well doing that Mary and Joseph set for him. The grace under pressure that they showed during an extended trial was the object of his keen discernment. He could not fail, as he grew up, to hear the whispers and the innuendoes; but from his parents, never a complaint. These lessons were taken to heart, and given the perfect reinterpretation in his own life.

In remarkable ways, even before Jesus was born, his Heavenly Father was plowing the “soil”, and planting the seed that produced trials and the consequent character development of Mary and Joseph. By these, His only-begotten Son would be instructed and prepared for the work he had to do. It is never enough to tell someone: “Resist not evil; turn the other cheek; give kindness for hurt; do not complain but trust in God for all things...” It is far better, not just to tell, but also to show them. The words and sentiments are lovely, but we need (as Jesus himself needed) real-life examples to follow: God gave them, and Jesus found them, in those who gave him life, sustained that life, and raised and taught him.

The “Lamb of God”, set apart to take away the sin of the world, was prepared in his mother’s nursery, and in the workshop of his “father” Joseph, and in the

bosom of a small, poor family, who talked of God's wonderful promises, praying together around the table and the fireplace.

Joseph and Mary grasped the "scarlet cord" of hope, the same "cord" that their ancestors had grasped. Generation to generation was bound together by the wonderful stories of redemption, in their own family of Judah, and by the stories of faith and commitment and sacrifice that filled the Old Testament. Thus Yahweh made His own Son strong for the work he must do.

"He will be called 'Yahshua', for he will save his people from their sins"
(Matt 1:21).

(7) The Scarlet Thread

Bro. Harry Tennant once said, "When you find a golden thread in a Scripture verse, and you pull it a bit, you never know which other verse will 'move'."

It's a lovely thought and a constant reminder to us that, wherever we read in the Bible, we ought to be alert for the echoes, the direct quotations, and the marginal references that point us to other parts of God's Word. The Bible is an inspired masterpiece, and those who understand one part are well on the way to understanding other parts. "What does this remind me of?" is almost always the best question we can ask as we read the Scriptures.

Bro. Harry spoke of golden threads, and we have been talking about scarlet threads, or cords, or garments. The principle is the same, of course.

Even more than that, the two together — golden threads and scarlet ones — remind us of the tabernacle, and then the temples, in Israel. These houses of God, and houses of worship, were equipped with elaborate woven hangings, curtains, and veils. The garments of the priests who ministered there were likewise woven of the finest fabric, and interwoven and embroidered with, among other things, threads of gold, and threads of scarlet!

Exodus 26, 27, 36, and 38 speak of the tabernacle, and Exodus 28 and 39 of the ceremonial garments of the High Priest. In these were to be found finely-twisted linen, and threads of scarlet, and blue, and purple, and even gold itself, drawn out into the finest wire and interwoven with the fabrics.

It is beyond our scope, and our time, to develop this picture in great detail. But we satisfy ourselves here by remarking on the plain Scriptural significance of the fabrics and the gold and the colors:

1. Fine linen, being white, signifies holiness, purity, and righteousness, as found in the bride (the sort of garments the young Mary no doubt planned to wear at the celebration of her wedding). In Revelation 19:8, the bride of Christ is "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." (And not so much their own righteousness, but more so the righteousness provided them as a garment, or a covering, by the Bridegroom.)

2. The color blue calls one's attention to the heavens, and to the God who dwells there. The Jews were supposed to wear, always, cords or hems of blue on their garments (Num 15:38), the more easily to remember God and His commandments. (In the gospels, the woman with an issue of blood, who could not be healed, took hold of the hem of Jesus' garment and was healed. This recalls the passage in Zechariah 8, where ten men of the nations take hold of the hem of the garment of *THE Jew*, asking him for deliverance and salvation. It was the blue hem of such a garment, perhaps augmented with the scarlet of Judah, that Ruth asked Boaz to spread over her, claiming her as his bride.)
3. Scarlet is the color of blood, and sin, and sacrifice God promises Israel: "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18). Tamar's scarlet cord was the cord of inheritance and royalty, and Rahab's scarlet cord more that of sacrifice, the scarlet blood of the Passover lamb.
4. Purple is the combination of equal parts blue (godliness) and scarlet (humanity, sin, and sacrifice). Purple is often associated with kingship.
5. And gold is, among other things, a symbol of royalty (the crown of gold), **as well as** a symbol of faith. In 1 Peter 1:7 Peter compares faith with gold, and a tried faith with purified gold.

All this is fascinating. Without going deeper, it suggests that God's house, and the coverings for God's priests, were specially prepared for them according to rigid standards.

In Psalm 139:13-16 (NIV), David sings to God: *"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."*

Several words in this passage are commonly used elsewhere in the Bible to describe the knitting together, and the weaving, of the fabrics of tabernacle and temple and priestly garments (you'll have to use a concordance on that later). David applies them to the knitting together of the fetus in the mother's womb, the mysterious process by which God miraculously creates each human being. David was thus "woven together" in his mother's womb, as was the Lord Jesus Christ.

Even beyond this point, we recognize that God is working to weave all of us together, in our lives, our experiences, our trials, our "successes" (if there are such) and even our "failures" (as those of David and Bathsheba). It is in our failures that we may learn most readily to turn to the One who doesn't fail. In our weaknesses we may be drawn to the One who is strong!

God has worked,

- (a) first in the experiences of men like David, of the tribe of Judah, then
- (b) in the experiences of his descendant, our Lord Jesus Christ, and now
- (c) in all our own experiences.

God continues to work today to construct and organize a tabernacle, or temple, in which He will dwell. This is what we mean when we talk about the “scarlet thread, or cord” in the story of the women of Matthew 1 (and, I venture to suggest, what Bro. Harry Tennant meant when he talked of finding, studying, and learning from the golden threads of the Bible).

More than this, the scarlet cord plays an important part in the development of our story. As we recall:

- a. A scarlet thread or cord was used by Tamar to mark out her firstborn as a prince in Judah.
- b. And another scarlet cord (or the same one?) was used (probably) by Salmon prince of Judah as a Passover emblem to denote the house of Rahab, and to save her and her family when God destroyed the city of Jericho.
- c. A garment (whether with a scarlet cord, we cannot say for sure) figured prominently in Ruth’s claiming her redeemer Boaz: “Spread your garment over me... give me protection.” And another prince of Judah resulted from their union, another link in the genealogy that led from Abraham to Jesus Christ.
- d. And then, there are the lips of the Shullamite, as “a scarlet thread” (Song 4:3). This signifies that she is distinguished by talking about, and thinking of, these stories.
- e. The scarlet cord seems to recede in the story of David and Bathsheba, but it is replaced by a sword: “The sword shall not depart from your house.” Because of sin, there is suffering, and death, and loss, but in all of this, and despite it, God still works to produce His seed, to continue the royal line, that leads at last to His only-begotten Son.

When Jesus was born, he was taken shortly thereafter to the Temple to be presented to God, and redeemed by a special sacrifice. There the old man Simeon took the baby in his arms, and then said to Mary: “And a sword will pierce your own soul also” (Luke 2:35). In this he implied, as plainly as he could, that there would be a “sword” (suffering, and death) in the life of this little baby.

There is more. We go to the garden of Gethsemane, and there we watch. We see, in the shadows, the Son of God sweating as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground (Luke 22:44). Shortly thereafter, there arrive at the garden soldiers, carrying **swords** and clubs, to arrest him. Peter pulls out a hidden **sword**, and wields it. Jesus warns: “Put your **sword** away. Must I not drink of the cup prepared for me?”

Finally, a few hours later, we see his captors “put a **scarlet robe** on him” (Matt 27:28) and mockingly saluted him as “the **king** of the Jews [literally, the king of **Judah**]”.

The sword could not depart from David’s house; it cannot depart from our house either. We are all condemned to die because of our sins. The sword **will not depart...** until the work of Jesus Christ has run its full course. He must experience the sword, he must wear the scarlet robe, and we must be bound to him in those

experiences. We must share in his death, and his sacrifice: we must be touched by his blood. We must crucify ourselves, and our pride and our sins and our self-reliance, along with him at Golgotha.

We must bow down at the foot of the cross, and say, 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner! I grasp the scarlet cord of your garment. I need to be sprinkled with your shed blood. I need healing that only you can provide. I need covering that only you can provide. Redeem me, O Lord.'

We have traced the theme of the scarlet thread through the stories of the women of Matthew 1. As we went along, we noticed that the picture of the scarlet thread (or cord, or garment) seemed to give way to the picture of the sword (and blood and sacrifice and death). Alternately, it might perhaps be said that the scarlet cord *has become* the cord of blood! For several reasons, this makes quite a good deal of sense:

- (a) As the scarlet "thread" is traced through our story lines, and we get closer and closer to the culmination, with Jesus Christ, the theme of blood and sacrifice begins to supersede the other. That is, it becomes more obvious that the inheritance of the royal line of Judah *depends upon* a sacrificial death of the One in whom the line concludes! Jesus *IS* the King because he is first the perfect sacrifice. He will wear the crown of gold because he first wore the crown of thorns. He will conquer the nations because he first conquered his own "spirit", his own "will", by making that will the same as his Father's will.
- (b) When the scarlet cord appears in the story of Rahab, it is plain that it is the nearest approximation to the blood of the Passover Lamb. When Rahab hung the scarlet cord in the window of her house, it would, to Jewish soldiers and angels alike, resemble the blood sprinkled, or smeared, around the doors of the Israelite homes in Egypt. The inhabitants of those houses were the only ones who escaped the final plague, the death of the firstborn of each family. This points plainly to Jesus Christ himself, whom John the Baptist calls "the [Passover] Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).
- (c) Then there is *another* scarlet thread in the Bible, already mentioned. It is the scarlet thread found in the garments of the High Priest, and in curtains and veils and garments associated with the tabernacle and temple. It is the scarlet thread of sacrifice.
- (d) Even though Levi (and not Judah) was the priestly family in Israel, Jesus is plainly a different order of priest. He is a priest, not of Levi, but after the order of Melchizedek (Heb 7): a king-priest combination. So there is reason to see two scarlet threads in the Bible: one kingly and one priestly; and also to find them coming together in the person of our Lord.

Certain passages in the Book of Revelation bring these threads together:

- (1) Revelation 5:1-13: The Lion of the Tribe of Judah is proclaimed (in heaven? or in the temple of God?) as having triumphed. To him is given the privilege of opening the Book of Life and the book of the future. In the scene pictured

in Revelation 5, all the hosts around the throne of God wait eagerly for the “Lion” of Judah to appear so that the wonderful book might be opened. However, when he does appear, in v 6, he appears, amazingly, not as a “Lion” at all, but instead as a “Lamb, looking as if he had been slain”! It is one of the great dramatic reversals, and great surprises, in the Bible, if we can imagine the theatrical effect of this scene. [*‘We all waited, breathlessly, for the Great Lion to appear! And behold, when he came, he was a lowly lamb, covered with blood and the marks of having been slain!’*] However, in one sense it is no surprise at all: the “Lion” of Judah who receives the scepter of the Kingdom of God could prove his right to the throne only by laying down his life. He had to be a lamb, *the Lamb of God*, before he could ever think of being the “Lion of Judah”!

- (2) In Revelation 7:9-17, the redeemed “out of every tribe, nation, people, and language” wash their garments and make them white in the blood of the “Lamb”, the Lamb who rests in the center of God’s throne.
- (3) And in Revelation 13:8, the Lamb is said to have been slain “from the foundation of the world”. In other words, his death was ordained from the beginning. So there is every reason to suppose that, from the “foundation of the world” to the end of the world, the “scarlet threads” (the threads of bloodshed and death and sacrifice) would, if pulled a bit, lead inevitably to him. Signs and markers and emblems left ahead of time, little scarlet threads interwoven into the fabric of God’s wonderful Book, all point to the Coming One. He is a Man who became a Lamb, and then became a Lion (though he still may appear, to believers, at least, in his most precious role, as the Lamb who had been slain.).

We have talked earlier, also, about the “scarlet cord” as a cord of hope, binding together one generation to the next, in shared expectations of the One to come.

It is no surprise, then, that *the umbilical cord* binding the expectant mother to the child in her womb, and carrying nourishment from the one to the other is actually a “scarlet cord” and a cord of blood.

The spiritual “umbilical cord” is the means by which the mother conveys spiritual nourishment to the child, giving him or her the first lessons about God. Such lessons inculcate an awareness of the One who is beyond, intangible, unseen, yet all-knowing and all-powerful, and on Him we all depend utterly. The old rabbis said the one who is best taught is the one who is taught by his mother.

Matthew 1 — with its special women — speaks to us of the hopes, the yearnings, the “treasured-up-in-the-heart” desires of righteous mothers for their children. It may seem, sometimes, as though men rule the world, but there is great truth in the old saying. The saying is a cliché, but it is still true: *“The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.”*

We all should have our own memories of the “scarlet cord” of family — for many of us a natural family, father and mother, grandparents. For all of us, surely, there are memories of a spiritual family, of “fathers” and “mothers” in the faith, who gave us visions of coming glory. Those are the memories we should cherish and pass along to others, to our own natural children, and to our “spiritual” children as well.

I still have copies of books that belonged first to my grandmother, and then were passed along to my mother, and now they are mine. On the front pages are written notes like this: “My darling Ruth, please read this, and read it again. It is your life! The Truth is the most precious thing I can give you.”

I have my own memories, of a mother who dragged us boys out of bed on Sunday mornings so that we could drive an hour each way, no matter the weather, to attend Sunday school and meeting, practically every Sunday. I can still hear myself saying, ‘No, Mom, I want to sleep in. I’m tired. I don’t feel well.’ And I still hear her reply: ‘Get up anyway; you can sleep in the car; you’ll feel better when you get there. It’s the right thing to do!’ So off we would go! They are “scarlet cords!”

In a documentary about the Statue of Liberty, and the meaning of freedom and America, Mario Cuomo, the son of Italian immigrants and at that time the governor of New York, talked about his family history.

He remembered his father, who had first come to the shores of the New World, and then worked as a ditch-digger to earn enough money to bring over his wife and one son. Finally she and the boy (Mario’s older brother) were able to make the trip from the Old Country.

Governor Cuomo, a great storyteller, imagines the scene that *might* have occurred when Mrs. Cuomo and her small son were interviewed by an Ellis Island official. As he had imagined it, they had just come off the ship, in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty.

‘So... Mrs. Cuomo, do you have any money?’

‘Almost nothing at all.’

‘Any other family in America?’

‘No, sir.’

‘Do you have any education?’

‘Very little.’

‘What prospects do you have in America?’

‘Well, my husband is working — when he can find work — at making trenches.’

‘Making trenches? Oh, he’s a ditch-digger?’

‘Yes.’

‘That’s all?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘So. Let me get this straight. You have no money, no friends, no education, no job, nowhere to live, and one child so far to support. Your husband is a ditch-digger. Why did you come here?’

‘Sir, we came because over there, on the mainland, there is work, and we believe there is hope, hope for something better.’

‘So, Mrs. Cuomo, why should we let you in, since you have brought next to nothing with you? What can *you* give to *us*?’

‘Sir, it is true: I have nothing else to offer, except for one other thing: You see, I have a dream, just a hope, really, that before I die, a son of mine will be governor of this great state of New York.’

Let us then imagine another interview. Let us imagine that, when Naomi and Ruth made their way from Moab toward Naomi’s homeland of Israel, they were met by an Israeli border guard:

‘So, ma’am, you are Naomi widow of Elimelech, and you have land and property in Bethlehem. Is that right?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘We are pleased to have you return to us. Shalom! But who is this with you?’

‘Sir, this is my daughter-in-law, Ruth of Moab, the widow of my son Mahlon.’

‘And you, then, Ruth of Moab, let us see about you. What is your allegiance? Whom do you worship?’

‘Sir, I worship the God of Israel. I have learned of Him from my husband and my mother-in-law.’

‘Oh yes, and so they all say, when they try to sneak into Israel. How do I know this is true?’

‘Sir, you have only my word for it.’

‘Well, we shall see. Let me think: what else? Do you have any money?’

‘Almost nothing at all. We are poor widows.’

‘Do you have any education?’

‘Only the little I received in... uh, that other land.’

‘What skills do you have? Your mother-in-law is too old to be of much use working? How will you support yourself and her?’

‘I had thought that I would glean in the fields during harvest time.’

‘Hah! One more of those... And how will you ever manage?’

‘We have faith, sir. And I am a hard worker.’

‘No great prospects in that, I must say. So, let me summarize: you have no money, no skills, no expectations, and a questionable past. We know you were an idolater, and who knows what else, over there in that dark, ugly land. So why should I open the gate and allow you to enter our special Land of Promise? You seem to have brought absolutely nothing of value.’

‘Well, sir, there is one other thing: I do bring with me the hope that, if God give me the right husband, one day a descendant of mine will be the King of Israel, and another will be the Messiah.’

So, in the last analysis, what can you and I offer to the LORD of heaven and earth? Nothing, really. Except our firm grasp of the scarlet cord of memory and belief and love and hope, the cord of faith that binds us together with His Son, and with one another. The hope that one day we, and our sons and daughters, will rule as kings and priests in God’s glorious eternal Kingdom. This will be so not for any merit we have, nor for any works we have done that lift us above anyone else, but because ***with unfailing resolve we continued to cling to the hem of the garment of the One who died for us. We held on and we never let go.***

“Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. ‘They will be mine,’ says the LORD Almighty, ‘in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him’ ” (Mal 3:16,17).

In Jesus, then, the “scarlet cord” of family line and inheritance and royalty, and also of sacrifice and redemption, reaches its end. Each of us, belongs to Christ, and is through him Abraham’s seed and an heir of the promises. For us the “scarlet cord” has, in every generation, a wonderful new beginning. “Behold, I make all things new!”

- Like Tamar, we say to our Lord (the prince of Judah): “Give me your special cord and insignia, as a pledge!”
- Like Rahab, we say: “Remember me when you enter the promised land!”
- Like Ruth, we say, “Spread your cloak of protection over me!”
- Like Bathsheba, “Lord, remember the oath, the promise you made to me!”
- And, like Mary, “Lord, I am your servant. May your will be done with me!”

Appendix: The “Gaal”, or “kinsman-redeemer”

The Hebrew word “gaal”, or “goel”, has been translated “kinsman” (Num 5:8), “avenger” (Num 35:12), “revenger” (Num 35:19-27), “kinsfolk” (1Ki 16:11), “redeemer” (Job 19:25), “near kinsman” (Ruth 2:20; 3:9), and “deliver” (Psa 119:154).

When God proclaims Himself to be the Redeemer, He announces that He will become “next of kin” to those whom He will save. How did the great Creator become near of kin to us? By manifesting Himself in the flesh (2Co 5:19-21; Rom 8:3), through

the birth of a Son who will bear the image and stamp of His character, while at the same time being a man.

Redemption of a land inheritance

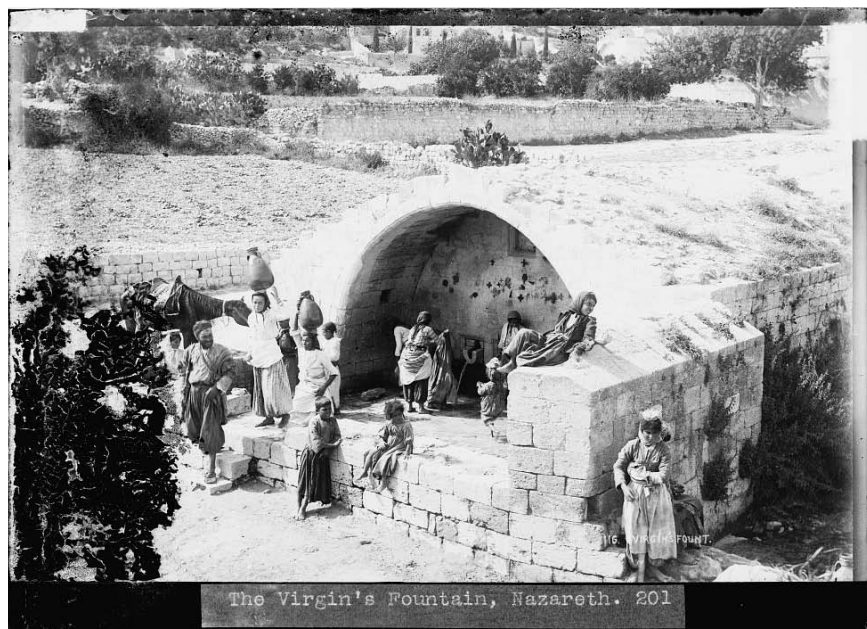
The Land belongs to God, and even in Old Testament times the individual Israelites never really owned it (Lev 25:23), though they were given the exclusive right to it so long as they kept the law. If a man fell into debt, and had to mortgage the land he inherited, it became the duty of the Gaal to purchase it, so as to retain possession of it in the family (Lev 25:23-27). On the year of Jubilee, however, the land that had passed out of the hands of the one who inherited it, reverted back to him; and therefore was redeemed by God Himself (Lev 25:9,10). Meanwhile, the Gaal acted on behalf of God.

The Land of Promise passed into the hands of strangers when Israel was taken into captivity. Yet that very Land will be redeemed by the true "Gaal": God manifested in His Son (Psa 74:2; Isa 52:9).

Redemption of slaves

If an Israelite, through poverty or any other reason, were sold into slavery to a stranger, then the Gaal had a duty to buy him back, to redeem him, and thus to restore him to freedom (Lev 25:47-53).

Through sin, man finds himself in bondage to the law of sin and death (Rom 7:3; 8:2), and utterly unable to redeem himself (Psa 49:7,8). But God, the Gaal of Israel,



The Virgin's Fountain, Nazareth. 201

The Virgin's Fountain in Nazareth (Library of Congress, M32-D-201)

having manifested Himself in flesh in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, assumes the position of near kinsman, and so the price of redemption is paid (1Pe 1:18,19; 1Co 6:20; 7:23).

Preserver of the family

The next of kin also had the duty of preserving the family by marrying the widow of a deceased brother if he had died childless (Deut 25:5-10). Under such a law, the continuity of the family was maintained, even though its continuance may have been threatened by folly or disaster. The duty of Preserver of the family is clearly linked with the duty to redeem the land inheritance. Boaz, acting as the Gaal, made it possible for Ruth the alien to have fellowship with Israel, and a covenant relationship with God.

The Lord Jesus, as Gaal, has done likewise for us who are Gentiles (Eph 2:11-13; 3:6).

*“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great... Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to **redeem** us from all wickedness, and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good” (Tit 2:11-14).*

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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No. 8

Editorial — Treasure Hunt	367
Exhortation — One, <i>Jonathan Fry</i>	369
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:	
(18) Defeating the Wiles of the Devil, <i>Tom Barling</i>	372
Ecclesial Study — Why Has Chistadelphia Survived?, <i>Ken Camplin</i>	376
The Care Line and the Caring Network	381
Music in Worship:	
“Lord Dismiss us with Thy Blessing”, <i>Joan and Ken Curry</i>	384
“Loud Organs, His Glory Forth Tell...”, <i>Bob Burr</i>	386
Bible Study — Little Words that Mean a Lot:	
(11) Bema, <i>John C. Bilello</i>	388
Reflections — The Nature of the Bread and Wine..., <i>Robert Roberts</i>	395
Bible Mission News — Latin America; Argentina; The Bahamas;	
Ecuador; Guadalajara; Guyana Bible School	396
News & Notices	405
Minute Meditation — Life is a Test, <i>Robert J. Lloyd</i>	412
Coming Events	414

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Editor: George Booker

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

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

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

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

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

Editorial

Treasure Hunt

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

George Booker

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

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

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

Exhortation

One

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

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

FORM

1

LANE

had become

FORM

1

PLANET

One planet

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

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

One man

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

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

One life

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

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

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

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

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

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

One God

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Remembering the one Lord

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

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

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

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

One "garment"

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

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

One sacrifice

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

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

Jonathan Fry
(Melbourne Dandenong, Australia)

Exposition

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

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

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

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

Principalities and powers in the heavenly places

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

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

The NIV reads:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The armor of God

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tychichus

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

Peace, faith, and grace

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

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

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

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

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

Tom Barling (Teignmouth, England)

Note:

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

(Series concluded)

Ecclesial Study

Why Has Christadelphia Survived? Lessons for Today

Introduction: the Lord is working with us

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

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

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

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

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

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

Organizational and communal features: ecclesial autonomy

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

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

Different types of ecclesias

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

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

Extra-ecclesial activities

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

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

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

Frequency of interaction

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

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

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

Credentials of members

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

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

Commitment of members

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

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

Lessons for today

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

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

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

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

Test yourselves

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

(Quotations from NKJV unless stated otherwise)

Acknowledgments:

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Ken Camplin (Mittagong, NSW, Australia)

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The Care Line and the Canadian Christadelphian Caring Network

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

What is the Christadelphian Care Line?

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

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

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

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

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

What is the function of the Care Line?

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

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

Where did the Care Line originate?

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

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

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

on the Care Line.

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

What other things does the Caring Network do?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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“Lord Dismiss us with Thy Blessing”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Joan and Ken Curry (Toronto East, ONT)

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

(H.W. Beecher).

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

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

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

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

The organ is discussed specifically in the following paragraphs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bible Study

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

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

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

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

The history of the *bema*

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

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

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

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

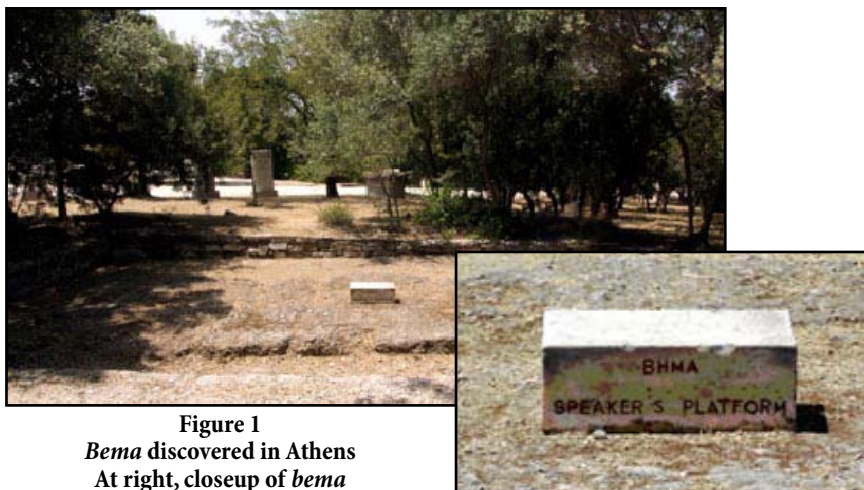


Figure 1
Bema discovered in Athens
At right, closeup of bema

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

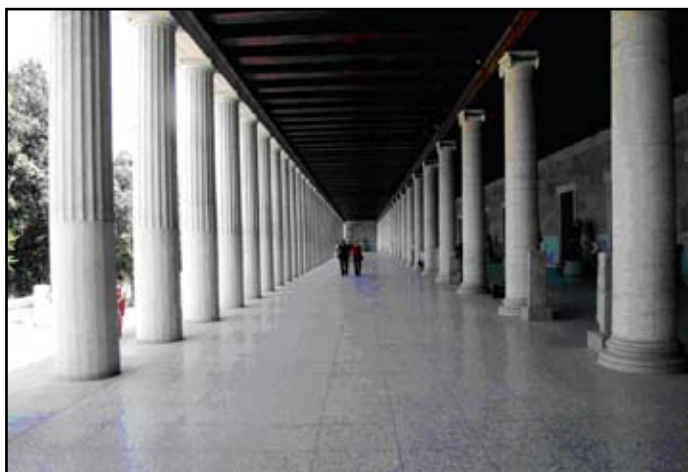


Figure 2
Agora
(marketplace)
discovered in
Athens

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



Figure 3
The remains of the *bema* in Corinth

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

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

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

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

Rules for the *Bema*

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

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



Figure 4
A six-minute hydraulic clock

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

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

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

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

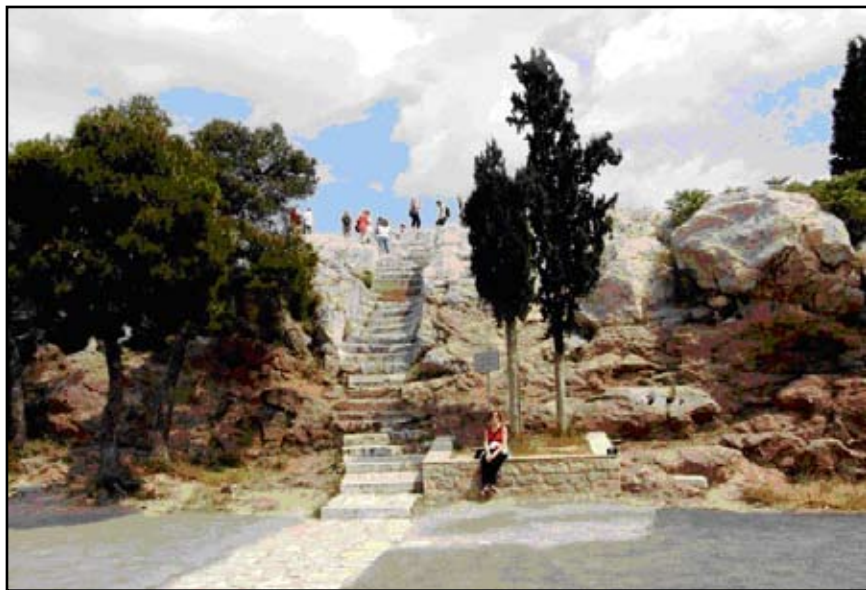


Figure 5
Mars Hill or the Areopagus in Athens

The evolution of the word *bema*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

John C. Bilello
(Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

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

Reflection

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

Does it Matter?

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

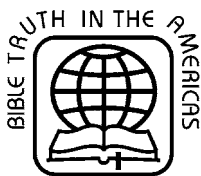
The object of breaking the bread and drinking the cup is to “bring to remembrance” [1Co 4:17] the things symbolized, and this does not depend upon the quality of the articles partaken of, but on mental discernment in connection with the memorial act... If much is made of the quality of the articles used,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

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

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

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

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



Bible Mission News

Latin America: Seven Baptisms

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Elizabeth and Francisco

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

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



The Córdoba Ecclesia, with families and friends

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

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

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

*Rubén Barboza,
Ecclesial Representative in Cordoba*

The Bahamas: Turning from Tradition to Truth

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ecuador

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

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

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



The Cueva-Valladares

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kevin Hunter

Guadalajara: My First Visit

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



Bible Class

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

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

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



At Lake Chapala

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

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

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

Guyana Bible School

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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

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

News & Notices

BEDFORD, NS

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

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

Ronald A. A. Hill

BRANTFORD, ON

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

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

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

Daniel Billington

CALGARY, AB

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

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

John Fairhurst

ECHO LAKE, NJ

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

David Link

KINGSTON, JAMAICA

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

Davion Sinclair

LIMA, PERU

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

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

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

Jim Hunter

LONDON, ON

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

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

Colin Meaker

PORT MARIA, JAMAICA

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

Dave Clarke

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

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

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

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

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

Paul Campbell

ST. LUCIA

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

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

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

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

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

George Rock

SUSSEX, NB

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

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

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

Cliff Baines

THOUSAND OAKS, CA

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

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

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

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

Tom Graham

WORCESTER, MA

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

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

Mark Fulmer

The Anderson Family

Dear brothers and sisters,

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

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



Bro. Grant Anderson

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

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

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

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

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

With much love in the Hope we share,

Glen and Julie Anderson

A note from Bro. Andre George

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

New England Fraternal Gathering

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

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

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

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

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

Craig Nevers

The more things change...

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

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

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

Minute Meditation

Life is a Test

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When we are tried, we should not be surprised but rejoice that God loves us and gives us these tests to fulfill His promise: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

Robert J. Lloyd

"Love is not easily provoked" (1Corinthians 13:5)

We are inclined to look upon bad temper as a very harmless weakness; and yet here, right in the heart of this analysis of love, it finds a place; and the Bible again and again returns to condemn it as one of the most destructive elements in human nature. What is it made of? Jealousy, anger, pride, cruelty, self-righteousness, touchiness, stubbornness, sullenness. It is a test for love, a symptom, a revelation of an unloving nature at bottom. It is the intermittent fever which suggests a steadily growing disease within; the occasional bubble escaping to the surface which betrays some rottenness underneath; a sample of the hidden fruit of the soul dropped involuntarily when off one's guard. In a word, it is the lightning form of a hundred un-Christian sins. For a lack of patience, a lack of kindness, a lack of generosity, and a lack of courtesy are all instantaneously symbolized in one flash of temper.

Henry Drummond

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)

SEPTEMBER

- 6 Hamilton Greenaway, ON.** Fraternal gathering. Wildwood Manor Ranch, Georgetown, ON, 2 pm. Bro. Ian Neblett (Toronto East, ON): "For in him we live, and move, and have our being". Picnic supper at 4:30 pm
- 7-12 Adult study week:** The Bible school with a difference. Wildwood Manor, Ballinafad, ON. Topic: Zechariah 8-14. For information about the workbook or to register please contact Bro. Bob and Sis. Joy Jennings (bobnjoy@vif.com) 519-754-0902 or Bro. Martin and Sis. Lois Webster mjwebster@vif.com 519-442-0544
- 12-14 Texas Sisters' Weekend** Glen Rose, TX. "Challenges We Face". Sis. Gerry Ann Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA). For registration information contact Sis. Maritta Terrell mt-ct@swbell.net or Sis. Kathy Hill kathyrebhansar@aol.com 512-288-0353
- 20 Bedford, NS** Study day. Bro. Shawn Snobelen (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON): "Jonah". 1:30 pm at Grand Lake / Oakfield Community Centre. Contact Bro. Michael Carr 902-820-2532 buxtoncarr@hotmail.com
- 20 London, ON, Annual Fraternal Gathering** Bre. Don Styles (Ann Arbor, MI) and Nathanael Abel (Orangeville, ON): "Josiah". Please note new location: new ecclesial hall at 101 Wistow Street, London. Contact Bro. Dave Birchall 519-668-7081 dalefinancial@rogers.com
- 20,21 Paris Avenue, OH** Study weekend. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK): "Ephesians: Build Together in Him". For information, hotels, times, etc. contact Bro. Greg Misko, Jr., 330-784-7159
- 26-28 Bozeman, MT** Fall fraternal gathering/study weekend. Bro. Matthew D. Link (Washington, DC): "Galatians"
- 27,28 Manitoulin Island, ON** Study day. Bro. Jamin Wigzell

OCTOBER

- 4 Cranston, RI** Study Day, at ecclesial hall. Bro. Jim Styles (Livonia, MI): "Law versus Grace", three classes. Contact Bro. Craig Nevers craignev@cox.net
- 4 Milford Road, MI** Study day. Bro. Ron Kidd (London, ON): "David, the Shepherd King". Contact Bro. Trevor Snow 734-421-4215 tsnow1@hfhfs.org
- 4,5 Portland, OR** Fraternal Gathering. Bro. Christian Russell (Verdugo Hills, CA)
- 5 New England Fraternal Gathering** East Greenwich, RI, High School. Bro. Jim Styles (Livonia, MI): "Be Ye Doers of the Word". Contact Bro. Craig Nevers craignev@cox.net
- 10-12 Simi Hills, CA, Sisters' retreat** Sis. Mary Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI): "We shall be like them". Clocktower Inn, Ventura, CA. Contact Sis. Bonnie Sommerville kenandbonnie@simihills.org 19111 Kinzie St., Northridge, CA 91324
- 10-12 Vancouver, BC** Fraternal gathering. Bro. Andrew E. Walker: "Life Before the Flood". Contact Bro. Dan Orsetti 604-515-4704 pamela721@shaw.ca

- 11,12 Atlanta Area, GA** Fraternal gathering. Bro. Dean Brown (Avon, IN): "Luke's Two-Volume Gospel". Contact Bro. Carlos M. Carter 770-891-8915 carlosmcarter@comcast.net
- 11,12 Baltimore, MD** Study Weekend / Baltimore-Washington Gathering. Bro. Michael Moore (Brantford, ON): "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD". Three classes starting Saturday 2 pm; supper; evening public lecture. Sunday 10:30; lunch. Contact Bro. Andy Bilello 410-357-4612
- 11,12 Echo Lake, NJ** Study weekend. Bro. Carl Parry (Golden Grove, SA, Australia): "The priest upon the throne", based on the Book of Zechariah. Contact Bro. David Link dlink44131@aol.com 973-696-3316
- 11,12 Edmonton/Calgary Thanksgiving Fraternal Gathering** Calgary, AB. Bro. Richard Morgan (Saanich Peninsula, BC): "The Conversion of Saul". Contact Bro. Paul and Sis. Cindy Aback pcaback@shaw.ca
- 11,12 Sussex, NB, Thanksgiving Fraternal Gathering** Bro. Mark Carr (Toronto West, ON): "Joseph — I Seek My Brethren". Contact Bro. Cliff Baines for further details 506-433-1728 christad@nbnet.nb.ca
- 12 San Francisco Peninsula, CA** Fraternal gathering, Belmont Senior Center, Belmont, CA. Bro. Dave Jennings (Pomona, CA). Contact Bro. John Warner 510-528-7225 or Email Sis. Dolores Sleeper desleeper@astound.net for more information and accommodations
- 18,19 Kouts, IN, Fraternal Gathering** Woodland Park Community Center. Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "The Kingdom of God Applied". Contact Bro. Joe Bennett 219-762-2704 purepro18@aol.com

NOVEMBER

- 8 Brantford, ON, Prophecy Day** Copetown Community Centre, 1950 Governor's Road, Copetown, ON. Doors open at 12 noon; first talk starting 1 pm. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK): "Dedicated Wholly to the Hope of Israel"; Bro. Don Pearce (Rugby, UK): "Road Map to the Kingdom"; Bro Paul Billington (Brantford, ON): "Our Nation, Our People, Our Hope". Classes for children ages 3 to 8 during the 2nd and 3rd talks. Contact Bro. Gary Smith 519-758-0362 hgarysmith@sympatico.ca
- 14-16 Austin (Leander), TX, Fall Fraternal Gathering** at HEB Camp in Leakey, TX. Bro. John Bilello. Contact: Sis. Maritta Terrell, mt-ct@swbell.net, 512-331-5575
- 28-30 Washington, DC** Bible study weekend, Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. Bro. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA): "Only Forgiveness". Contact Bro. Robert Kling 301-498-5245 rkling@acm.org
- 30 Ann Arbor, MI** Thanksgiving gathering, Holiday Inn North Campus, Ann Arbor, MI. Bro. Malcolm Cross (Doncaster, UK): "Christ in you, the hope of glory". Memorial service 11 am; afternoon Bible talk 2 pm. Contact Bro. Peter Bilello webmaster@tidings.org 734-424-9254

DECEMBER

- 27 - January 3 Fourth Annual Texas Youth Conference.** Texas Christadelphian Camp and Conference Center, Freestone, TX (near Buffalo, TX). Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): "The Life of Jacob". To register, contact Bro. Jeremy Wolfe wolfe518@gmail.com. Information at www.texasyouthconference.com

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JANUARY 2009

10 Thousand Oaks, CA Day with the Word. Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA):
“Exhortations from the House of the Lord”. Begins 9:15 am with continental breakfast.
Contact Bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com

FEBRUARY 2009

22-29 Palm Springs Bible School Palm Springs, CA. Bro. Tec Morgan (Birmingham Washwood Heath, UK) and Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA). Contact www.californiabibleschool.org

Texas Fall Fraternal Gathering

The annual Texas Fall Gathering will be held at the HEB Foundation Camp outside of Leakey, TX from November 14-16. The speaker will be Bro. John Billelo. He will be giving classes on the topics of “The Bible and Science” and “Little Words”. Please contact Sis. Maritta Terrell mt-ct@swbell.net, 512-331-5575, for more information.

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

Vol. 71

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No. 9

Editorial — Coals of Fire	419
Exhortation — Rules for Holy Living, <i>Andy Merg</i>	424
Bible Study:	
Little Words that Mean a Lot:	
(12) Humility, <i>John C. Bilello</i>	429
Adorned in Fine White Linen, <i>Patricia Bartle</i>	434
Even Christadelphianism Can Kill Us!, <i>Clyde Snobelen</i>	437
History — Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff, <i>Gordon Hensley</i>	441
Letters — Considering God's Providence; Who is the "mighty God"?; ... and the "Everlasting Father"; The Ecclesial Guide; Bathsheba's guilt or innocence?	447
Youth — Baptismal Confession, <i>Jonathan Sleeper</i>	452
Reflections:	
Our Electronic Witness, <i>Jeff Livermore</i>	454
Unjust Extremes, <i>Islip Collyer</i>	455
Bible Mission News — Brazil; Panama; ThisisyourBible.com	457
News & Notices	462
Minute Meditation — Life is a Trust, <i>Robert J. Lloyd</i>	465
Coming Events	466

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Editor: George Booker

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The dress of young sisters

An engrossing concern with young girls naturally is their appearance and dress; and excess in mere outward adornment is among their besetting sins. The young sister is at liberty to adorn herself; but she must be careful to have her ornaments chosen and adjusted according to the fashion book inscribed by the Spirit. This requires that she be richly adorned with good works, and modestly attired as regards dress. If she be rich in good works, she will of necessity [control her] fleshly desire to be richly-appareled outwardly — which desire, if indulged, would cripple her ability to adorn herself spiritually.

If she be moderate in her expenditure upon herself, she will doubtless be able to have something to expend in the service of Christ. He asks of her the first place in her affections. If she loves him, and at all appreciates the high destiny to which he has called her, she will make it a rule to let his claim have her first consideration in all matters. To begin early in life thus to train herself, will make many things easier of accomplishment in years to come, than if she should live the best part of her life, and then begin to try to crucify the natural desires.

Jane Roberts, *The Virtuous Woman*

Editorial

Coals of Fire

*"If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat;
if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head,
and the LORD will reward you" (Proverbs 25:21,22).*

The simple meaning of this proverb is: Show kindness to your enemies. Kindness to one's enemy is encouraged many times in Scripture, both in Old Testament (e.g., Prov 20:22; 24:17,29; Exod 23:4,5; Lev 19:17,18; Deut 22:1-3; Jer 29:7; Job 31:29) and New Testament (e.g., Matt 5:43,44; Luke 6:27,28; Rom 12:17-21; 1Th 5:15).

The easy part

A good example of showing kindness to one's enemies, with beneficial results, is in the story of Elisha and the king of Aram, or Syria, who sent his army to capture the prophet:

"As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, 'Strike these people with blindness.' So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked. Elisha told them, 'This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for.' And he led them to Samaria. After they entered the city, Elisha said, 'LORD, open the eyes of these men so they can see.' Then the LORD opened their eyes and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria. When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, 'Shall I kill them, my father? Shall I kill them?' 'Do not kill them,' he answered. 'Would you kill men you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master.' So he prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory" (2Ki 6:18-23).

One preacher, surveying this scene, wrote, 'What a noble revenge, to provide a feast for his persecutors — to provide a table for those who would provide a grave for him! No revenge but this "revenge" is heroic, and fit for Christian imitation.'

The way to turn an enemy into a friend is to act toward him in a friendly manner. It was said of a kindly old minister, obviously tongue in cheek, that one should be very careful never to do him a disservice or to hurt him in any way, unless one wanted to make him a friend for life!

A Chinese proverb makes the same point quite succinctly: "Meet good with good so that good can be *maintained*; meet evil with good so that good may be *created*."

We who live after the advent of the Messiah have an example unavailable to Solomon or Elisha: an example of self-sacrificing love and forgiveness for one's enemies. Our Lord Jesus Christ sought forgiveness for the soldiers who crucified him (Luke 23:34), and Stephen followed his Lord's example by praying for those who were about to stone him to death (Acts 7:60). But our Lord did a greater kindness even than this: he *died* for all of us when we were his avowed enemies (Rom 5:6-10) — he made it personal, for every one of us!

...and the hard part

That was the easy part of the proverb, at least in understanding it; putting it into practice when we just don't want to is another matter altogether.

But now we must consider the hard part of the proverb, that second verse:

"In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head" (Prov 25:22).

It helps, of course, that the apostle Paul cites these verses when writing to the Romans:

"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay [a further citation, of Deut 32:35]', says the Lord" (Rom 12:17-19).

Then in verse 20, Paul quotes Proverbs 25:21,22, and concludes:

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21).

Whatever precise meaning this verse may have had for those who first read or heard it, and tempting though it might be to look for an excuse to take vengeance upon one's enemies, it simply cannot justify doing so. Paul's inspired application of these words ("Overcome evil with good") rules this out altogether. Only God Almighty can avenge His wronged children.

But what does it mean?

So, without seeing it as a vengeful act, how can we understand the heaping of burning coals upon another's head? In *Strange Scriptures that Perplex the Western Mind*, Barbara Bowen suggests that heaping such coals on someone else's head describes the way a man might carry a brazier (a pan for holding burning coals) when going to a neighbor's house to borrow a fire. She says that the expression alludes to the old custom of carrying burning coals in a container. When one's home fire has gone out, he would need to go to a neighbor — even to his enemy — and request hot coals to carry back on his head. These coals were the evidence of the neighbor's love. Likewise, the person who receives undeserved kindness feels uncomfortable because of his neighbor's love. This guilt may gently convict the wrongdoer of his or her sins.

This illustration seems like a bit of a stretch, but in one form or another it is often suggested by expositors.

Perhaps, however, there is a more directly Scriptural interpretation. Let us ask the question, 'Where, in the Bible, are burning coals being heaped upon the "head" (Hebrew "rosh": chief or topmost part) of anyone or anything?'

Paying special attention to the Bible links, there are at least two possibilities:

In a number of passages, burning coals of fire symbolize the judgments of God. We know that God will rain these “coals” of judgment down upon His enemies (Psa 11:6; 120:4; 140:10; 2Sa 22:13). There are historical examples of Him doing just such a thing: to Sodom and Gomorrah in Lot’s day (Gen 19:24; Luke 17:29) and to Egypt in the time of Moses (Exod 9:23,24). In other words, it is *God’s* prerogative to do so, but not ours. We have already established that, and ruled it out as a legitimate enterprise for true believers in this age — even if they had the power to heap coals of fire upon their enemies in such a way.

Another possibility

However, a second possibility holds promise of helping us. We must now ask the question more specifically, ‘Where in the Bible are burning coals heaped upon the head, not of someone, but of *something*?’

To this there is an immediate answer. Burning coals belong in one place in the divine worship: the altars of God! In tabernacle and temple, such coals were always found on the altar of burnt offering, and periodically they were taken from that altar, and then heaped upon the other altar, the small altar of incense in the holy place. The purpose of these burning coals was to ignite the incense there (Exod 30:1-9,34-38). The burning incense in turn represented the prayers of the saints:

“May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice” (Psa 141:2).

This pattern is described in the Apocalypse:

“Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel’s hand” (Rev 8:3,4).

An extension of this worship was carried out each year on the Day of Atonement, when the high priest would carry a small censer, with burning coals and incense, from the holy place into the most holy place. This would bring the prayers of the whole nation into the actual presence of the Almighty (Lev 16:11-13). This seems to be what the priest Zechariah (soon to be the father of John the Baptist) was doing when the angel of the LORD appeared to him:

“[Zechariah] was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshippers were praying outside” (Luke 1:9,10).

This pattern is also described in the Apocalypse, where we see the four living creatures and the 24 elders standing in the presence of the Lamb and before the throne of God:

“They were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” (Rev 5:8).

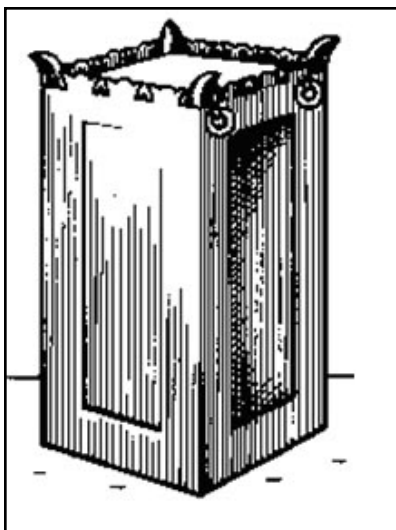
This leads to a quite satisfying conclusion. The burning coals are placed on the altar, or in the censer. And the altar and the censer alike are now seen to symbolize the individual believer. Now we may see this from the viewpoint of the offender, the one who has made himself the enemy of another. When he receives undeserved and unexpected kindnesses from the one whom he has treated as his enemy, he may be drawn to approach God and seek forgiveness for his own hurtful actions and thoughts. His “enemy”, by returning to him good for evil, has put coals and incense upon his head. His initial emotion, of burning shame, can now lead him to turn his heart to God. Now he may become a little individual altar or censer, using the ignited incense placed upon his head to fuel his prayer to his Heavenly Father: ‘Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!’

The right perspectives

We need the right perspective. We need to ask ourselves: ‘Can I see my “enemy” as the incense altar or the censer? Can I return good for evil, in the hopes that my good deeds may, like fiery coals, ignite the incense of prayer in my enemy, so that he may seek forgiveness from God?’

Then I need one final perspective: ‘*Lord, is it I?* Must I still learn not to hold grudges, and not to remember old wounds? Must I pray for forgiveness, for those who have hurt me, but also for myself, confessing how I’ve hurt others?’

George Booker



The altar of incense



Priest carrying a censer

Turning an enemy into a friend

Abraham Lincoln was a man who knew how to “overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21; cp Prov 25:21,22). In 1855, when he was a relatively unknown Illinois backwoods lawyer, he was hired to join a team of lawyers to defend Cyrus McCormick, the inventor of the harvester, in a high-profile patent infringement case. His colleagues were led by Edwin Stanton, an eastern attorney — famous, wealthy, and well connected politically. Lincoln prepared his part of the case meticulously, and then met Stanton and the others at the hotel where they would all stay while the case was being organized and argued in court.

On meeting Lincoln for the first time, Stanton took one look at the tall, gangling figure in ill-fitting clothes, and whispered to another attorney, “I won’t have this long-armed ape on my team; he clearly doesn’t know anything and can do us no good.” So it was made known to Lincoln that he ought to withdraw from the case, which he did. He delivered his legal research to Stanton, and resigned, but remained at the hotel and in the courtroom to observe the case. Stanton never took one look at the work Lincoln had done. Though Lincoln had a room and ate all his meals at the same hotel as Stanton and the others, he was never invited to eat with them, never spoken to, and never acknowledged in any way.

In 1861, after an improbable and meteoric rise, Abraham Lincoln was president of the United States. With the country on the brink of civil war, Lincoln set about to include in his cabinet, and among his closest advisers, the men who had been his greatest rivals for the presidency. They were men who, by all accounts, and certainly in their own estimation, were each and every one better qualified to be president. They were in fact what the historian **Doris Kearns Goodwin** calls “a team of rivals”. In her book of that title, she writes, “The powerful competitors who had originally disdained Lincoln became colleagues who helped him steer the country through its darkest days... Lincoln’s genius revealed itself through an extraordinary array of personal qualities that enabled him to form friendships with men who had previously opposed him; and to repair injured feelings that, left unattended, might have escalated into permanent hostility.”

Returning to Edwin Stanton, **Goodwin** writes, “Unimaginable as it might seem... in their next encounter six years later [1861], Lincoln would offer Stanton the most powerful civilian post in his administration. Lincoln’s choice of Stanton would reveal... a singular ability to transcend personal vendetta, humiliation, or bitterness... As for Stanton, despite his initial contempt for the ‘ape’, he would not only accept the offer but come to respect and love Lincoln more than any person outside of his immediate family.”

During the next years, their two families would share a summer residence and spend leisure time together, while Stanton became Lincoln’s greatest help and support. Four years later, as the fatally wounded president lay dying, Edwin Stanton sat beside him, holding his hand and weeping.

Exhortation

Rules for Holy Living (Colossians 3)

We live in a society of rules. These rules give us guidelines on how to act. They let us know what we should be doing and what we shouldn't be doing. They let us know what is right and wrong. Consider, for example, if we didn't have rules of the road. How would people know which side of the road to drive on or how fast they should drive? Because we have rules of the road, such as speed limits, driving is much safer. Speed limits let drivers know the correct speed to drive for a specific road. Stop signs allow cars and trucks to get through intersections without crashing into one another. When we are old enough to get our driver's license, we need to study the rules and learn how we should behave behind the wheel. It is the same thing with our Bible. It gives us rules on how we should behave in different situations.

Colossians 3 gives practical information we can use in our walk to the Kingdom. I have always liked the parts of the Bible I can apply to my daily life, and Colossians 3 gives a black-and-white image of proper conduct and behavior.

A little bit of background and history: Colosse is located in the lower middle portion of what is now Turkey. It was on a major trade route from Ephesus to the Euphrates River. At the time the letter was written, Colosse was a city in decline. Over time its neighbors, Laodicea and Hierapolis, surpassed the city in power and trading importance. It is believed the ecclesia was formed with the help of a man named Epaphras, whom Paul called "a dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ" (Col 1:7). The ecclesia fell into wrong practices that are not specifically explained by Paul, and while he was in jail in Rome he writes to them to help correct and encourage their meeting.

Set your hearts on things above

Colossians 3 starts us off with what I call Rule #1 of the Rules for Holy Living:

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (vv 1,2).

This verse tells us what we should be constantly thinking about. Because we have been raised with Christ, our focus should always be on things above, not on earthly things. This is often easier said than done. Unfortunately, putting our focus on earthly things is very easy in this world because we are constantly bombarded with slick and exciting images that grab us and make us think we want and need them. These images make us envious; they cause strife and greed and remove our focus from where it should be. If we focus on earthly things and make them more important than God, we are making a serious mistake.

When we were baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection, we made a contract that guarantees the reward of the Kingdom for those who keep their focus. But if we break that contract, we are risking disqualification. What is it worth to us? Where should our thoughts be? Jesus tells us:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt 6:19-21).

Do you think God cares what type of car we drive? Or how much money we have? Or what position we attain at work? Earthly things don't last forever — godly things do. Jesus tells us not to put our treasures in earthly things. Remember Colossians 3:1,2: We should set our hearts on things above, where Christ is. Jesus is the best treasure we can have.

Delete all the rest

Then follow what I call the "Don't do it!" Rule. Rule #1 says to set our focus above on heavenly things. Rule #2 says to delete the things that belong to earthly nature. These things will surely get us into trouble:

"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry" (v 5).

These things we may have done in the past. When we did these things, we weren't putting God first. We have all seen people in the news who have done such deeds and paid a high price. Paul says that as followers of Christ we should put such behaviors to death. Don't do them; turn away from these temptations! These things are of an earthly nature. Our focus should not be there. Our focus should be on God and Jesus. We are not aiming to live in Sodom and Gomorrah, but to live eternally in God's Kingdom.

When faced with an evil desire or greed or any of the other items in this verse, we have to ask for help. God always gives us a choice. The easy choice is to succumb to the earthly desire, but you know that it isn't the right choice. The right way is not the easy way. The things you truly want aren't going to be easy. When tempted, pray to the Father for strength and help. Elsewhere, Paul gives us examples as a warning and consequence of focusing on earthly matters:

"For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: 'The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.' We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did and in one day 23 thousand of them died.

We should not test the Lord as some of them did and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did and were killed by the destroying angel” (1Co 10:1-10, NIV).

The Israelites were saved from the Egyptians by God and saw many miraculous signs. God saved them by parting the Red Sea and guiding them in the wilderness. But they complained and focused on earthly things instead of on God; they wanted to be back in Egyptian bondage. They got into trouble for it and God smote a large number of Israelites. We have their example for a reason: they are a warning to us (v 11).

We are also told that these temptations can be faithfully borne because God is faithful and will not tempt us with more than we can handle (v 13). In every temptation God gives us a way out. It is important to remember this when we are dealing with trials. God gives us a way out. It is our choice to take it. It just depends where we are looking: up or down.

Paul continues with a statement and a warning:

“Because of these, the wrath of God is coming” (Col 3:6).

This is a strong warning indeed: if we continue down paths of sin, God will punish us. God is opposed to sin. I’m not sure we think about that enough. If we did, we probably would make different choices when we meet temptations.

Elsewhere again Paul writes of those who “exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the creator — who is forever praised” (Rom 1:25) Do you ever see yourself in that statement? Do we do what we want rather than what God wants? Then he wrote that those who were stubborn and unrepentant “are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed” (Rom 2:5). But God “will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger” (Rom 2:6-8). Brothers and sisters, those who continue to live in a life of sin will receive God’s wrath. While I don’t know exactly what God’s wrath looks like, it has to be a terrible thing. We are warned. God will punish those who are sinful and do not seek to change. But the same warning holds for those who did change, at baptism, but later allow themselves to relapse into the old fleshly desires and the old worldly ways.

More “delete” rules

Paul continues with more rules of how not to act, or rather more aspects of Rule #2, the “Don’t Do It” Rule:

“But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off the old self” (Col 3:8,9).

These Rules of Holy Living control powerful emotions. It can be difficult, but what we have to remember is that we made the change and we do not need to look back at the old self, but rather forward to what we really want. We achieve

this by taking off “the old self” (v 9) and putting on “the new self” (v 10). Paul is telling us that the difference between the old self and new self is black and white; there is no gray. You cannot do the things of the earthly nature and put on Christ at the same time. You can only walk on one side of the fence. You must not hop back and forth.

Lest I sound too harsh, remember: These “Don’t Rules” have value. As a parent, we use “Don’t Rules” to keep our children safe. We tell our children, ‘Don’t run into a parking lot, or you’ll get flattened like a pancake’... ‘Don’t touch the stove, or you’ll get burned.’ The rules Paul gives us in this chapter, just like the rules parents give their children, tell us what not to do, and warn us that bad things can happen if we forget.

What *should* we do?

We have seen how we shouldn’t behave. Now let us look at how we should behave. Rule #3 is:

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience” (v 12).

“Clothe” is a wonderfully descriptive word. I imagine a big thick parka completely sealing out the elements and storm, keeping me warm and safe. Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience will help keep rage and malice and the other behaviors of verse 8 away from us. It is not a passive kind of behavior, but rather an active, powerful way to behave as Jesus would have us. His parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) describes a man who did not just walk by an injured man but instead had compassion on him, and stopped to help him. In contrast to the priest and the Levite, who should have known better, the lowly Samaritan’s kindness, gentleness, and patience underlie the whole story. Each of us can look to people we know who have acted in positive ways. We know people who show compassion for aged or disabled people. We know people who show kindness to others when they are in need. We see people act in humility when they serve others. We also see people work with gentleness when difficult situations come. To do as Paul commands, always act with compassion, gentleness, and patience.

The choice is clear

Paul refers to “God’s chosen people” as “holy and dearly loved” (Col 3:12). He is using another black-and-white example. There is a big difference between being God’s dearly beloved — and suffering God’s wrath. When you act with kindness, humility, and patience you are dearly beloved. When you act with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, you will suffer God’s wrath. Again, the choice is ours to be on either side of the fence. Always strive to be on God’s side.

The hardest rule

Then comes Rule #4:

“Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (v 13).

This can be the hardest rule to obey. We have all been injured by someone at some time. We all have some scars, whether physical or emotional, and by nature, we do not want to visit the trauma and think about what happened or the person who hurt us. Yet we are commanded to forgive. Just think about how every Sunday we seek God's forgiveness for our wrong doings. We take the cup to remember that Jesus died for us as a sin offering. We clothed ourselves with the life of Jesus at baptism. We try to emulate him in our behavior. But we still fail. The wonder is: God forgives us! If we ask God to forgive us for our sins, shouldn't we forgive those who trespass against us?

The most important rule

Rule #5 is:

"Over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity" (v 14).

Love is the strongest weapon of God we have. We all know 1 Corinthians 13: 1-7. Love binds everything together in unity. Paul says that without love we are nothing. Love is the most important Rule for Holy Living because God *is* love. God wants us to be with Him in the Kingdom because he loves us so much He gave His only Son as an offering for our forgiveness.

The final rule

Rule #6 in our final rule:

"Be thankful" (v 15).

This thought continues on to the last two verses of this section. We should be thankful at all times to our Father, for He has given us much. He has given us many blessings, such as His Son and the opportunity for everlasting life with him. What He wants us to do is to show His glory in how we act. If we follow the Rules for Holy Living, we will shine like a bright light showing others we are true followers of God.

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"Be thankful"

We prevent God from giving us the great spiritual gifts He has in store for us, because we do not give thanks for daily gifts. We think we dare not be satisfied with the small measure of spiritual knowledge, experience, and love that has been given to us, and that we must constantly be looking forward eagerly for the highest good. Then we deplore the fact that we lack the deep certainty, the strong faith, and the rich experience that God has given to others, and we consider this lament to be pious. We pray for the big things and forget to give thanks for the ordinary, small (and yet really not small) gifts. How can God entrust great things to one who will not thankfully receive from Him the little things?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (12) Humility

*“The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom,
and before honor is humility” (Proverbs 15:33, NKJV).*

The Roman philosopher Cato is reputed to have said, “After I’m dead I’d rather have people ask why I have no monument than why I have one.”¹ This pithy saying describes very nicely the kind of life a truly modest man should lead, but relatively speaking Cato was just a newcomer to observing the human condition. Almost a millennium before he lived, the Wisdom of Solomon put it even more succinctly: “...before honor is humility” (Prov 18:12).

The Scriptures do not treat the attribute of humility² lightly. In fact we can be certain that it is a first principle. Consider the following:

“By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches and honor and life” (Prov 22:4, NKJV)

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5, NKJV, cited from Psa 37:11; see also Prov 15:33; 18:12; Acts 20:19; and 1Pe 5:5, among many others).

If humility, or equally its synonyms humbleness and meekness, are a matter of “life”, Solomon must have been alluding to eternal life. In the passage cited from the Beatitudes, it is obvious that the Lord Jesus Christ is referring to a first principle; in other words, meekness can lead to an eternal inheritance. Given the clarity of Scriptures regarding humility as an absolutely essential Christian characteristic, it is no wonder so many try to cultivate it to the point they become proud of their humility! In fact “too much humility is pride”, to quote an old German proverb. The complete antithesis of humility is pride. In the worldly sense, pride wins hands down over humility every single day in every single way. In this world those with the best education, drive, energy, hard work, connections, dedication, and often ruthlessness seem to prevail. In short, ambition gets one ahead, while meekness often leads to one being abused. On the other hand, what qualifies a person for leadership in the kingdom of God? One quality alone stands out: humility. It cannot be a false act put on as a cloak to fool our brothers and sisters, for that will fail miserably before our Lord and Master on judgment day. In the words of our Lord Jesus:

“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Matt 23:12).

Given this unmistakable necessity, that one must have humility to be saved, why then is it so rare? And why does humility apparently often desert us in the working out of our ecclesial life? Let’s take a journey through a case study in Scripture and see if we can find the answer that can lead us to true humility.

Our attention will focus on a dispute among the disciples, and its aftermath, as recorded in Mark 9.

A case study

Jesus and the twelve had taken the Roman road leading to the city of Capernaum. When they arrived they apparently went straight to the home of Peter and Andrew.³ Jesus was naturally aware of some intense arguing which had been going on among the disciples as they walked along the road to town. However, it does not appear that Jesus was physically in the middle of this disagreement. Perhaps he was leading the way and was some distance ahead of the trailing group of disciples and did not hear their discourse. Then again, our Lord may have been intent on ministering to the people along the way, and had no time to involve himself in the discussion at that juncture. Nevertheless, Jesus fully realized what they had been quarrelling about (Mark 9:35), but wanted to see what they would say. He was no doubt testing them.

Once they were settled in the house, and were assured some measure of privacy, however, Jesus asks them quite innocently, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?” (Mark 9:33). This didn’t elicit any response at all from the disciples: “They kept silent” (Mark 9:34). The sure mark of someone doing something they know is completely wrong is for them to be absolutely speechless when caught, as it were, “red-handed”.⁴ The disciples instantly must have realized their discourse was unseemly and were ashamed that they had been having so crass an argument. Meanwhile it is obvious that Jesus knew their thoughts even as he assuredly must know ours. Sadly we seem to know this intellectually too, but often fail to act that way in life. It is even possible on occasion that brethren and sisters strive to have primacy in their ecclesia, or even beyond, in the larger Christadelphian community. Undoubtedly such deeds are done under the guise that they truly believe their knowledge and wisdom to be superior to all others. Indeed, that may be true — or it may not!

The proof is not in the outcome, because some will take the attitude that the end justifies the means. This is patently not true; the end can never justify an immoral path followed to accomplish that end. If it were so, then assuredly David should have slain Saul while he lay asleep in the cave in the wilderness of Engedi (1Sa 24:2-7), and the apostle Paul would not have castigated the concept that it was acceptable to “do evil that good may come” (Rom 3:8). Beyond any shadow of doubt, it is absolutely necessary that we not only do the right thing, but also that we must do it in the right way. Brethren and sisters have perpetrated some truly terribly immoral behavior, at times, under the pretext of “protecting” the Truth from error. In my experience, almost anything imaginable has been tried — everything from lying, to fabricating reports or minutes of meetings, to spreading unfounded gossip about brothers or sisters so as to assassinate their character. Such behavior will probably continue until the Lord returns. Nevertheless, it is not now, nor will it ever be, consistent with true humility.

The first clue to true humility in people is their willingness to serve others above themselves. Putting others’ needs before our own is the path to humility:

“If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35).

What parents wouldn't do this for their own children? What persons wouldn't do this for their spouses? I hope the answer to these questions is: 'Yes, I would.' Indeed, I would give up my own life for my wife, or children, or grandchildren; and I am sure such self-sacrifice for loved ones would motivate all who read this to do likewise. It becomes more difficult to put others first as we move further away in terms of family relationships, and even more difficult when we move further away from our social and philosophical comfort zone. Yet I don't see any clear line of exclusion made in the Lord's statement to his disciples and, by extension, to us.

Humility leads to love

A person possessing true humility cultivates love for the brethren. How are we taught to love one another? There can be no greater manual on how to love than the exhortation delivered by Paul to the Corinthians:

“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1Co 13:4-7).

It is impossible for me to improve on these words; hence I will let them stand alone, unabridged, for all of us to contemplate once again, and to ponder how we may earnestly apply them in our lives.

A person of true humility is self-sacrificing even when it is to his or her own disadvantage. Consider the conflict between Abram and Lot over arable grazing land:

“And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land. So Abram said to Lot, 'Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left'” (Gen 13:7-9).

Abram was the elder and he certainly could have asserted his rights over Lot's. Given this, Lot almost certainly would have yielded to his uncle, though probably with some bitterness. This is exactly what a humble Abram wanted to avoid. He was not interested in his own rights; he was only interested in retaining the love and affection of his nephew. In this action we have a direct reflection of what the apostle Paul meant when he said the gospel was preached beforehand to Abraham (Gal 3:8). We see this clearly in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:

“And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two” (Matt 5:38-42, NKJV; see the full context).

Abraham was willing to walk the extra mile to preserve a loving relationship with Lot. This was certainly an act meant also to help his nephew realize the character God desires in those who seek an eternal inheritance.

Brothers or sisters with truly humble spirits are not hypocritical in their actions. Even the apostle Peter was not immune to acting hypocritically to protect his own self-image. Thus we find that he was reprimanded for this behavior by Paul:

“Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy” (Gal 2:11-13, NKJV).

The other Jews (meaning the Jewish Christians within the ecclesia) joined Peter’s hypocrisy, showing how easy it is for a leader to drag others down with him. Obviously, Peter was afraid that his leadership position in the church would be jeopardized if he didn’t appease the circumcision party.

Nonetheless, humility is not about appeasement! Consider:

“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17, NKJV).

We should never confuse humility with lack of courage. It has been said: “Evil triumphs when good men do nothing.”⁵ To be quiet when there is wrong in the ecclesia is to fail in our duty; silence in this case has nothing to do with humility.

Naturally, there is a right way and a wrong way to correct perceived sins among us. I use the word “perceived” here advisedly, because all too often the failures of others are clear to us, while our own shortcomings disappear in a dense fog (cp Matt 7:3-5). In humbly dealing with others, we can never go wide of the mark by being too courteous. Our motives must be pure and our speech honorable. Above all, we need to exercise patience and tact. All these things are far easier to write than to actually do, as I know from long struggles with others and within myself. However, that is no excuse for giving up and not getting done what needs to be done. We find, for example, that the apostle Paul could exercise the utmost humility when he lamented his past behavior:

“For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1Co 15:9).

Yet when occasion called for him to speak out boldly, he did not hesitate to do so — whether it was to preach the gospel to the Jews in the synagogue in Ephesus (Acts 19:8), or to write to the Roman Ecclesia, reminding them of their need to admonish one another, especially with respect to dealing with the Judaizers (Rom 15:14,15).

Examples in the life of Christ

No discussion on refining any aspect of human nature would be complete without examining how humility worked in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. The ac-

tions of our Lord sometimes confuse those who have only a smattering of Bible knowledge, while those with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures can say unequivocally that Jesus always showed true humility. Detractors often ask: was he being humble when he violently drove the moneychangers from the temple? Or when he called the Pharisees and Sadducees by such names as “generation of vipers”? Let’s take a closer look at these stories.

The episode of driving the moneychangers from the Temple is recorded twice. Both times it happened at Passover time, in the first year (John 2:15) and in the third year (Mark 11:15; Matt 21:12) of our Lord’s ministry. (I suspect it also happened in the second year, but it is not recorded.)

It is (and was) the custom of Jews to cleanse the house in preparation for Passover. In my old neighborhood in Brooklyn, Jewish families would literally clean every nook and cranny of their homes, including emptying every cupboard and washing them out. The last thing to be done was to hide one piece of leavened bread for the children to search out and find. Once that was detected and purged, the home would be considered cleansed of all the leaven of sin; now it was fit for the Passover meal. (In orthodox homes, entirely separate plates, glassware, silverware, and pots were also reserved only for use at Passover times.) Hence, Jesus was driving the moneychangers (who shouldn’t have been within the Temple precincts in the first place, but were probably giving the priests and Levites a cut of the action) from his Father’s House. Thereby he was cleansing the house in preparation for the Passover. The apostle Paul explains very clearly why such behavior was perfectly within the realm of humility:

“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ” (Gal 1:10).

In other words, Jesus’ humility in fulfilling his duty to his Father transcended any necessary humility in his service to men.

The same applies to our Lord Jesus’ rather harsh words for the religious leaders of Israel. They had been privy to his miracles, witnessed directly and indirectly the power of his healings, and heard on many occasions the wisdom of his teachings. Thus they were without excuse.

We are not in the same position as Jesus, or the apostle Paul. We are certainly not endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit, or any semblance of infallibility in our thoughts and actions. This doesn’t mean that we let wrong prevail rather than raise our voice, but it does place a challenge upon us to do so in a most humble way. In fact, fulfilling our duties, humbly, may be one of the biggest challenges of our life in Christ. But it can be done; the apostle’s advice to his beloved Timothy gives useful guidance to us who are required to uphold Truth in humility:

“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will” (2Ti 2:24-26).

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Notes:

1. Attributed to Marcus Porcius Cato, 234-149 BC.
2. The word “humility” appears seven times in the KJV and invariably means modesty, meekness, humbleness, or gentleness. See Strong’s numbers 6038 (Hebrew) and 5012 (Greek).
3. See Mark 1:21-29 for the identification of the “house” mentioned in Mark 9:33.
4. The expression “red-handed” comes from the notion of one having blood on one’s hands from murder or execution. Hence, a “red-handed” person is one caught doing a blatantly evil action (<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings>).
5. Attributed to Thomas Jefferson.

Adorned in Fine White Linen

“I haven’t a thing to wear” is the lament heard from many a woman as the seasons change. This is usually another way of saying, “I am tired of what I have and would like something new!” Some may feel they need clothes to give them confidence; for others it can be a source of pride to wear the latest fashion or the most expensive ‘classics.’ Then there is the deliberate flaunting of the female form to catch the eye of the opposite sex. How easy it is to be influenced by these subtle expectations that serve to line the pockets of designers and the clothing industry.

Sisters in the Truth are not immune to these things. If the love of clothes and the interest in the latest fashion has taken over the love of God in one’s heart, there is something seriously wrong. On the other hand, a well remembered spiritually-minded young sister, determined to demonstrate her disinterest in clothes, paradoxically drew attention by her unkempt appearance! As with many things, it is a question of balance and emphasis.

The LORD created the beautiful female form to be attractive to the male who is seeking a wife. The bride wishes to look beautiful and pleasing to her husband on her wedding day, and she takes great delight in the preparation and selection of her dress and trousseau [*a bride’s clothes and linen, collected during her engagement*]. This is natural and right in God’s sight, as shown in John’s analogy describing the New Jerusalem “coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:2).

Inner beauty

One such bride in Scripture is a lovely young princess, joyfully preparing herself to be presented to her bridegroom:

“The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king’s palace”
(Psa 45:13-15).

Some think this was a bride of Solomon, and that she may have been the daughter of Pharaoh. Others suggest this was Hephzibah, the beautiful bride of faithful king Hezekiah. Whatever the primary application, there is the deeply moving spiritual picture of the Bride presented to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is interesting

that, irrespective of the rich and exquisitely-made clothing, the true beauty of this bride “comes from within” (v 13).

One wonders whether the apostle Peter had this Scripture in mind when speaking to the sisters of his day:

“Your beauty should come not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight” (1Pe 3:3,4).

Sixteenth-century Puritans interpreted Peter’s comments so literally that their obsessively plain style of dress became a cult. Rather than condemning a pretty outfit, braided hair, or a delicate gold necklace, Peter is counseling the godly woman to focus her attention upon developing a Christ-like character.

Certainly the virtuous woman of Proverbs demonstrated these characteristics. She industriously made herself garments of “linen and purple”. She rejoiced as the symbolic bride of Christ and, inwardly, her clothing was “strength and honour” (Prov 31:22,25).

Interestingly, both figurative brides were dressed in fine linen, a fabric which is brought to the discerning reader’s attention many times throughout Scripture.

The history and processing of linen

Linen is made from the flax plant and has been popular for five millennia. Very versatile, it can be woven as strong coarse yarn, suitable for sails, or as delicate cambric for wedding gowns. Ancient cultures — Egyptian, Greek and Roman — greatly valued the material. The spinning and weaving of linen is depicted on the wall paintings of Egypt. The Egyptians were so skilled in the processing that white cloth was produced (five hundred threads to the inch), far finer than anything made today!

Growing flax is easy, given the right conditions: moist fertile soil and plenty of sunshine. From seed to harvest, it takes a hundred days. One variety from which the highest quality of linen is made has lovely blue flowers. Although the stalks are straight and slender, they are covered with a tough woody casing that must be removed to reveal the workable fibers. This process is called retting, whereby the stalks are immersed in water and then laid in the sun to allow bacterial action to render them pliable. (Rahab hid the spies beneath drying flax stalks on the roof of her house: Josh 2:6.) Stripping the bark is a labor-intensive work; great skill and patience is needed to remove the tough outer part without damaging the delicate inner fibers. What a lovely spiritual lesson: believers in Christ must be immersed in water and undergo a lifetime of exposure to the word of God in order to strip away the hard layers of human nature. The “divine weaver” can then work with the pliable inner core.

Priestly garments

Exodus 28 outlines the details and instructions regarding the priestly attire. Aaron’s garments were made of fine linen embroidered with gold, blue and purple, whereas

his sons wore simple fine white linen. These holy garments were “for glory and for beauty”; they were to be fashioned by men specially endowed with skill and wisdom by the Spirit of God. During the consecration ritual the priests *and their garments* were sanctified:

“And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons’ garments with him” (Exod 29:21).

From head to toe, men and clothing were sanctified, ritualistically cleansed before being allowed to approach the holy things of God. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest put aside his splendid priestly clothing and entered the presence of God in the Holy of Holies clad in simple garments of fine white linen (Lev 16:4).

The prophet Ezekiel reveals the reason why the cool quality of linen was an appropriate material for the priests:

“They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen trousers on their bodies; they shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes sweat”
Ezek 44:18, RSV).

Sweat glands secrete waste products, giving rise to an unpleasant odor. All waste products from the human body that is tainted with sin are abhorrent to the holy person of God.

Garments of salvation

When the LORD God chose Zion He stated:

“I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall ever sing for joy” (Psa 132:16, NIV).

Aaron’s garments were but a shadow of those worn by the immortal kings and priests in Revelation:

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints” (Rev 19:7,8).

“The bride has made herself ready” (note the past tense). Here is the antitype of the virtuous woman of Proverbs and the bride of Psalm 45, preparing themselves with garments of linen, preparatory to meeting the bridegroom.

“The righteousness (of the saints)” is plural. Bro. John Thomas suggested the phrase would be better rendered “right *actions* of the saints”, and most modern versions give “right *acts*”. We know that faith not works is required; however, faith leading to the right action of baptism imputes righteousness. At baptism we “put on (Greek ‘*enduo*’, meaning ‘to clothe oneself’) Christ” (Gal 3:27). These are the garments described by Isaiah:

“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD. My soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness...” (Isa 61:10, NKJ).

Could this be the wedding garment of the parable?

Having washed her robes in the blood of the lamb (Rev 7:14) and striven to keep them undefiled from sin, the bride of Revelation 19 is dressed in fine linen, clean and white. “Clean” is the Greek word “katharos”, from which we get the word catharsis, meaning to purge. “White” is “lampros”, from which “lamp” is derived, meaning bright. The symbology is lovely; the bride is morally clean and radiant, having been clothed upon with the immortal glory of the Lord God (2Co 5:4).

The antidote for an obsessive interest in clothes is to consider these spiritual concepts and be exhorted by them. When we next swell with pride after compliments about a new outfit, or crave a dress in a shop window which is well beyond our budget, then an examination of attitude and priorities may be in order. The appropriate dress for those in Christ is the armor of God:

“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:14-17).

Patricia Bartle (Toronto East, ON)

Even Christadelphianism Can Kill Us!

This title should grab our attention. If we are hanging our eternal hope on the false belief that “Christadelphianism” will save us, then we need to ask ourselves some serious, searching questions. There are many other competing “isms” that are rewriting our world view and dramatically impacting our lives. I recognize there is, of course, a quiet and compelling comfort in having one tradition to undergird our lives. But a tradition, alone, can be deceptive. It can even be deadly!

There are many competing voices today. Many other “isms” are contending aggressively for our attention and time; some may be winning. Let’s review a few.

Materialism

No other society or culture has ever existed in human history that has so democratized materialism, i.e., the notion that material things are all that matters. Of course, I am speaking especially of “Western” societies and cultures. Ours are the ones with the means to implement materialism. We have more options, more comforts and, overall, more “stuff” than any of our ancestors.

The main shift has been in the middle class. A burgeoning bourgeois since the late 1940s has fueled consumerism to staggering heights. Consumerism is the business end of materialism. Bigger homes, more fixings and furnishings, more and more cheaply produced by poorly paid, poorly treated labor in China and elsewhere — stuff, lots of stuff. Automobiles, clothes, toys, the list is long. Under this heading we could also mention “tourism”, another “ism” that may bewitch us. But, for the sake of brevity, I will avoid that journey.

These “isms” are compelling and cater to our basic covetousness, especially the lust of the eye and the pride of life. They are beguiling because possessions and lifestyles are often the result of hard work, and hard work seems, on the face of it, to be completely Biblical. But consumerism can really be opposed to living a life in Christ. One little example: by one recent count, I had 52 shirts. Is this necessary? Would Jesus have had 52 shirts? Probably not. He didn’t have a closet to put them in; he was homeless.

Our preoccupation with things is contrary to sound Christian teaching.

“I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Phil 4:12).

Remember also Paul’s admonition to Timothy:

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out of it” (1Ti 6:6).

Hedonism

This is the creed that proclaims pleasure or happiness to be the sole or chief good in life. One useful definition is found in Webster’s: *“Noun: 1. Pursuit of or devotion to pleasure, especially to the pleasures of the senses. 2. The ethical doctrine holding that only what is pleasant or has pleasant consequences is intrinsically good.”* This notion has now, more or less, been enshrined in law — especially within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Our preoccupation with self and pleasure is also contrary to sound Christian teaching.

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature... because of these the wrath of God is coming” (Col 3:5,6).

“There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...” (2Ti 3:1,4).

Hedonism’s helper is, of course, liberalism. Liberalism has always been “cool”. It is a world view that has never gone out of fashion. Paul encountered it on Mars Hill, with the Epicureans. It is founded on the notion that whatever we think is right for us is, in fact, right. Liberalism is the business end of hedonism. It is deadly.

New Age spiritualism

This “ism” is just a repackaging of old pagan beliefs, where all things are an integral part of the great goddess “Mother Earth”. She was the foundation of most pagan and indigenous cultures. Being “spiritual” is really being part of Mother Earth. It encompasses the notion that our ashes live on in the trees and grasses; that dear departed Aunt Hattie’s spirit is blowing in the wind and reflected in the summer flowers; and that we are not individual, God-created and God-loved creatures, but instead simply parts of the impersonal, organic whole. This notion is linked to environmentalism. It is fashionable, and it is a delusion. We need John’s message more than ever.

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.”

Our spirit, as John goes on to say, is about Jesus, and the reality of him coming in the flesh (1Jo 4:1-4).

Spiritualism's close friend is Buddhism. Both offer a form of godliness but deny its power and miracles. The reality is that there is no other name or spirit under heaven by which we will be saved, except Jesus Christ.

Gnosticism

The greatest threat today is probably gnosticism, with its partner "dualism". Gnosticism is a rather complex mix of ideas which gained traction in the late first century. It was a growing problem in the New Testament era. It is a New Age re-cooking of the old pagan ideals today. To simplify the concept, we need to think of the predominant cultural ideals of the Western mind nowadays: self-interest, the deifying of the mind of man, and dualism.

Dualism is the conflict between good and evil, where good becomes evil and evil becomes good — they are both relative terms. So, there is no real evil any more than there is any real good. Situation and self-interest determine good and evil. Then, associated with this pernicious notion, is the concept that we are all dual in makeup: that is, we are body and spirit — and conflict exists between the two domains. This allows for a free movement of thought and action between the two realms. In other words, we can live in both worlds. We can, at one and the same time, be spiritual and worldly.

The notion that we can live in both worlds simultaneously is quite dangerous. It allows us to be good on Sunday, and more or less evil on Monday. Well, not exactly evil — only according to someone else's evaluation, etc. So, we can be quite bad (well, not exactly) in the body — but, at the same time be quite good and spiritual (but not exactly) in the mind and spirit.

In short, we can (supposedly) have the best of both worlds.

This sad commentary upon ancient Israel is pretty much an expression of gnosticism.

"They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods — according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away" (2Ki 17:33).

Paul states emphatically that we are all one — body, mind, and soul. He states also that the body is the temple of the living God, and that salvation is all about this body (*with its mind*) possessing the mind of Jesus Christ.

The new atheism

The new atheism is "hip." It is contemptuous of all who believe in God. It is evangelical. It is actually just a more aggressive form of the old. People choose to believe there is no God because they choose to establish their own morality. They may argue that we know more now. They may rationalize that we have more scientific information. Now, they may explain away the concept of any Intelligent Design, and the work of a Creator God who has set the boundaries of morality. But, most of all, they just refuse to be told.

This notion is intoxicating because it caters to the basic human predisposition to be like God — or to be “God”. We need to be continually aware of this deceit and rally around the simplicity and truth of Paul’s instruction to the Corinthians when he writes, “...but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to Gentiles”, while to us, “Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1Co 1:23,24). We also have increasing scientific evidence that we can find comfort and hope in the simple, direct, spirit-filled truth of King David: “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’ ” (Psa 14:1).

What then?

Not just the ones above, but all deceptive “isms” are false hopes. Even “Christadelphianism” can be a false hope. Even “Christadelphianism” can kill us!

How can we say such a thing? Because salvation is not merely bound up in a collection of doctrines or a statement of faith, however correct. Nor is it merely the property of any tradition, even the most Scriptural or helpful or venerable. There is no hope in any world view or practice — whether institutionalized or free-thinking, whether theirs or ours.

“Christadelphianism” alone — as a system — *cannot* save. *On the other hand, however, Jesus can and does save!* An expectant, spirit-filled, sacrificial life in Christ is the answer. There is no “ism” of salvation; there is only the Son of God. Our cognitive bias, our world view, has to reflect this. Otherwise, we have no hope. “Christ in us” *is* the hope of glory. That is the hook upon which we must hang our lives.

We need to be constantly called to action in the continual re-examination of our lives and belief systems. We need, like never before, to be asking the questions, continually and endlessly re-examining everything we think and do in the light of a Holy and Just God and within the radiance of Jesus Christ, “...that you may distinguish between the unclean and the clean” (Lev 10:10).

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1Pe 3:15).

Clyde Snobelen (Victoria, BC)

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:5). *“True godliness has a power in it, and those who embrace it yield their wills to the moral and spiritual influence of the Divine Word. But mere outward form, like the outside of the cup or the whited sepulcher, is no guide to what is within. It is with a sense of shock that we realize that these things [materialism, pride, abusive behavior, slander, and all the other forms of wickedness described in 2Ti 3:1-5] are not necessarily **outside** the ecclesia... Insofar as we recognize the characteristics of our own day we must be prepared to identify and resist the trends which will cause them to develop in our midst” (Alfred Nicholls).*

History

Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff: Sowing Beside All Waters



The dashing young man in the photo at left, decked out in a cowboy hat and carrying a pistol in his belt, would become one of the first home-grown Christadelphians of Ventura County, California. Young Henry Brinkerhoff was a rancher and a gold miner in the Santa Clara River Valley at about the time Scottish brother Robert Strathearn emigrated to nearby Santa Barbara in 1874. Henry's attempts to find gold would cause his path to cross that of Bro. Strathearn about five years later. Somewhere near the Piru Creek gold field,¹ Henry's life, and that of several generations of Brinkerhoffs since, was changed forever due to the accidental death of a miner with whom Henry had been working. The miner's death was the subject of a discussion that several men, including Henry Brinkerhoff and Robert Strathearn (who lived near Piru at this time) were having while standing over

the lifeless man. The talk turned to what would happen to the man now that he had died. Several miners agreed the dead man's soul was surely in heaven, but Bro. Strathearn said that he didn't see it that way. When Henry asked what he meant, Robert invited him to his house where he explained his belief in the resurrection.² And so began the path that would lead to Henry's baptism as a Christadelphian.

Even before his encounter with Robert Strathearn, Henry's life had taken a number of unexpected turns. Henry Rouse Brinkerhoff was born on June 23, 1852, in Plymouth, Ohio, the last of Peter and Persis Brinkerhoff's five children.³ Shortly after Henry was born, Peter left his wife and children on the farm in Ohio and sailed around Cape Horn to California. While in California, Peter Brinkerhoff received word that his wife had died. He returned to Ohio, picked up Henry and his sister, and headed back to California, ending up in Santa Barbara.⁴ Peter remarried in Santa Barbara in 1858, and fathered eight more children.

While Peter Brinkerhoff chose to live in Santa Barbara with his new family, Henry moved to Santa Paula, where he married Jessie Alvord in 1877.⁵ Two or three years later, around the same time their first child was born, Jessie and Henry were baptized. The two would become a wonderful preaching team, always ready to share the gospel with anyone they met.

The new brother and sister, and their family

While the exact year that Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff became Christadelphians is

unknown, he's first mentioned in *The Christadelphian* magazine in 1879, when he ordered some literature. According to information in *The Berean Christadelphian* magazine when Henry died, this would have been very close to the time of his baptism. The first time Henry and Jessie were referred to in print as brother and sister was in 1884 when Robert Strathearn reported the following in *The Christadelphian*: "On Sunday morning we met together for the breaking of bread, in memory of our absent Lord. Bro. and Sis. Brinkerhoff accompanied us, in whose fellowship we rejoiced greatly."

At the time Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff had only one child, a two-year-old boy named Alvin. Like many parents in those days, the couple faced tragedy involving their children a number of times in their lives. Young Alvin Brinkerhoff succumbed to diphtheria in an epidemic that hit the Santa Clara River area in 1890.⁶ The Brinkerhoffs lost another child in 1898, and a heart-wrenching notice was sent to *The Christadelphian* at the time by Sis. Elizabeth Reith: "Death has entered the home of our Bro. and Sis. Brinkerhoff, and taken their little son Sprague, a bright boy of eight years. This is the second son they have lost, and it was a severe trial to them, but they bear it with that strength they alone have who know and love the Lord." Two of their other children, who were baptized together as teenagers, would lose their lives while attempting to save the lives of others. Gertrude (Henry and Jessie's only daughter), died from contracting the flu while tending to patients as a nurse during the 1919 influenza pandemic.⁷ Their son Forrest was killed in the 1933 Long Beach earthquake when a building collapsed on him. The following was submitted to *The Christadelphian* at the time as a press notice that had appeared in a local paper under the heading "Dies for Others": "Forrest Brinkerhoff was young and life was good to live. His job was



The Brinkerhoff family in the early 1900s. Left to right: Forrest, Henry, Lawrence, Julius, Gertrude, Jessie, and Howard

that of switchboard operator at the Dominguez substation of the Pacific Electric Railway. When the first shock came he stood at his post to the switch that would save the lives of many at the cost of his own life. Early today searchers found his body crushed by huge pieces of masonry, but on his face, miraculously untouched by the jagged rocks, was a look of calm decision and peace.”⁸

All five of Henry and Jessie’s children who reached maturity became Christadelphians. Gertrude and Forrest were baptized in 1903, Howard was baptized in 1907, and Julius was baptized in 1916.⁹ Lawrence was baptized later in life, and like his brothers and sisters remained a Christadelphian until his death. Even today, there are 25 Christadelphians who are descendants of Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff.

Three of the Brinkerhoffs’ children, Sprague, Howard, and Lawrence, were born in Saticoy (or New Jerusalem, as it was called at the time), where Henry and Jessie had moved around 1890.¹⁰ Henry baptized a Sis. Adair there in 1895.¹¹ Bro. Cyrus Lewis, while on a trip to visit isolated Ventura County Christadelphians, including Helen Shiells, Robert Stratearn, and Robert and Marion Stocks, spent two weeks in the fall of 1895 at the Brinkerhoffs’ large bean farm in Saticoy. Bro. Lewis noted that the farm kept the Brinkerhoffs busy, but not too busy to preach to their neighbors.¹² The Brinkerhoffs were frequently mentioned in connection with their efforts to preach to others. No doubt they were moved to share the gift that had been imparted to them by Bro. Strathearn.

Henry Brinkerhoff was again mentioned in *The Christadelphian* in 1897, when he baptized Clement Seagoe in Moorpark, California. Robert Strathearn had died the year before, and Henry appears to have become the leading brother in Ventura County. Henry also baptized a Sis. Baker, who was taught the truth by Jessie Brinkerhoff, in Santa Paula in 1902. Sis. Marian Stocks reported the baptism in *The Christadelphian* that year: “The truth was first brought to Sis. Baker’s notice by Sis. Brinkerhoff, who together with Bro. Brinkerhoff are ready to ‘sow beside all waters.’ ”

A big house and a new ecclesia

Bro. and Sis. Brinkerhoff and family left Ventura County in 1904, moving to an area of Los Angeles that would later become Hollywood (1418 Tamarind Avenue).¹³ This was just a few years before the movie studios moved in and made the area famous. In those days this part of Los Angeles was known for its large homes surrounded by groves and orchards.

The Brinkerhoffs continued to farm as they had in Ventura County, working a large piece of rented land near their home. The property they farmed was known as the Arnaz Ranch.¹⁴ This ranch was used a few years later as a location for filming a number of the “Little Rascals” comedy series.¹⁵

When the Brinkerhoffs moved to Los Angeles in 1904, they became members of the newly formed Los Angeles Ecclesia, along with their son and daughter, Forrest and Gertrude. The ecclesia was meeting at 534 South Spring Street at the time, six miles from the Brinkerhoff’s home. Henry and Jessie were members 10 and

11 of the new ecclesia.¹⁶ The Brinkerhoffs lived in a large two-story house and often invited guests over, especially children from the ecclesia.¹⁷



**The Brinkerhoff home on 1418 Tamarind Avenue in Los Angeles.
The family lived in this home between 1904 and 1916.
Today this street is in the city of Hollywood.**



**The Los Angeles Christadelphian Ecclesia
soon after Bro. and Sis. Brinkerhoff joined in 1904.
Henry and Jessie are the couple at the far right of the picture.**

Gertrude Brinkerhoff would leave her parents' home in Los Angeles in 1911. On November 15 of that year Gertrude married Bro. Stephen Rutherford and moved to Santa Barbara. Stephen was a relative of Jessie Rutherford, the first convert to the Truth of Sis. Helen Shiells (another early Ventura County Christadelphian).

Gertrude and Stephen had two children, Paul and Lois, before Gertrude's untimely death in 1919.¹⁸ Gertrude Rutherford was a well loved sister, as the following notice in *The Christadelphian* attests: "It is with heartfelt sorrow we record the death of Sis. Gertrude Rutherford... Sis. Rutherford was a true daughter of Abraham. Her Christ-like character and many good deeds endeared her to us all."

Going north

In 1916, Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff moved north to Chowchilla, near Yosemite, where Henry bought 80 acres of land and set up a ranch. That same year, the Brinkerhoffs' youngest son, Julius, was baptized in the L.A. Ecclesia at age 15. Shortly after that, Julius joined his parents on their ranch in Chowchilla. Henry loved to farm his land using a team of horses and never converted to a tractor, even though most of his neighbors did.¹⁹



Stephen Rutherford and Gertrude Brinkerhoff were married in 1911



Henry Brinkerhoff, behind a team of horses, working the land on his Chowchilla ranch.

In 1918, Henry and Jessie's son, Howard, was drafted for service in World War One. Unable to secure conscientious objection, Howard Brinkerhoff was sent to Camp Lewis, near Seattle, Washington. Howard, who had been baptized when he was 13, refused to take part in any combatant service, and was eventually allowed to do farm work as alternative service. The following was noted in *The Christadelphian* for 1919, on his release from service: "We are all glad to welcome the return from Camp Lewis, Washington, of brethren Howard Brinkerhoff and John Hetherwick. Bro. Brinkerhoff was amongst the first to be called to camp by the selection draft, and had to endure much hardship and reproach before the status of conscientious objectors was settled."

A year after Howard returned home, Henry Brinkerhoff lost his companion of over 40 years. Jessie Brinkerhoff died on March 15, 1920, and was buried next

to Henry and Jessie's daughter, Gertrude, in Santa Barbara. Sis. Jessie was highly esteemed in Southern California and was "well known for the warmth of her affection for the brotherhood, and her devotion to the Truth", according to the notice about her death in *The Christadelphian* that year.

The final years

A few years after Jessie died, Henry Brinkerhoff lost the ranch in Chowchilla. By 1930, Henry had moved in with his son Lawrence, who was living in Los Angeles at the time. Henry died at age 83, on June 10, 1935, at Lawrence Brinkerhoff's ranch in Camarillo, the same year that his grandson Robert was baptized.²⁰ Henry's walk toward the Kingdom ended just a few miles from where it had begun in Ventura County.

In 1940, Henry and Jessie's grandson, Robert Brinkerhoff, married Robert and Marian Stocks' granddaughter, Margaret Cocke. Robert and Margaret Brinkerhoff's children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren are related to Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff, Robert and Marian Stocks, and Robert Strathearn (Robert Stocks' uncle), all early Ventura County Christadelphians.

Although Henry and Jessie Brinkerhoff endured much heartache in their lives, they remained strong in the Truth and should be an inspiration to all of us. They were true pioneer Christadelphians of Ventura County, and now await the resurrection to life eternal — thanks to the effort that Bro. Robert Strathearn made to share his faith with a young gold miner. Henry may not have found the shiny nuggets he was seeking near Piru Creek, but what he found that day was worth much more to him than gold. It isn't hard to imagine him reading Psalm 19:9,10 as the years went by, and knowing exactly what David meant:

"The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous all together. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold."

Gordon Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

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Letters

Considering God's Providence

Dear Bro. George,

Bro. David Levin's article in the July issue on the subject of God's interactions in our lives today [*"Providence: How Can I Sense God's Presence?"*], while of necessity limited in scope, was very well balanced. The tendency of some to confidently assert that a specific phenomenon is the direct manifestation of the will and power of God seems to me to be a dangerous practice. While all that happens has clearly been allowed by God, as everything is in His control, that is not what is being referred to when someone asserts that God saved them in a crisis. Attributing direct cause/effect relationships might be more than we are here to do.

From another aspect, it was interesting to contemplate how much we "miss" the belief in the devil and demons in considering this subject. It would be so much simpler if we could attribute all the bad to the devil and all the good to God. Instead, we have to come to grips with the truth that it all rests with God.

The effect of this truth, however, is very helpful.

It causes us to consider all that happens to us, in the light of God's revealed desire for us; and thus to react to all that happens to us in ways that improve our character and glorify Him. At the end of the day, it is not what happens to us, but how we react to it that is important.

*With love in Christ,
Ken Sommerville (Simi Hills, CA)*

Who is the "mighty God"? (Isaiah 9:6)

Dear Bro. Booker,

Greetings.

We have just received the June edition of *The Tidings*, and we want you to know how excited we were to read the article you wrote on Isaiah 9:6 [page 241].

We are regularly attacked from all sides by Trinitarians, and the reference to the Soncino Commentary has helped us to reassess our thinking on this passage.

Could you please help us further with our thinking? Does the point hold for any person mentioned in the Scriptures?

[Editor: The point was this: that any Bible name which includes God's Name may possibly be describing the character of God, and not so much the character of the person upon whom the name was conferred.]

We were working our way through names and wondered about the name change

for Abraham. However, “father of a multitude” is still a reference to his acting out this name for Yahweh.

*Your brother and sister by grace,
Bill and Carol Rawson (Costa Blanca, Spain)*

Dear Bro. Bill and Sis. Carol,

*I wouldn't say the point **must** hold for any name. Rather, I would suggest that it **might** apply here and there when it seems suitable.*

As to Abram's (or Abraham's) names: It's usually assumed that Abram means “father of a high place”, with possible pagan associations. In other words, Abram's father was a worshiper of such a god or gods. But Abraham (meaning “father of a multitude”) plainly refers to the promise that he would become a great nation. Of course, as you suggest, Yahweh Himself was acting through Abraham to create that great nation, or seed.

Another point. We know that, quite often, the name of any righteous person in the Bible says something about his or her character or conduct or destiny. Perhaps, when that happens, we can go one step further. Perhaps we can assume that the name doesn't just apply to the person, but also to the God whom that person worships. And the reason would be obvious: we do very little of our own accord, but rather it is God who is working in and through us to make it so. “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil 2:12,13).

One example will suffice: Jesus, or Joshua. Does the name mean “He [i.e., Jesus] shall save”, or does it mean “Yahweh saves”? Surely it means both, for if Jesus is the One who shall save, it is only because Yahweh Himself actually saves, being the God Who is “in [Jesus]... reconciling the world unto himself” (2Co 5:18).

*Yours in Christ,
George*

More about the article, and an additional perspective on Isaiah 9:6,7:

...and the “Everlasting Father”

My dear brother George,

Your note on “Who is the ‘mighty God?’” [June, p. 241] set me thinking. Might there not be another angle from which to view this passage?

Take, for example, the title which follows in Isaiah 9: “Everlasting Father”. Most people immediately think of begetting as the context, even paternity on as high a plane as God's of His only-begotten Son Jesus, and the multitude of God's children who come into being through him. But the word “father” is also used in a very different way in Scripture. For instance, Joseph told his brothers that “God made me *father* to Pharaoh” (Gen 45:8; all quotations from the NIV) and Naaman's subordinates coaxed him from his rage with the words: “My *father*, if the prophet...” (2Ki 5:13).

In the case of Joseph, Pharaoh had made him supreme, relieving Pharaoh of day-to-day responsibilities and, in his name, issuing orders to the nation. Naaman was a military officer with full responsibility for and authority over the army of Syria. This long tradition in politico-military idiom still exists — the troops are ‘infantry’; I believe French army officers still address the troops as ‘mes enfants’ [‘my children’]: the father and children idiom again. This was the pattern at Israel’s birth as a nation under Moses. The early chapters of Numbers (1 and 2 will demonstrate the point) describe the census of all men “who are able to serve in the army”, and go on to describe the encampment orders under which all soldiers would billet under “his standard with the banners of his family”. The word “family” here is the Hebrew *av*, “father”. That’s how it began, fathers with their sons (fathers as commanders) defending home territory (or enlarging it!) and this grew as families became clans and clans became nations. Anyone who has watched the Trooping of the Colour in London, in the presence of the Queen, will know the importance of the family ensign, the “colour”, even now.

The “Everlasting Father”, then, might well be a reference to the Messiah as the Supreme Commander of the armies of heaven, which is precisely what he is seen to be in Revelation 19:11-14, riding at the head of the armies of heaven.

How does this relate to the title “Mighty God”? It seems to me that, on his conquest of sin and ascension to God’s right hand, Jesus took all the names and titles of his Father — as a son would. We find him from then onwards being referred to as “God” without any Trinitarian, or similar, implications whatsoever. A couple of examples:

- (a) Hebrews 1:8: “But about the Son he says” (from Psalm 45) “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever.” There is no doubt here as to who is being addressed nor about the relationship between this “God” and his “God” for the Spirit continues: “therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions.” It is plain that “God” (the Son) is within the power, and under the authority, of God (the Father), Who can set him at His pleasure above his companions. But the Son bears his Father’s title (“God”) nonetheless.
- (b) John 20:28: Thomas, confronted by the risen Lord, exclaimed: “My Lord and my God!” Jesus did not correct him and tell him that he had got it all wrong. He simply accepted that his doubting disciple had now seen and believed.

Such Scriptures indicate to me that we can be quite relaxed about attributing the title “Mighty God” to the risen, glorified Messiah, commander of the forces of heaven. It challenges none of our doctrines, and at the same time harmonizes with the Isaiah prophecy and highlights the awesome glory of the Christ.

*Sincerely, in Jesus,
Paul Launchbury (West Kingdown, Kent, UK)*

Dear Bro. Paul,

Thanks for the very interesting suggestions.

There are other passages that use “father” to mean “counselor”, “leader”, “teacher” (Gen 4:20,21; 2Ki 2:12; 13:14; Isa 22:21). And there are probably even more; pos-

sibly some of the “father of” passages in the Chronicles genealogies may be speaking of chieftains or clan leaders without implying that all those in the clan or “family” were direct literal descendants.

Some of the teachings of Proverbs may use the father-son terminology to signify a teacher-student relationship. Elsewhere, “father” may have meant the head of a trade guild, union, or fraternity. The “sons” of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun, for example, or the “sons of Korah”, may have been literal descendants of those chief musicians, but some “sons” may have simply been Jewish members of the musicians’ guilds or associations that bore those honored names. Likewise, the “sons of the prophets” (1Ki 20:35) may not all have literally had fathers who were prophets, but rather they themselves belonged to the association of the prophets.

In the New Testament, the father-son pairing often indicates spiritual mentor and disciple (1Ti 1:2,18; 1Co 4:14-17; Phil 2:19-22; 2Ti 1:2; 2:1; Tit 1:4). It is in just that way that Jesus could speak — in the most negative sense — of those who were the seed, or children, of their “father the devil” (John 8:44; cf Matt 3:7; 13:38; Acts 13:10; 1Jo 13:10).

Finally, of course, the very foundation of our faith is that in Christ we become the “children” of our spiritual father Abraham (Rom 4:11,12,16-18; Gal 3:7,27-29; Eph 3:6), not by sharing the same gene pool but by sharing the same faith.

I imagine you had many such passages in your mind already.

Yours in Christ,
George

The Ecclesial Guide

Greetings,

This is just a thought: It has been discovered that many brethren who own *The Ecclesial Guide*, written by Bro. Robert Roberts back in 1883 and reprinted many times over, has not been read through by at least 50 to 60% of our community. Therefore there are so many brethren who are totally unaware of some of the guidelines for our community.

As a good way to become acquainted with *The Ecclesial Guide*, one might use the following formula: Read one proposition per day, as you would your daily Bible readings. You might read the item with the number corresponding to that day of the month, and then the extra 16 or so into the next month, until you have read all 46 propositions. After a break, you might repeat the process again and again, until you have all the ideas firmly embedded in your mind.

At a meeting where 400 brethren were present, the question was asked, “How many of you have read *The Ecclesial Guide*?” Only three raised their hands — that’s not a good ratio! It’s little wonder that so many brethren have no idea of these very useful guidelines.

Reuben Washington (Echo Lake, NJ)

Bathsheba's guilt or innocence?

Dear Bro. Booker,

Many thanks for your thoughts in the special issue of *The Tidings* for August. I'm a little worried that poor Bathsheba is getting a bum rap. 2 Samuel 13 starts out, "Some time passed." So I know it's not immediately the next thing in David's life chronologically, but it has always seemed significant that the very next thing in the record is the rape of a beautiful young woman. Tamar protested but was not helped. Was Bathsheba truly as innocent as the little lamb in Nathan's parable?

David was angry when he heard what happened to Tamar, but seemingly he didn't do anything (2Sa 13:21). Was that because he had done the same thing and thus it was very hard for him to condemn Amnon? Bathsheba is never reprimanded the way David was by God, but she did lose her son. On the other hand, the innocent do often suffer at the hands of sinners. I'm not sure what to conclude, but my heart leans strongly toward Bathsheba's innocence. I would love to hear your thoughts on the matter.

With love in Christ,
Sis. Diane Sabean (Meriden, CT)

Dear Sis. Diane,

You have indeed quickly summarized some of the same points regarding Bathsheba's innocence which occur to me. But, as my article mentioned, there are some aspects that point toward a measure of guilt also. Somewhere in the mix is the balance that is the absolute truth of the matter. Each of us may have our opinions, and perhaps our leanings or predispositions, and it is to be expected that we will. At the same time we should be thankful, of course, that we are not required to make final judgments about such things. There is one Judge who will make such judgments, and we can rest assured that his judgments — like those of the LORD God Himself — will be "true and righteous altogether" (Psa 19:9).

Yours in Christ,
George

A baptismal prayer

*May this solemn dedication
Never once forgotten be;
Let it know no revocation,
Published and confirmed by thee.*

*Thine I am, O Lord, for ever
To thy service set apart;
Suffer me to leave thee never:
Seal thine image on my heart.*

(John Curwen, slightly modified)

Youth

Baptismal Confession

To the serving brethren of the San Francisco Peninsula Ecclesia,

As you all know, I have been born and raised in a Christadelphian family. I have studied the Bible, learned the principles that are taught there, and attended meeting regularly for the great majority of my life. The constant exposure and familiarity with the Word of God can be a blessing, but it can also cause one to become complacent and take this wonderful blessing for granted. In my case, I have struggled with the decision to be baptized for a long time. I am a scientist both by profession and at the core of my being. Logic and reason have always been the basis for everything I believe and do. I have never been a person who could just accept something because I was told, or blindly believe someone in a position of “authority”. Although I believe this is a blessing in itself, which will make my faith stronger in the long run, it also tends to make me very skeptical.

For a long time, I questioned whether I only believed what the Bible says because it had been “programmed” into me, and because I was so entrenched in this way of thinking that I had “blinded” myself to other possibilities. I saw people of other religions who were so devoted to what they believe that they wouldn’t hesitate to sacrifice their lives in the hope of reward from their god. I saw intelligent and reasonable people in the world who didn’t believe in a God at all and, at least on the surface, seemed to have logical and scientifically-based reasons to believe that everything in the universe came from nothing. So, in order to truly accept that the Bible contained the truth and was the inspired word of God, I needed something that could ground it in reality. I’ve always been impressed by the complexity and intricacy of the Bible, and how so many themes repeat themselves, and so many of the stories are interconnected on a deeper level. However, in order for me to accept the Bible as the Truth, it needed to be grounded in reality (i.e., in something outside of itself). If the Bible’s version of events did not match the facts of history and science, it would lose any value to me as a source of the Truth and be relegated to no more than one of the great literary works of human civilization.

The three major categories of evidence that have grounded the Bible in reality, and have led me to conclude that it does indeed contain the Truth, are:

- (1) the scientific evidence for creation (and evidence against evolution),
- (2) the historical accuracy of the Bible, and
- (3) prophecies that have been fulfilled in recorded history and are being fulfilled through the events of the world today (mostly through God’s witness on this earth, the nation of Israel).

I won’t go into the details of all these pieces of evidence at this time, as that is not the purpose of this letter; we’ll save that for the “interview”! I mention this because, to me, this is the foundation of the logical progression that led me to desire to

be baptized. If the Bible does indeed contain the Truth, then I believe one must accept it as such in its entirety, not picking and choosing which parts one likes. If we have a sincere belief in the Bible, we must also accept the responsibility of what God has called us to do: be baptized, and attempt to follow the example of His Son in our daily lives.

This is the point where I have been stuck for the last few years. I had come to accept that the Bible was true based on the reasons I mentioned previously, but I was afraid of the responsibility. I also still held an irrational doubt, that somehow I was blinding myself, in that I was so entrenched in the Christadelphian belief system that I couldn't really see beyond it. I call this an irrational doubt because the evidence was right in front of me the whole time. I think that at some level I just didn't want to accept it. Part of me wanted to just forget the whole thing and live my life in ignorance, like most of the people around me at school, work, and elsewhere. I lacked the strength and will to take that first step and commit my life to God, although I knew in my heart I wanted to do so. I always saw baptism as something I would do eventually, but "not right now."

I have come to realize over the last few months that I would never have the strength on my own, and that I really needed God to help me overcome my weakness and doubt. I prayed sporadically over the last few months for God to give me the strength and help me take the first step of baptism, but it wasn't until Menucha Bible School this year that I really felt my prayer had been answered. I prayed every night during the week for God to give me strength and for the school to be the "spark" that would finally push me to make the commitment I had delayed for so many years.

Menucha had always been a place that helped me spiritually, but I always would return to my normal routine afterward, and the spiritual "high" would quickly fade amid the distractions of the world and my daily life. This year was the first time I felt that a prayer had truly been answered. The answer mostly came from an encouraging conversation with my friend Austen, but I also felt that the classes, the two baptisms, and the week in general were pretty much exactly what I needed.

At this point, I feel that I can no longer ignore what I believe in my heart and fall back into the meaningless daily routine of this worldly life. I know that I am still weak and very far from anything resembling perfection, but I believe that I am now ready, and it is my honest desire to take the first step in my walk on the straight and narrow path by entering the waters of baptism.

With this letter, I would like to formally request the opportunity to confess my faith in front of God and a few of His servants, and, I hope, to be baptized thereafter.

*Sincerely, in the Hope of our Lord,
Jonathan Sleeper*

(Jonathan was baptized September 2, 2007.)

Reflections

Our Electronic Witness

The Christadelphian community has heartily embraced the internet and social networking sites. There is a Christadelphian presence on all of the more popular social networking sites. Personally, I have accounts at the MySpace and Facebook social networking sites, which I use on a regular basis. Social networking sites are designed to be widely viewed by as many people as possible. We know from Scripture and past experience that everything we do is a witness to our values, interests, and beliefs. Some of our witness on social networking sites is extremely positive, and some is not what it should be. We are commanded in 2 Timothy 4:2 to be “instant in season and out of season” in our witness. Our social networking presence should reflect that.

Social networking sites have been used to strengthen fraternal bonds and inform the Christadelphian community of fraternal news. Bible schools, gatherings, and local CYCs have all used social networking sites to announce their plans. One example of positive social networking is the Facebook group “Grant Anderson Needs Your Prayers.” Bro. Grant was in a terrible car accident, and his family set up a Facebook group to keep Grant’s ecclesial family around the world informed of his condition and the progress he has made in his recovery. Many non-believers have seen the love and faith of our community expressed in this public forum.

Social networking sites are based on users identifying other users on the site as their friends. Many users take great pride in the number of friends they have. The desire to appear well-liked and well-connected leads many users to indiscriminately accept friend requests from anyone. Believers cannot forget the definition of a friend in John 15:14: “You are my friends if you do what I command you.” Social networking sites also feature groups which their members can join. Most colleges and universities have alumni groups, and there are groups for hobbies, sports teams, and special interests. People will judge us by the groups we join and the friends we select. A believer needs to remember that friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4).

Social networking sites often enable users to load content to their pages. MySpace enables its users to upload photographs, videos, and music to their pages. As believers, the content we load should reflect our service to our Master instead of our interests in fleshly pursuits. Our photographs should depict godly behavior and dress, as opposed to the photographs commonly found on MySpace. MySpace users are all asked what people they would like to meet, and their answers are displayed on their MySpace home pages. This choice reflects our interests and where our heart lies. Would we rather have people think that we want to meet Bible characters, or that we want to meet worldly entertainers?

Social networking sites are neither good nor evil. Social networking is a communication tool like email or the telephone. How we use this electronic tool will

tell the surrounding community and our Lord a great deal about our priorities and how we want to live our lives.

Jeff Livermore (Milford Road, MI)

Unjust Extremes

It is easy for men to deceive themselves into thinking that unrighteous and unjust extremes are simply the evidence of their zeal for truth. Even a readiness to listen to the accused is regarded as weakness. Such extremists cry shame on the very effort to be fair, and in their determination to have no compromise with error they sometimes exaggerate faults, and so grossly misrepresent the objects of their attack that they become guilty of offences worse than all the error against which they are trying to fight.

We must not fall into the mistake of taking an extreme view even of the extremist. God has been merciful to such men in the past, and we must be merciful now even in our thoughts. We may state most emphatically, however, that it is wrong to exaggerate the faults of anyone, or to find ugly and misleading names with which to label those who do not quite see eye to eye with us. It is quite possible to be valiant for the Truth and zealous for the Lord without being unfair even to those who are mistaken, and it is always wrong to be unfair. In faithfulness we must point out the danger that, in great zeal for the jots and tittles of the law, men may lose sight of the foundation principles. All their faith and works may become valueless through lack of charity.

The need for a clear perception of the Scriptural principles governing controversy is shown by the tendency toward unrighteous exaggeration even on the part of those from whom better things would be expected. A few days ago we read some words written by a critic who has usually shown a sense of responsibility in the use of words. Yet there are exaggerations which tend to foster strife without the slightest suggestion as to the restitution of the offenders. It declares that the belittling of the commandments among us had become an open sin.

This is a very definite and severe judgment, which presumably includes the present writer in its sweeping condemnation. What does it mean? Is there any effort or desire to restore us “in the spirit of meekness”, or are we too evil for that? If we “belittle the commandments of Christ” to the point of “open sin”, what hope can we have of forgiveness unless we can be restored? I have just recently been through the four Gospel records in an attempt to classify all the commandments of the Lord Jesus and apply them to present experience. It is easy to find commands which are very imperfectly observed. The repeated command to love one another even as he has loved us (John 13:34) has been repeatedly broken. The commands not to lay up treasure on earth and not to seek the riches of the Gentiles are so foreign to the spirit of our age that we only grasp them with great difficulty, and so far no one has been found to rend the ecclesias on this issue. It is quite certain that our critic does not mean these matters. He probably refers to the vexed question of a

decision as to where to draw the line between reproving, rebuking or withdrawing from an offender. Is there anything in the commands of Christ to suggest that one who takes too lenient a view of his brother's offences is to be condemned and repudiated? I know of no such command. There are plenty of warnings that those who take too severe a view of a brother's offences will themselves be dealt with severely. There are warnings against judging and against the natural tendency to see the defects in the eye of a brother while remaining unconscious of greater defects in ourselves. If some among us err in their unwillingness to take the most severe of all measures against offenders, if they carry too far the commands to be patient and to restore offenders in the spirit of meekness, it cannot in fairness be described as "belittling the commandments of Christ."

The use of this expression is to be explained in the same way as the many far worse attempts at argument which we sometimes hear. It is a natural emanation from strife and debate.

It is not fair, it is not true; but it has the doubtful merit of being severe, and therefore it is made to serve. It is so easy to be led into the use of such expressions, and we must not make any man an offender for a word, but we do well to sound a warning. Be pitiful, be courteous, be gentle, be meek, be honest. Cultivate charity and love, and remember that for every idle word that you speak you shall give account in the day of judgment.

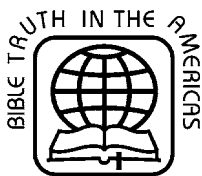
(Islip Collyer, The Scriptural Principles Governing Controversy)

My Neighbor's Bible

*I am my neighbor's Bible;
He reads me when we meet;
Today he reads me in my home,
Tomorrow on the street.
He may be a relative or a friend,
Or a slight acquaintance be;
He may not even know my name,
Yet he is reading me.*

*Dear friends in Christ and brothers,
If we could only know
How faithfully the world records
Just what we say and do.
Oh, we would make our record plain,
And labor hard to see
Our worldly neighbors won to Christ
While reading you and me.*

Dorothy Keeling



Bible Mission News

Baptism in Brazil

We are very happy to report that on Saturday, August 23, a new brother was baptized in Brazil. He is Emerson Acosta. Emerson has been studying with us for several years and in addition has been visited by different brethren on several occasions. In the past he was a member and leader of different Evangelical churches but was never able to accept the doctrine of the Trinity, so he was very happy to discover a community that shared his conviction. He has become a very good Bible student, and he gave an excellent confession of his faith over the course of several days. Bro. Rubén Barboza took the short flight over from Córdoba, Argentina, to participate in the interview and carry out the baptism.

This is the first baptism in Brazil that the CBMA has been directly involved with from the beginning of the instruction period. Bro. Emerson will be in isolation, although communication will be maintained with him through various means.

*Jim Hunter, Brazil linkman
CBMA Latin American Committee*



The baptism: Rubén on the left and Emerson on the right.



**In Brazil:
Rubén Barboza
on the right.
Emerson in the
center, with his
wife Viviane,
son Kevim and
daughter Ellem.**

Singing Hymns in Panama

During the month of August, we were privileged once again to visit the two ecclesias in Panama (Colón and Panama City), and enjoyed the fellowship and labors of Bro. Clive and Sis. Christine Drepaul from the South Ozone Park Ecclesia in Brooklyn, NY. The Drepauls, along with a few other Christadelphians from North America, attended a wedding in Panama in July, 2007, and they offered to return in 2008 to assist with ecclesial activities. Although the language spoken by the majority of the members in Panama is Spanish, quite a number speak English as well. This being the case, during the 16 days the Drepauls spent in Panama, Bro. Clive was able to give a number of exhortations and studies (such as Malachi, Haggai, and Jonah) and a lecture on “One God, One Gospel, One Way to Go”. The members of both ecclesias were very grateful for Clive and Christine’s fellowship and ministrations. Bro. Don Luff also scheduled a linkman’s visit to Panama during the same time, so as to work with Clive in a few dual language activities for the benefit of the ecclesias and regular visitors.

There were two highlights from the various activities. On Thursday, August 21, starting at about 5 pm, ten brothers and sisters listened to a study on “The Comfort of the Truth” at the home of Bro. Luis and Sis. Vanessa Sobers’ home. This was followed by a delicious fish (corvina) supper. After the meal, we gathered as many English and Spanish hymn books as we could find in the house and sang hymns in both languages, and with no accompaniment, until about 10 pm, when we ran out of breath! It was a very pleasant evening indeed. The amazing thing was that 24-year-old Bro. Jahir Jiménez, who was baptized about two years ago, could sing most of the Spanish hymns by heart! The other occasion was in Sunday, August 24, when we held another joint Sunday service in Panama City — the Breaking of Bread, a meal, and an afternoon Bible class. Twenty brothers and sisters, six children and four regular visitors were well-fed by God’s Word, as well as an excellent meal provided by the sisters.

We thank our Heavenly Father for the fellowship we enjoyed, based on His Word of Truth. We look forward to the day when we will serve together in the Kingdom.

Don Luff, CBMA linkmen for Panamá



**Bro. Clive Drepaal
(right front)
and Sis. Christine Drepaal
(center front)
(from Brooklyn, NY)
with members of
The Colon Ecclesia.**

**Sisters
preparing meal at
Panama City
Ecclesial Hall.**



Bring the Power of Internet Preaching to Your Ecclesia!

Since January 2006, ThisisyourBible.com (TIYB) has been bringing the Gospel message to thousands. We've been blessed with a dozen baptisms of students from the TIYB site. These new brothers and sisters come from almost every continent — and from the Los Angeles metropolitan area to the tiny island of Malta. Additionally, tens of thousands have downloaded and read Christadelphian teachings on basic first principle topics. More than 8,000 have registered on the site. Yet we believe this is just scratching the surface!

It is now clear to us that the best formula for TIYB is a strong partnership among the TIYB site, our tutors, and local ecclesias. Each plays a critical role in leading men and women to the Truth. We continue to view the brothers and sisters who

faithfully serve as tutors as our greatest asset. It's this "in the trenches" work that develops important relationships with students and encourages them to go beyond mere completion of the correspondence course and to seek fellowship with those who uphold the true Gospel. We currently have more than 350 tutors. We thank the Lord for providing these dedicated servants.

We've witnessed some very creative and effective outreach techniques used in several communities to leverage the power of TIYB. For instance, in the Bahamas and Barbados, newspaper ads for TIYB and the correspondence course netted more than 1,000 new students. In these communities, the ecclesial members now have a rich slate of new contacts who are actively involved in ongoing correspondence courses with tutors. These new students are prime candidates for local Bible talks or seminar offerings. We feel that this is *the* model for TIYB partnership. It provides local ownership, along with the resources of our global tutor base.

So we have re-designed TIYB to give ecclesias more ownership and control over outreach in their community. In fact, we are pleased to introduce the "Ecclesial Manager" feature on TIYB, with the objective of giving each ecclesia the option of using TIYB as an effective tool for their localized outreach work.

For ecclesias looking for a new way to develop local contacts and invite them to outreach activities, TIYB now offers each ecclesia the ability to designate an "Ecclesial Manager" for its area. This means that your ecclesia can now have control over all students in your geographic area. You can designate specific tutors in your ecclesia for incoming students, or you can continue to use the existing global tutors. As the Ecclesial Manager, you will be able to access information on contacts in your area, create email lists for communication purposes — even set up a brief webpage about your ecclesia! What we ask is for the Ecclesial Managers to advertise and promote TIYB in their area, with the object of building contacts.

The process for getting started is not difficult. If you think that your ecclesia has a long-term interest in developing and cultivating students in your area, you can begin by emailing:

1. Bro. Mike LeDuke at mduke@gto.net in North America.
2. Bro. Peter Forbes at peterlforbes@tiscali.co.uk for Europe, Africa and the Middle East.
3. Bro. Keith Pearson at pearsonk@primus.com.au for Australia, New Zealand, Asia and the Pacific region.

We will be glad to provide you with all the details necessary to begin this exciting work in your ecclesial area.

The Lord has greatly blessed us with this opportunity to bring the Word of Truth to many more men and women. There's no magic bullet here — it involves connecting students with tutors and meeting them at a local level with a committed ecclesia. Today, your ecclesia can harness this important tool to be an important part of your outreach activities. Let us know when you'd like to get started!

Dave Jennings
Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

(For tax ID numbers please contact the Editor)

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Domestic Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make US dollar online donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Charles Brinkerhoff, 15925 La Ronda Cir., Hacienda Heights, CA 91745-4244

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 86, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: wcfoundation.org

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.

Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.

Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

Spanish language literature is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947.
jdhunter@gte.net, 626-303-2222

Christadelphian Heritage College

Donations may be sent to Christadelphian Heritage College, c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

Christadelphian Save the Children

Fund provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas. For details see: www.christadelphianchildren.com

Christadelphian Indian Children's

Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457-5012

Joy Fund, Inc., provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable

Foundation provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L4V7, Canada

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund

(KAMF) provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Christadelphian Care Line

provides a service for those who need fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

Alcohol Help Line

provides a service for those who need fully confidential help overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

News & Notices

BRANTFORD, ON

As of July 2008, we transfer and commend Bro. Ben Bowen to the love and fellowship of the Mississauga West Ecclesia. Bro. Ben is relocating for work and we will miss him, having enjoyed his support in many areas since his return from mission work in Bangladesh.

We are happy to extend a warm welcome to Bro. Brent and Sis. Jennifer Penny and family, by way of transfer from the Hamilton Ewen Road Ecclesia as of September 2008. We look forward to continued fellowship with them as we labor together in the truth. We are also very happy to welcome back our Sis. Hadassah Mindorff, who has agreed to teach at CHC for another year rather than returning to Virginia.

We enjoyed fellowship with our Bro. Ron and Sis. Babs Kidd (London, ON), and thank them for visiting us. We thank our Bro. Ron for leading the Bible studies during our recent Camp Kumah young peoples' weekend. We look forward to the visit of Bro. Carl Parry (Aust.) who will be leading us in studies of "The Prophecy of Isaiah", from October 3-8, 2008, God willing.

Daniel Billington

EDMONTON, AB

We thank the brothers and sisters who have visited us in recent months and in particular Bro. Jon Fletcher (Kamloops, BC), Bro. Don Hampson (Calgary, AB), and Bro. Bill Hlina (Vernon, BC), who have ministered to our spiritual needs.

Twenty-four years ago our ecclesia was blessed by the transfer of Bro. David and Sis. Mary Green from Brantford, ON. We enjoyed their fellowship throughout those years, watching as their little family grew. Now we commend them in love to the Sussex, NB, Ecclesia where they can watch their grandchildren grow in the love of the truth.

We look forward to our Calgary / Edmonton Thanksgiving Fraternal to be held in Calgary on October 11-12, 2008, and the fellowship it will offer. We thank our Bro. Dana Kohlman (Rolling Hills, AB) for leading our Thanksgiving fraternal last year in Edmonton.

Jerome Toronchuk

TROY, IL

We are pleased to announce the baptism of CALEB FOLKERTS on July 12, 2008.

We have enjoyed the fellowship of the following brothers and sisters who have visited recently: Ron and Barb Bryan, Tim and Christy Bryan, Jim and Jorie Asbury, and Patty Bobis (Kouts, IN); and Jim and Patty Robinson (Kitchener, ON). If anyone is traveling through the St. Louis area, please contact Bro. Jerry Asbury (618-288-5023). We welcome the company and fellowship.

Tom Tottleben

VERDUGO HILLS, CA

This year has brought a few changes to our membership. In February 2008, Sis. Dorothy Banta passed away at the age of 96. She was baptized in 1932 at the age of 21

in the Pomona Ecclesia. She had been a member of our ecclesia since 1953, but due to failing health had not been able to attend memorial service for a number of years. We look forward to reuniting with her in our Father's kingdom.

By way of transfer, we welcomed Bro. Ed Newton and Sis. Winona Morrison from the Orange County Ecclesia, and Sis. Mimi Sternad who transferred from the Simi Hills Ecclesia.

We have been blessed with two baptisms this year: DANNY COLLISTER on July 4, 2008, and SANDRA COLLISTER on August 24, 2008. Both are Sunday school students we have watched grow into young adults over the years.

Very exciting were the births of five future Sunday school students within the past few months. They were welcomed by parents, grandparents and great-grandparents who almost all attend our ecclesia. Aaliyah Bethel Paggi was born on May 12 to Bro. Jeff and Sis. Nissa Paggi. Jeremy James Larsen was born on May 25 to Bro. Grant and Sis. Renee Larsen. Ryder Robert Blanchard was born on July 29 to Bro. Nathan and Sis. Janee Blanchard. Finally, within about twenty minutes of each other on August 23 Hailey Katherine Ohins was born to Bro. Brian and Sis. Heather Ohins and Abigail Shamssa Shankour was born to Bro. Nassib and Sis. Norma Shankour. We give thanks to the Lord for so many healthy babies.

We have been blessed with visitors too numerous to mention, almost every Sunday. We especially thank those who have provided words of encouragement through their exhortations.

Dennis Paggi

WICHITA FALLS, TX

Since last reporting our ecclesial news we have welcomed around the table of our absent Lord the following: Sis. Jeanna McLaughlin, Bro. Antonio and Sis. Marcia Howell, and Sis. Michelle Massip (Dallas, TX); Bro. Garth and Sis. Kerri Maier (East Texas); Bro. Tyler Cherry, Bro. Aron Cherry, and Bro. Mark and Sis. Jackie Wade (West Houston, TX); Bro. David Ishman, Bro. Fred and Sis. Laura Bearden, Sis. Inga von Gadenstedt, Bro. Cliff and Sis. Maritta Terrell, Bro. Gene and Sis. Seba Faye Farley, and Bro. Adam Booker (Austin Leander, TX); Bro. Ralph and Sis. Elizabeth Hollenbeck (North Houston, TX); Bro. Todd Wolfe, Bro. Jeremy and Sis. Leah Wolfe, and Sis. Seba Wolfe (Abilene, TX); Sis. Cheryl Kitch and Sis. Sandra Maggert (Albuquerque, NM); Sis. Judy Muniz (Livonia, MI); and Sis. Hannah Tunnell (San Diego County, CA). We thank Bro. G. Maier for his special Sunday school presentation and Bre. A. Cherry, T. Wolfe, and A. Booker for encouraging words of exhortation.

In June we were happy to welcome home Bro. Ben Beutel after a short stay in Abilene, TX. We certainly appreciate his efforts on behalf of our ecclesia.

In August, we rejoiced as we witnessed the baptisms of Sunday school scholars DANIEL BEUTEL and CALEB CLUBB. Our prayer is that our heavenly Father will bless these two young brothers as they join us in anticipation of Christ's return and the establishment of God's kingdom on this earth.

John A. Clubb

New England Bible Study Weekend

Lord willing, the New England Bible Study weekend is planned for November 7-9, 2008 at Barton Center, N. Oxford, MA, USA. The adult speaker for the weekend will

be Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA) on the subject, "Learning to be Holy: The Law of Moses for Today". There will be separate classes for the young people led by Bro. Steve Harper (Meriden, CT). His subject is "Be Ye Separate — A Nazarite Unto God".

The Barton Center is a beautiful location with a new conference center in which the adult classes are held. There are two different types of accommodation. Dorm accommodation is in log cabins containing approximately 18 beds (no bunks) with some privacy. Cabins typically have two or more bathrooms which include showers. There are private rooms in the main lodge which are set aside for husband and wife couples on a first come/first served basis. These rooms require a tuition surcharge as we do not use these to their fullest capacity. There are wash basins in each room and very good bathroom facilities at the end of the hall. Meals are prepared and served by volunteers attending the weekend. This affords an opportunity to help in loving service to each other. Cost for the weekend is \$106 per person double occupancy in the conference center building. Cabin costs are \$86 per person for adults and \$76 per person for young people ages 12-19.

We look forward to another spiritually rewarding weekend around the Word of God and in fellowship with our brothers, sisters and young people.

For further information please contact Bro. Craig Nevers at craigneve@cox.net or Sis. Judith Nevers at jnevers@verizon.net.

Judith Nevers

Uganda Pen-pal

A young man in Uganda who is a primary school teacher, and receiving the CBM Bible Course, is asking for a Christadelphian pen-pal by email. Further details from Art Bull, quantum-space@shaw.ca.

Art Bull

The rough parts of the road

Don't be dismayed when you come to a pothole, a detour, or a stretch of rough and rocky road. Don't be surprised. Slow down a little. Be patient. It's not the whole journey. It's not the way it'll always be. But it is part of your journey, too, part of the journey of your heart and soul. Even when we're living with joy and freedom, we continue to learn, grow, feel, and experience. And the road can still get rough.

Happiness doesn't mean feeling gleeful all the time. Happiness doesn't mean that the road we're traveling is always smooth. Happiness means feeling all we need to feel. And it means accepting, in faith, each part of the journey, even the changes of course and direction.

Melody Beattie

Minute Meditation

Life is a Trust

Paul tells the Corinthians, “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” This requirement extends beyond the superficial level of completing tasks or returning borrowed items. We each carry a responsibility for faithful service to God because we ourselves and everything we own has been entrusted to us by our heavenly Father. The Psalmist tells us, “The earth is the LORD’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” Nothing that we have is really ours; God has only loaned it to us to use for the short time we have to live.

When God created Adam and Eve, He entrusted the care of His creation to them and appointed them trustees over His property. The Garden of Eden did not belong to them, but they were put in charge of tending and keeping it. “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

What are we doing with the things the LORD has entrusted to our care? Do we act like they are our own, or do we treat them as we would treat a valuable possession someone has loaned to us? Certainly if we borrow another person’s car we do not want to put a dent in it. When Elijah went with the prophets to build a larger meeting room, we read, “As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axhead fell into the water. ‘Oh, my lord,’ he cried out, ‘it was borrowed!’ ” He felt a greater sense of responsibility for property he was using that belonged to someone else.

We need to develop this attitude towards all the things with which the LORD has blessed us. There should be no such thing as pride of ownership for anything that we possess. God allows us to use our home, our car, and even our money to see what we will do with them to serve Him. Paul told the Corinthians, “For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?”

We must not be puffed up by the worldly possessions God has given us to test us. Recall that even good King Hezekiah succumbed when God left him to test him, and he showed off all his riches to others. We later read that “Hezekiah repented of the pride of his heart,” and the LORD forgave him.

We need to be watchful so that, if we have become proud of our possessions, we also have a change of heart and repent as did Hezekiah. The more we have, the more the Lord expects from us. Jesus tells us, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” For this reason Jesus warns us, saying, “So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?”

The Lord tests us just as He tested Hezekiah. How are we doing? In Jesus' parables about pounds and talents, the master who went away returned to determine what his servants had done with what he left in their care when he went away. Our Lord will soon be returning to call us to his judgment seat. Each of us will have to give an account of what we did with what the Lord has given us. We must not hoard what we have but use all the gifts God has given us to serve Him.

Is our car being used for the LORD's work or our own? What about our home? Whom do we invite to eat with us? Jesus specifically mentions details of daily living in his instructions in the gospels: "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

The day will soon be here when we must give an account of what we have done with the worldly things God has loaned to us. We cannot take them with us, so we are expected to use all of them now in our service to our King. Remember, Jesus said that we will be held accountable, and if faithful will be rewarded when he returns. "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to his works."

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)

OCTOBER

4 Cranston, RI Study day, at ecclesial hall. Bro. Jim Styles (Livonia, MI): "Law versus Grace", three classes. Contact Bro. Craig Nevers craignev@cox.net

4 Milford Road, MI Study day. Bro. Ron Kidd (London, ON): "David, the Shepherd King". Contact Bro. Trevor Snow 734-421-4215 tsnow1@hfhs.org

4,5 Portland, OR Fraternal gathering. Bro. Christian Russell (Verdugo Hills, CA)

5 New England Fraternal Gathering East Greenwich, RI, High School. Bro. Jim Styles (Livonia, MI): "Be Ye Doers of the Word". Contact Bro. Craig Nevers craignev@cox.net

10-12 Simi Hills, CA Sisters' retreat. Sis. Mary Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI): "We shall be like them". Clocktower Inn, Ventura, CA. Contact Sis. Bonnie Sommerville kenandbonnie@simihills.org 19111 Kinzie St., Northridge, CA 91324

10-12 Vancouver, BC Fraternal gathering. Bro. Andrew E. Walker: "Life Before the Flood". Contact Bro. Dan Orsetti 604-515-4704 pamela721@shaw.ca

- 11,12 North Houston, TX** Study weekend. Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): "The Lord in the Psalms". Starting 2 pm Saturday; dinner at 5 pm; class and exhortation on Sunday. Contact Bro. Shannon Strickland shannon.d.strickland@exxonmobil.com 281-794-9932 or Sis. Jeanne Strickland jeanne.strickland@exxonmobil.com 281-797-7579
- 11,12 Atlanta Area, GA** Fraternal gathering. Bro. Dean Brown (Avon, IN): "Luke's Two-Volume Gospel". Contact Bro. Carlos M. Carter 770-891-8915 carlosmcarter@comcast.net
- 11,12 Baltimore, MD** Study weekend / Baltimore-Washington Gathering. Bro. Michael Moore (Brantford, ON): "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD". Three classes starting Saturday 2 pm; supper; evening public lecture. Sunday 10:30; lunch. Contact Bro. Andy Bilello 410-357-4612
- 11,12 Echo Lake, NJ** Study weekend. Bro. Carl Parry (Golden Grove, SA, Australia): "The priest upon the throne", based on the Book of Zechariah. Contact Bro. David Link dlink44131@aol.com 973-696-3316
- 11,12 Edmonton/Calgary Thanksgiving Fraternal Gathering** Calgary, AB. Bro. Richard Morgan (Saarnich Peninsula, BC): "The Conversion of Saul". Contact Bro. Paul and Sis. Cindy Aback pcaback@shaw.ca
- 11,12 Sussex, NB, Thanksgiving Fraternal Gathering** Bro. Mark Carr (Toronto West, ON): "Joseph — I Seek My Brethren". Contact Bro. Cliff Baines for further details 506-433-1728 chrstad@nbnet.nb.ca
- 12 San Francisco Peninsula, CA** Fraternal gathering, Belmont Senior Center, Belmont, CA. Bro. Dave Jennings (Pomona, CA). Contact Bro. John Warner 510-528-7225 or email Sis. Dolores Sleeper desleeper@astound.net for more information and accommodations
- 18,19 Kouts, IN** Fraternal gathering. Woodland Park Community Center. Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA): "The Kingdom of God Applied". Contact Bro. Joe Bennett 219-762-2704 purepro18@aol.com

NOVEMBER

- 7-9 New England Bible Study Weekend.** Barton Center, No. Oxford, MA. For adults: Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA): "Learning to Be Holy: the Law of Moses for Today". For young people: Bro. Steve Harper (Meriden, CT): "Be Ye Separate — A Nazarite unto God". Contact Bo. Craig Nevers caignev@cox.net or Sis. Judith Nevers jnevers@verizon.net
- 8 Brantford, ON** Prophecy day. Copetown Community Centre, 1950 Governor's Road, Copetown, ON. Doors open at 12 noon; first talk starting 1 pm. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK): "Daniel's Prophecy of the Kingdom of Men"; Bro. Don Pearce (Rugby, UK): "Gog's Roadmap: Russian Bear on the March"; Bro. Paul Billington (Brantford, ON): "In the Hebrew Tongue: Armageddon". Classes for children ages 3 to 8 during the 2nd and 3rd talks. Contact Bro. Gary Smith 519-758-0362 hgarysmith@sympatico.ca
- 14-16 Austin (Leander), TX** Fall fraternal gathering. HEB Camp in Leakey, TX. Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI): "Little Words" and "The Bible and Science". Contact Sis. Maritta Terrell, mt-ct@swbell.net, 512-331-5575

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28-30 Washington, DC Bible study weekend, Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. Bro. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA): "Only Forgiveness". Contact Bro. Robert Kling 301-498-5245 rkling@acm.org

30 Ann Arbor, MI Thanksgiving gathering, Holiday Inn North Campus, Ann Arbor, MI. Bro. Malcolm Cross (Doncaster, UK): "Christ in you, the hope of glory". Memorial service 11 am; afternoon Bible talk 2 pm. Contact Bro. Peter Bilello webmaster@tidings.org 734-424-9254

DECEMBER

27 - January 3 Fourth Annual Texas Youth Conference. Texas Christadelphian Camp and Conference Center, Freestone, TX (near Buffalo, TX). Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): "The Life of Jacob". To register, contact Bro. Jeremy Wolfe wolfe518@ gmailcom. Information at www.texasyouthconference.com

28 - January 1 Bozeman, MT CYC Winter Conference. Bro. Graeme Osborn (Vernon-Okanagan, BC): "The Call to be a Faithful and Wise Servant: Matthew 25 — 'The Ten Virgins'." Contact Sis. Briana Bittinger 406-388-7735 briana1614@hotmail.com

JANUARY 2009

10 Thousand Oaks, CA Day with the Word. Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA): "Exhortations from the House of the Lord". Begins 9:15 am with continental breakfast. Contact Bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com

FEBRUARY 2009

22-27 Palm Springs Bible School Palm Springs, CA. Bro. Tec Morgan (Birmingham Washwood Heath, UK) and Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA). To register contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or visit website www.californiabibleschool.org

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

— of the Kingdom of God —

Vol. 71

November, 2008

No. 10

Editorial — America's Presidential Election, <i>Joe Hill</i>	471
Exhortation — Instruments of God's Help, <i>Michael Bull</i>	475
Bible Study:	
Little Words that Mean a Lot:	
(13) Patience, <i>John C. Bilello</i>	478
The Pastoral Letters of Paul, <i>Colin Edwards</i>	483
Ecclesial Study — The Jury Duty Summons, <i>Ken Sommerville</i>	489
History — The Historical Interactions Between the CGAF	
and the Christadelphians, <i>Peter Hemingray</i>	497
Archaeology — Seal of Zedekiah's Secretary Found in Jerusalem	503
Reflections:	
Bro. Julian Webster	504
"Then the land had rest from war", <i>George Booker</i>	505
Sis. Arlene Gordon, <i>Wesley Booker</i>	506
Bible Mission News — Guyana; Costa Rica; This is your Bible	508
News & Notices	513
Minute Meditation — Life is a Temporary Assignment, <i>Robert J. Lloyd</i> ..	517
Coming Events	519

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Editor: George Booker

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The Christadelphian and the State

Recently both Canada and the United States have seen national elections. Even though we don't participate in such elections, it would be just about impossible not to notice them. Furthermore, it may be just about impossible not to have opinions. Let us be sure that we don't give expression to them, either by voting or partisan statement.

Several articles in this issue deal with the Christadelphian and the state. In a guest editorial, Bro. Joe Hill (Chairman of The Tidings Publishing Committee) reminds us that God rules in the kingdom of men, and that, for now, we are strangers and pilgrims in this world. This is a good place to start.

Bro. Ken Sommerville (a member of the Tidings Publishing Committee) deals specifically with another feature of our relationship with the state: jury duty. He points out that, with different procedures now in many places, we might be called upon to appear in court and explain and defend our position regarding jury service. We should have our points well thought out. He also raises questions about our general consistency, questions for which there are not necessarily definitive answers, but which nonetheless ought to be asked.

Finally, Bro. Bob Lloyd (retired editor of The Christadelphian Tidings) vividly reminds us that our whole life in this world is temporary, but that our citizenship in God's Kingdom is, and ought to be, eternal.

George Booker

Editorial

America's Presidential Election

By the time you receive this magazine, the United States of America will have elected its next president. The citizens of the U.S.A. will have voted this new president into office; he will be their representative leader of the executive branch of government. Depending on how much support he received from the voters, he will have some measure of a mandate to carry out his policies. His duties will include:

- (1) to execute the laws of the land and to prosecute those who violate them;
- (2) to act as commander-in-chief of the armed forces;
- (3) to act as head of state, the figurehead for the nation in its interactions with other nations and their figureheads;
- (4) to make appointments of federal judges, including new members of the Supreme Court; and
- (5) to work with Congress to enact new laws.

It is interesting to note how many of these roles Jesus will fulfill as God's chosen King, to rule over His kingdom; of course, his mandate will be unequivocal. To some extent this parallel is fortuitous, because the so-called founding fathers patterned the U.S. government after the representative form of government found in the Bible. They also included checks and balances similar to those found in Scripture.

But perhaps more important is to note God's role in this election process.

Three times in Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar is instructed that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will:

"This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men... That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will... And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan 4:17,25,32).

So God's role in selecting the President of the United States is similar to God's role in selecting Saul to be king over His nation of Israel: in both cases, God picked

someone whom the people wanted. No matter who has won the U.S. election, God was the one who caused him to be chosen. We may not understand or appreciate His purpose in making the selection, but we can be sure that He was the one who made it happen.

Our citizenship in Christ

We Christadelphians do not vote, nor do we serve on juries or in the armed forces or in the police force. We abide by the laws of the land whenever there is no conflict with the laws of God. We pay our taxes. We are peaceful and helpful to those around us. We are in many respects “good citizens”. But we have a citizenship that takes priority over the one of the country in which we live.

Before we were baptized, we were aliens and strangers from the hope of Israel:

*“That at that time ye were without Christ, being **aliens** from the commonwealth of Israel, and **strangers** from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12).*

But now, through Christ, we are no longer strangers, but citizens in God’s Kingdom:

*“Now therefore ye are no more **strangers and foreigners**, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph 2:19).*

“Only let your conversation be [behave as citizens, RVm] as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil 1:27).

“For our conversation [citizenship, RV] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20).

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:12-14).

We wait for our Lord to return from heaven, which “must receive him until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21).

In the meantime, today we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, resident aliens in the countries in which we dwell. We long for our Savior’s return, so that God’s Kingdom may be manifest to all. We desire the coming of the Kingdom and pray that we might reign with Christ as kings and priests. In this, we are following the pattern of the faithful, including our father Abraham:

*“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and **confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth**. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country,*

that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb 11:13-16).

The yoke of the Kingdom

I remember our late Bro. Alfred Norris asking a class at Bible school, “Is the Kingdom of God already in the earth?” Of course, the question caused a bit of discomfort. Most answered “No.” But a few of us said “Yes.” Bro. Alfred indicated that both answers were right without the other being wrong. Of course, Christ has not returned, he is not reigning on David’s throne in Jerusalem, and the Kingdom of God has not been established in its ultimate glory. On the other hand, for us, as citizens of God’s Kingdom, there should be a very real way in which God already reigns in our lives. For us, if for no one else, the essential aspects of God’s Lordship should already be apparent in the way we live.

Indeed we pray, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:9,10), by which we acknowledge His rule over us. We also find comfort in the words of David’s psalm: “The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all” (Psa 103:19).

In this regard, the Jews have an ancient tradition that is worthy of emulation. Every morning and evening they recite the Shema, including, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut 6:4,5). By saying these words aloud, they acknowledge their acceptance of the yoke of God’s kingdom. This first of all commandments reminds them of their covenant relationship with God. It brings into their hearts and minds the greatest of all commandments, that we must love our God with all our heart and all our soul and all our might. We must acknowledge His authority over us, not out of fear, but out of love, love for our Father, our heavenly Father who has had pity on us, who provides all things for us, and who has promised to bless us with eternal life, if only we remain faithful to His covenant with us.

Following this example, we ought also to live under the yoke of our Father’s reign. That is what it really means to be citizens of His Kingdom. He is our King today: we don’t have to wait for anything to happen in order for this to be true. His Son is our Lord and Savior today: we don’t have to wait for him to return to the earth for this to be true. So we should live every moment of every day constrained by the love which they have shown us.

This idea of accepting God’s reign in our lives underlies the words of Hymn 163: “Take my heart; it is Thine own. It shall be Thy royal throne.” In singing these words of dedication, we commit ourselves to live according to God’s Kingship. We must have His law written in our hearts, in fulfillment of the new covenant (Jer 31:33). And we must make every effort to live by that law, following the example of God’s obedient Son. By doing so, we will fulfill the Lord’s prayer, if only in our own small way, but in the only way we can fulfill it today. In this way, we become the true brothers and sisters of our Lord.

Bro. Alfred's book, *I Believe*, was the basis for those Bible school classes. It is his personal confession of faith and commitment to action. In his book, Clause IX reads:

"I believe in the Kingdom of God. I believe that God Most High, Who rules in the kingdom of men, and did in times past choose Israel as His special people, will send back the Lord Jesus Christ His Son to be ruler over all the earth, reigning from His holy city Jerusalem, the city of the great King, until He shall have put all enemies under His feet.

"I know that none shall enjoy for ever the blessings of that Kingdom, save those who have already submitted themselves under the mighty hand of God; and therefore, as I pray, 'Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,' I pledge it as my duty to seek to do His will even now, behaving as a subject of that Kingdom ought to behave, seeking first of all His rule and righteousness."

Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

The Kingdom of Men

"The kingdom of men"... occurs three times in Daniel 4 — see verses 17, 25, and 32. The "kingdom of men" consists of the aggregate of human governments. It is an appropriate designation for them all. They are all the embodiment of one principle — namely, the rule of man by himself. Whether it be the despot or free Parliament, the same is exemplified — self-government.

This has been the alpha and omega of all political faith, since man was first sent forth an exile from Eden to take care of himself. Its form has varied in different ages and countries, according to the views and inclinations of men, but men have agreed with marvelous unanimity as to the mainspring of the system. There has been no difference between the bitterest factions as to the source of the power they respectively claimed to exercise, namely, the will of man — whether royalist or republican, despotic or constitutional.

The will of man is the cornerstone of every political edifice that exists — the foundation of the vast system of nations that covers the face of the earth. No one ever questions the legitimacy of human authority as politically embodied. The fact is, the world knows of no other authority. If it believe in God, a false theology has excluded Him from any influence in the minds of men in things practical. They confine His jurisdiction to "spiritual things," to which an artificial significance has come to be attached; and even in these they only yield Him a constrained and occasional deference. In reality, they acknowledge Him not. They own no higher authority than themselves. They assert the right to be their own masters, to dispose of this world's wealth as they think fit, and to make such laws as they please.

Robert Roberts, *Christendom Astray*

Exhortation

Instruments of God's Help

It is fairly easy to admit we are imperfect, in the general sense. It is relatively easy to be known as a sinner among many other sinners. We find it easy to accept the concept that we need help from time to time. But when we move from the general to the particular, we may be less willing to share our imperfections and sins and ask for specific help. Although we admit the possibility, in practice we don't like to feel inadequate, weak, vulnerable or in need.

We smile at young children when they say, 'Don't help me! I can do it myself!' We may see that the little child with the bold face and focused eyes can't perform what he so confidently asserts. As adults, however, we sometimes fail to recognize that our own pride or foolishness can lead us down the same path: we either refuse help, or, more often, fail to ask for help. This leaves us proud and alone in our weakness — a deplorable state.

We're often not alone, but simply reluctant to reach out for help. Elijah was demoralized that Israel didn't return from Baal worship to the true God after the sacrifice on Mount Carmel. He lamented that he was alone, "the only one" who followed God. But the LORD, who is merciful, gently showed him that he was not alone, and that in fact there were thousands of others who did not worship Baal.

The Preacher reminds us that it is good to have at least one person willing to see our need and help out when we fall:

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.

For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help" (Eccl 4:9,10).

The lesson here is not simply to ask for help when it is needed, but to put ourselves in a position where those around us will see that we have failed. This is a humbling thought. Our natural instinct is to hide our failures and cover them over, to appear as good and competent and strong as we can. The difficulty can be compounded if we don't admit to ourselves that we need help.

We must ask for help

The Israelites in the time of the Judges may have often gone astray, but at least, sometimes, they knew when they were powerless to help themselves. They "cried to God for help" (Jdg 4:3; 6:6) and each time God provided them with an earthly savior — the judge, in these cases Deborah and Gideon, who provided hope for Israel and leadership out of their suffering.

A frame of mind where we elevate ourselves and justify or explain away our own needs and weaknesses will set us up for the ultimate failure. On the other hand, a mindset where we humble ourselves and reach out for practical help will reward us in the long run. In the New Testament, the man with the son who

suffered seizures, who spoke to Jesus after he was transfigured, knew he and his son needed help. His son desperately needed a cure, and the man himself needed faith. The seizure itself was heartrending for father and son — the father, because he was powerless to stop it, and the son, because of the physical danger each time. “Help us,” asked the anguished father, and “help my unbelief!” It is not enough to expect help without our asking, although inwardly this is what we might like. Even God, who knows and sees all, expects His loved ones to come to Him and spell out their needs.

We know how to ask for help from God, and that is by petition in prayer. That is not enough, however. We need to ask for help from others, from anyone who has the ability and the willingness to help us. There are many ways to ask for help. At times we may be direct, knowing exactly the kind of assistance we need. At other times we might want to talk things over in order to get advice on what help is needed, because we’re unsure ourselves.

Empathy as help

Help is more than action: it is empathy. In asking for help we are often asking for more than a task to be done or shared; we are asking to be understood. Helping others demands that we take the time to listen and understand and share in their needs and weaknesses, and not simply perform the required help in a detached way. Even of Jesus it is said,

“Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested” (Heb 2:18).

This verse tells us what is often true: those who have gone through what we are suffering may be better equipped to assist us. It is up to us to seek out such people in the context of the help we need.

Those looking for help in overcoming an alcohol problem may attend a group where others who share the same weakness are able to empathize. So it is with other aspects of our life where we need help. It may be humbling to seek out such support because it means we must admit our problem to one or several people. We wonder what our friends will think of us or whether our relationship with them will change. It is possible that our relationship with them *will* change — for the better. We may find that there are situations where one needs help in one area, and another needs help with something else, so that mutual supports are built up. Pillars are mutual supports for a reason: they work together to bear heavy loads that cannot be borne alone.

Persistence

The gospels remind us of another aspect of asking for help, and that is persistence. At first the unjust judge was unwilling to help the widow in her campaign to obtain justice against her adversary. Since she couldn’t help herself, she was persistent in her “continual coming” until she got the help she needed. This is true in our lives for more than prayer; it is also true when asking for practical help to overcome what is troubling us. If we don’t get adequate help the first time, it’s easy to give up because we feel discouraged. The Canaanite woman, from the district of Tyre

and Sidon, begged Jesus to heal her daughter. After he called her a dog, in effect, she may very well have turned her back on him, but she didn't. She was persistent in pleading with the Master on her daughter's behalf.

This woman illustrates another aspect of asking for help that is an exhortation for us. There are times when those close to us need help, and we are powerless because we are unable to meet the need. We may try our best, but our best is not enough. As with the Canaanite woman, when it is appropriate we ought to humble ourselves and ask for help for our loved ones.

Our Lord was direct in admonishing his listeners to ask repeatedly and not give up. When Jesus spoke in the 'Sermon on the Mount', exhorting those around him, "Ask, and you will receive," the intent of the message wasn't 'Ask once', but '**Keep** asking'. When Elijah kept praying for rain, the sky was as blue as the sea from horizon to horizon the first six times he prayed. It was only on the seventh time that there was a hint that his petition would be granted.

Even ecclesias need help

What is true for individuals is also true for ecclesias. From time to time they need help, and the same principles apply. Those ecclesias which reach out to others will usually see care, sympathy and the love of Christ showered on them in abundance. The need may be welfare for members, a perplexing problem with personalities, or a need for help with preaching ideas. Paul had a vision of a man pleading for help and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." The vision didn't present itself to Paul as a perfunctory request; it involved pleading and begging for help.

In the same way, it is wise for elders when necessary to seek counsel elsewhere, even though they may feel they are putting themselves on a lower footing than others by asking for assistance. The idea to grasp is that asking for help is not a show of weakness, but of strength in order to overcome a weakness or a deficiency:

"And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary" (1Co 12:21,22).

Be ready to help

Just as receiving help may be emotionally difficult at times, giving help is not always easy, requiring effort and often sacrifice. Our giving of help, however, is a compass for measuring love, showing the direction of our minds and hearts.

"How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?" (1Jo 3:17).

Real help is an act of love because it is God's love.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psa 46:1).

Let us be God's instruments of help for others, and let us prayerfully seek out those who will be God's instruments of help to us.

Michael Bull (Vancouver, BC)

(Note: all quotations NKJV)

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (13) Patience

*“... Who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’:
eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory,
honor, and immortality” (Rom 2:6,7).*

I am sure every parent, in fact every adult, who has had the occasion to take young children on a long car ride, whether to a CYC event, Bible school or on vacation, has experienced the impatient whine of the “Are we there yet?” syndrome. Perhaps this doesn’t relate well to parents today, but believe it or not: before iPods, DVD players in cars, and various portable electric games it was extremely hard to entertain children on even the shortest of trips. One excursion that particularly stands out in my memory is taking a group of CYC youngsters to a Yankee baseball game when we lived in Setauket, Long Island. From our house to the stadium was a car ride of about two hours. The parents brought all the children to our house, and we took off in a rented van with eight children ranging in ages from eight to 15 years old. We hadn’t gotten more than 10 minutes into our ride when the litany began: “Are we there yet, Uncle John?” And this phrase was repeated every few minutes by various children all the way to the Bronx. Fortunately, on the way home the children were so tired they more or less snoozed, and I was thankful for that blessing. The “Are we there yet?” syndrome is so familiar that it has become a symbol of childhood impatience that has been satirized in TV sitcoms, movies and various publications (a quick check of amazon.com yielded more than 10 media titles connected with this phrase).

Why is this phrase so ubiquitous? Probably because it is almost assuredly a universal lament of childhood, directly related to the inability of immature minds to postpone fulfillment. A corollary to the “Are we there yet?” expression is the “I want it now” demand, another phrase that is frequently blurted out by young children. Indeed, impatience is the characteristic feature of an immature person regardless of chronological age. It is the exact antithesis of the character of our heavenly Father, who is “longsuffering” in His graciousness (Exod 34:6; Num 14:18, and Psa 86:15 among others).

The apostle James exhorts us to be patient when he says:

“You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:8).

Almost 2,000 years have passed since he wrote those words, and some might say: What could he have possibly meant by seeming to indicate that the Lord was going to come shortly, i.e., that his coming was “at hand”? Without a doubt it would have completely discouraged the brethren and sisters in the first century if James had said: *Be patient, for the Lord’s coming is 2,000 years from now!* While it might be our earnest desire that our Lord Jesus Christ *come soon*, as I have heard expressed

in many prayers including some of my own, it cannot be a proper prayer unless accompanied by the phrase “if it be Thy will”. God is not slack concerning the fulfillment of His promises. As the apostle Peter tells us, He is “longsuffering... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2Pe 3:9). Impatient persons might lose their faith if they don’t realize that, as long as the work of calling out a people for His name is unfinished, the LORD God will patiently continue this dispensation.

As far as we are concerned, patiently waiting for the coming of our Messiah, in the sense recorded by James, does not constitute 2,000 years; at most it can only have reference to our own lifespan. Consequently, the apostle is exhorting us to a lifetime of patient waiting for the Lord’s return. Surely he will come; there can be no doubt that it will happen (Heb 6:13). We may go to bed tomorrow and wake up the next morning to find that our Lord Jesus Christ has come. On the other hand, one might be in the grave thousands of years like the patriarch Abraham, yet just as assuredly, with his next waking moment, he will see his redeemer (cf Job 19:25,26). There is no delay in either case, because there is no consciousness of time passing for those asleep in Christ.

There are many other aspects of leading a life of mature patience that we need to explore. In a sense, many people never grow up; when they want something they want it *now* regardless of the consequences! Such people invariably demonstrate certain characteristics:

- They are quick to speak, and slow to listen.
- They are prone to excessive speed when driving — in a hurry to get there.
- They are impatient at red lights, often running through stop signs.
- They may become extremely annoyed when caught behind a slow driver.
- They may be abusive toward their spouses or children if they don’t immediately get their own way.
- They have difficulty controlling their debts, sometimes running up unsustainable credit card balances.
- They demand quick job promotions without associated merit.
- They have difficulty in holding down a job; there is always some excuse for resigning or being fired, but never accepting one’s own responsibility.
- They are often jealous of what others have obtained, yet unwilling to put in the time and sacrifice to better their own circumstances.
- They fail to consider what effect their actions have upon others.

I have outlined just a few of the human behavior patterns of impatient people I have observed in my lifetime (including proneness in myself at times). The list is not meant to be all-inclusive, nor is it in any particular order of importance. If you see any of yourself in this list please do not be offended, but contemplate whether or not this is what you want to be. Ask yourself: is a change of behavior required? We might fool others, we might even fool ourselves, but our childish, immature behavior cannot be hidden from God:

“For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known” (Luke 12:2, NKJV).

God does not want immaturity from us. As we read and feed upon the word of God throughout our lives, there must be growth in our spiritual character. Without this concomitant development of our spiritual life, in doing the daily readings, for example, attending Bible classes and the memorial service will not avail us when we face our Master at the judgment seat. I believe we will not be asked how much we have studied (as valuable as that might be), but rather what we have done with the precious word we have been given.

"...As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby..." (1Pe 2:2 NKJV).

A baby is fed milk because it does not yet have teeth to dig into meat. Chewing and digesting are something that takes time and work, whether it is physical food or mental delicacies. A child cries when hunger pangs occur, and it needs immediate attention. An adult can wait with patience while a good meal is being prepared. (With apologies and my regrets to all who prefer fast food as opposed to slow food!)

Ultimately immature behavior leads to sin and can destroy any possibility of leading a Christian life. Consider the situation in the ecclesia in Corinth:

"I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able..." (1Co 3:2, NKJV).

The Corinthians were still acting like babies; their behavior exhibited extreme immaturity in Christ. Their lack of spiritual depth had caused dissension in the church and even the acceptance of moral depravity because family connections prevented them from doing the right thing. Factions had developed that were likely to lead to division:

"What I mean is this: One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ' " (1Co 1:12, NIV).

"For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal?" (1Co 3:4, NKJV).

The apostle made it abundantly clear that divisiveness and factionalism were altogether wrong behavior in the Corinthian ecclesia and it had to cease. Notice Paul's analysis of such immature behavior: "Are you not carnal?" We are of the flesh, not the spirit, if we are immature people, and if we are carnal we cannot inherit the kingdom of God:

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom 8:7,8, NKJV).

We are expected to grow up so that we can serve others. The Scriptures are emphatic in telling us that. As long as we remain immature Christians, we are not doing the will of our heavenly Father.

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe" (Heb 5:12,13, NKJV).

How then can we grow to become mature followers of our Lord Jesus Christ? There are some key guidelines we can adopt to nurture our spiritual growth. Growing in maturity means that our studies of the word of God must be applied to:

- Developing our character: if we don't grow in our love for our brethren and sisters and our families, and in our service to God, then we are still babes.
- Setting out long-term goals for improvement.
- Planning the necessary means for achieving these goals.
- Sticking to these goals, especially when faced with stormy emotional seas.

There are many examples I could choose to illustrate how this may apply in life, but obviously space is limited; hence a few will have to suffice. I recall once that a young brother was rather restricted in his job opportunities and wanted to get a master's degree to solve this problem. However, he was very discouraged about doing so because he had a wife and children and couldn't afford to quit his job and go to school full-time. He told me it would take five years going to night school, and that he would be in his mid-thirties before he would graduate. I asked him how old he would be in five years if he didn't go on for more schooling? He got the point and achieved his goal with distinction.

The same can be said of developing our opportunities in the ecclesia. If we want to preach in foreign lands we may need to learn their languages. This won't happen by magic, but only by planning and determined effort. If an ecclesia needs to improve its speaking brethren's exhortations, it won't happen by complaining about it. The ecclesia will need to spend the time and effort to have mutual improvement classes taught by qualified teachers. If we are to be of service to brethren and sisters in need (surely as worthwhile a goal as being a better speaker), we have to find out what those needs may be. Merely wondering why others do not come out for meetings and Bible classes will not solve the problem. Only appropriate action and organized effort to provide time and resources to satisfy those needs will alleviate the situation.

Our ultimate goal is to be citizens in the Kingdom of God. To achieve this objective we need a long-term plan and we need to stick to it. That requires patience. This is an extremely important aspect of our character development, because the Scriptures tell us it is absolutely essential if we are to obtain eternal life (Rom 2:6,7; also Rev. 3:10¹). We need to stick to the job at hand; there can be no vacation from doing the work of the Lord.

"But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience"
(Luke 8:15).

Undeniably, *bearing fruit with patience* can be extremely difficult at times, because life is not always smooth sailing. We may find that:

- Our brethren and sisters may disappoint us in their actions.
- They may offend us personally.
- Sickness may strike us or those we love dearly.
- Financial ill-fortune may fall upon us.
- Personal tragedy might strike us and sorely try our faith.

- Preaching work may yield very little return.
- Our own families may be aliens to the truth and make our service to God difficult.

It is when disappointments and sorrows pile on us that we most need to work at patient continuance in serving our heavenly Father; for He is patient and longsuffering with us:

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience" (Rom 5:3, KJV).

He will reward our patience with His grace:

"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32, NKJV).²

The apostle James superbly describes the attitude of mind that a mature Christian needs to develop:

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4, NKJV).³

The NIV renders the word "perfect" as "mature", and this is certainly a more reasonable translation since it is impossible for us to be "perfect" now, in the absolute sense!

In this lifetime, all of us will surely endure, in some measure, offenses, temptations, sufferings, trials, persecutions and tribulations. By patiently enduring such we emulate in a small way our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. It is only at such times that we can ever hope to come even marginally close to appreciating the horrible torture and death that our Lord and Messiah patiently endured for us. Jesus was the ultimate example of patient maturity, never losing sight of the ultimate goal. In doing so, he gave us an example that we need to keep before us every moment of our lives, so that we might be complete.

"...Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:2, NKJV).

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Notes:

1. Here the Greek word *hupomone* is used for the "patience", i.e., *logos hupomone* = word of my patience. See Strong's number 5281.
2. See also NKJV, Romans 5:3,4: "And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope."
3. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4, NIV).

"Patience is not passive; on the contrary, it is active; it is concentrated strength" (Edward Bulwer-Lytton).

"If you are patient in one moment of anger, you will escape a hundred days of sorrow" (Chinese proverb).

Bible Study

The Pastoral Letters of Paul

The letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus are often referred to as the Pastoral Letters. These letters do not concentrate on doctrinal matters, although they contain much of first principle teaching, but rather on pastoral matters — discipleship within an ecclesial setting. We shall concentrate on several words which do not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. In fact, it is estimated there are about 150 individual Greek words which only occur in these letters, or are used in a distinct manner here. These words and phrases provide us with rich metaphors and memorable ideas.

A good deposit

In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, there is a detailed exhortation as to how believers should use their money wisely. Instead of trusting in riches, one should be aware that it is God in whom we ultimately trust. In verse 19, there is the comment:

“In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age.”

The Greek word translated “foundation” is in fact a banking term and means a “good deposit”. In other words, the person who does what is good is able to save a “good deposit”.

What really is this deposit? May I suggest that it is the body of belief which a disciple learns and develops during the life of discipleship. This body of belief was expressed in a series of “faithful sayings”, ancient hymns and prayers of affirmation which are quoted in the Pastoral Letters. It is this teaching which becomes the deposit given to Paul for safekeeping, and which he describes as being passed on to Timothy and Titus:

*“Guard the **good deposit** which was entrusted to you” (2Ti 1:14).*

This deposit was to be entrusted to others also:

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men who will be qualified to teach others also” (2Ti 2:2).

There is, however, an extra dimension to this subject. We do not just deposit money in a bank or other safe place so that we can reclaim it in the future. We also expect the deposit to increase in value. We expect our deposit to gain “interest”. This was clearly alluded to in the parable of the talents; it was a well-known practice in Bible times to earn interest on deposited money. What is this add-on value in terms of the teaching in the Pastoral Letters? Paul writes:

“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share” (1Ti 6:18).

In other words, God has given the deposit which needs to be added to by the “giving of ourselves”. We must not be selfish; we must not steal from others. Here is the supreme paradox — to give is the only way to gain! The only way to add

to the deposit is to give to others. The more we give, the more we shall gain. We need to guard the deposit and add to it by a life of service to others.

God's philanthropy

Another Greek word hidden in our translations describes the work of God, the love of God to mankind. This word is found in Titus 3:4,5:

"When the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, he saved us."

The Greek word "philanthropia" requires a whole phrase to translate it: "love of God... toward man". This phrase matches the one word compendium of the work of God, which has been defined as "a benevolence of concern and a benevolence of giving." Out of God's rich store He has given us life and immortality. God took the initiative, for "God so loved the world that he gave..." It was a free undeserved gift — the grace of God.

We could think of the activity of God as being expressed in three words:

- (a) **Grace:** that aspect of God's power which is concerned with salvation. In other words, the work of God to save man from his sins is expressed in the word "grace". His word has gone forth throughout the world. Whether people respond to that word is their own personal choice.
- (b) **Mercy:** For those who do respond, the grace of God becomes mercy: the work of a loving father to his erring children. Mercy is the active disposition of God toward His family, forgiving and caring for them in order to save them from death.
- (c) **Love** is the third aspect of this trilogy, for "God so *loved* the world that he gave his only begotten Son."

All of this is in effect summarized in one word. "Grace" is a beautiful word that conveys so much to us — the free, undeserved gift of life and immortality in God's Kingdom.

Godly edifying (1 Timothy 1:4)

This term is expressed by one word in the Greek language: "oikodomeo". This is a word which is usually concerned with the building, whether literal or figurative. It is used metaphorically, in the sense of edifying, or promoting spiritual growth, that is, the development of good character by patient labor. It expresses, in one word, our responsibility toward God, that of building His house on earth according to His principles. The brothers and sisters in the ecclesia at Ephesus, where Timothy was living and working, had been taught that they were "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph 2:19-21). This phrase uses the term elsewhere translated as "godly edifying". The construction of the house of God is the practice of ecclesial fellowship — working together with a common aim in order to prepare a "people for the Lord".

Each ecclesia needs overseers who are able to manage the construction work:

"Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless — not overbearing, not quick tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain..." (Tit 1:7-9).

The term “overseer” here means a steward, a builder, a “site manager” for the ecclesia.

“To edify” is therefore “to build”. The ecclesial elder has the responsibility of managing the building, to edify the house of God.

In the Bible there are probably three descriptions of the Temple of the Lord:

- (1) the literal temple constructed in Jerusalem by Solomon, and repaired and added to by others, including Hezekiah and Herod;
- (2) the “temple of his body” — the spiritual, corporal community of believers; and
- (3) the temple of the future age, yet to be built.

In the New Testament there are many references to the second of these, this spiritual temple of the Lord. The apostle Paul describes it in great detail in 1 Corinthians 3:

“I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building upon it. But each one should be careful how he builds” (v 10).

This teaching is expanded in his letter to the Ephesians:

“In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph 2:21).

Then there is an even further development of thought in Paul’s letter to Timothy:

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed...” (2Ti 2:15).

The term “workman” can be linked directly to a builder or construction worker. However, the term can also be linked to a farm worker, who works consistently to harvest the crops, and anyone who works with others in a cooperative endeavor.

Titus and Crete

On the Day of Pentecost, there were men from Crete who heard the gospel. They presumably returned home and formed an ecclesia of believers. Later, the apostle Paul visited Crete and subsequently left Titus to teach and guide the infant ecclesia.

In the letter to Titus we meet several medical terms, and other unusual terms, which may help us to understand the letter and provide us with some memorable ideas.

Setting in order

Titus was left in Crete to “set in order” the situation. Paul writes:

*“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might **straighten out** what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every city” (Tit 1:5).*

The Greek word translated “straighten out”, or “set in order” (AV), is “epidiort-hoo”. This word is seen, in English, in such terms as “orthodontist” — one who straightens teeth — and “orthopedist” — one who sets bones straight. In other words, Titus was left in Crete to set in order that which was defective, to straighten

that which was crooked. Bro. Alfred Nichols states, “*Hippocrates uses this word when he refers to the setting of a broken limb. The prefix epi- indicates that Titus was to continue the process of correction. Paul has left Titus to bring to completion the process of organizing the ecclesia which has been already begun*” (*Letters to Timothy and Titus*, p. 356). A unique New Testament word for a unique task.

Soundness

Timothy’s task was to encourage “soundness”. The Greek word here is another very interesting term. “Hugiaino” means to be healthy, sound in health; it is used metaphorically of “sound doctrine” in that it is whole or complete. The English word “hygiene” has evolved from this Greek and Latin root. In other words, Titus was to work to achieve an ecclesia which was clean, where individuals were free from spiritual disease and corruption, whose beliefs were without error, that is, sound or whole. This is a word which is used throughout the Pastoral Letters with considerable impact:

*“He (the bishop or overseer) must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by **sound** doctrine...”* (Tit 1:9).

*“Rebuke them soundly (the brothers and sisters at Crete) so that they will be **sound** in the faith”* (1:13).

*“You must teach what is in accord with **sound** doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and **sound** in faith, in love and endurance”* (2:1,2).

*“In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and **soundness** of speech that cannot be condemned”* (2:8).

If we understand this word in this way, the teaching gains much meaning and is easily remembered.

Sobriety

Often the brethren and sisters were encouraged to be “sober”. This means much more than just not being drunk with alcohol. It means more than just abstinence. It means to show control in all things, to demonstrate restraint. Paul writes that an ecclesial overseer or bishop should be:

*“...hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is **self-controlled**, upright, holy and disciplined”* (Tit 1:8).

The AV/KJV actually translates the word as “sober”; i.e., “The aged men [should] be **sober**, grave, temperate, sound in faith...” (Tit 2:2).

Purity

Another interesting word is found in the Greek of Paul’s Letter to Titus. “Katharos” with its related words means to make clean, to purge or to prune. It is often translated by “pure” or other related English words. The English term “to cauterize” is derived from this Greek term. To cauterize is to cleanse by the application of heat. In earlier times, hot tar was used to cauterize amputations so that no infection could enter into the exposed wound. In the same way, this word is used to explain that the disciple of the Lord must ensure that spiritual infection and

disease are kept at a distance from the disciple:

*“To the **pure** all things are **pure**, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is **pure**. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted” (Tit 1:15).*

The implication is clear: the person who has been cauterized against contamination will not be infected by evil, but the person who does not perceive such danger will be easily infected.

The love of strangers

An interesting word is found in Titus 1:8:

*“He (the ecclesial overseer/bishop) must be **hospitable**, one who loves what is good.”*

The Greek work is “philoxenia”, love of the stranger. This is the basis of the word “hospital” in English, where a hospital is the place where love is shown to those in need, particular to the stranger. This same idea is behind Titus 3:2, where we read that the disciple “is to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility towards all men.”

Adorning

Some of the words we have considered here are found elsewhere in Scripture, but some are unique to these pastoral letters. The word I now wish to highlight is found throughout the New Testament, but in an interesting manner. “Kosmeo” means “to adorn” and is translated in various ways:

- (a) to arrange jewels in a brooch, ring or necklace;
- (b) to make an ornament or decoration;
- (c) to furnish a room; or
- (d) to trim a lamp.

Today the word has passed into many languages in the form of “cosmetics” — that which is added in order to improve! Servants were encouraged to:

*“Show all good fidelity, that they may **adorn** the doctrine of God our Savior” (Tit 2:10, AV).*

This was the meaning of the teaching of the apostle Peter in his first letter:

*“Your beauty should not come from outward **adornment** such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelery and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit” (1Pe 3:2).*

We need to add to the doctrine of belief the characteristics of humility and mercy in order that we might reflect the character of our Heavenly Father. Doctrine without action is like a clanging cymbal or even a violin with no strings — a totally useless instrument.

Slaves

Finally, I would like to consider a very important part of the New Testament. In the pastoral letters there is considerable comment about slaves. There are no comments about masters. It may be that all the converts in Crete were slaves, and therefore special emphasis is placed upon guidance for slaves. It might help

us to understand the situation by just considering the status of slaves in the first century. Slaves were thought of as live possessions, described as “under the yoke”; that is, they were beasts of burden. One became a slave as a prisoner of war or as punishment for a crime; or he may have been sold to cover debts, or as a child slave to enable other members of the family to live. Slaves were bought and sold and were in total subjection to their owners as goods and chattels.

Slaves were broadly of two kinds: household slaves who could become valued assistants to their owners, and others who were simply menial workers. Production slaves worked for the state in slave ships, armed forces, in quarries, in building roads, and on other state projects. It was a tough life with no freedom, rights or status. A slave was always a marginal person. Nevertheless, coming to knowledge of the gospel enabled such people to gain respect and a form of freedom.

The apostle not only gives practical and personal guidance to slaves in relation to their work but also in relation to each other. He also provides a wonderful demonstration of empathy with his readers:

“Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ” (Tit 1:1).

Here Paul uniquely describes himself as a slave of God. He is using the entire literal concept carried by this word, plus all of the metaphorical and spiritual ideas contained in the teaching of Jesus. He is clearly identifying with his readers in a unique manner, yet at the same time teaching us about his relationship to God. The one who was the greatest exponent of the gospel of Christ describes himself as a “slave of God”. What a man! Let us learn from his rich teaching and strive also to serve his Master, and ours.

As we read through the Pastoral Letters, let us be aware of the interesting figures of speech the apostle uses to illustrate his teaching. In this essay we have identified terms relating to banking, building, medicine, and other aspects of daily life. We have also attempted to expand upon the language, so that we may understand a little more about the grace of God. Let us read with care and understanding so that we might gain insights from our reading and become more acceptable disciples of our Lord.

Colin Edwards (Newbury, UK)

The Blessing of the Fire

*“I will kindle my fire this morning
In the presence of the holy angels of heaven
Without malice, without jealousy, without envy,
But the Holy Son of God to shield me.
God, kindle Thou within my heart
A flame of love to my neighbor,
To my foe, to my friend, to my kindred all.”*

Ecclesial Study

The Jury Duty Summons... What Should You Say?

"You are hereby summoned to appear at the Los Angeles Superior Court, office of the Jury Commissioner, Burbank Courthouse, for possible jury duty. Please read the following instructions carefully..."

The jury selection process

We never used to be "summoned" to appear at a local court house with the legal obligation to perform jury service. Potential jurors were always chosen from the voter registration lists and, as Christadelphians never voted, we were spared the inconvenience of being called for jury duty. Even in cases of a brother or sister who had recently come into the Truth, and who formerly participated in the political process, a simple letter to the jury selection clerk would suffice. In some areas, understanding courts supplied letters which Christadelphians could use to facilitate being excused. But that has all changed. Today in most court districts in the United States there are almost no standard excuses acceptable, and the only one who has the authority to excuse anyone is the judge himself. This means we must:

- (a) show up promptly,
- (b) sit with the other 50 people who make up the pool from which the jurors will be selected, and
- (c) listen to the judge extolling the benefits of living in a free democracy, with a system designed to provide everyone a fair trial, while complimenting everyone for their good citizenship.

While all this is going on, we are looking for the opportunity to explain to the judge our reason for being excused.

This can be awkward, and standing up in front of a group of people to explain our position can be embarrassing. Part of the awkwardness is inherent in the process. The procedures are not uniform from one court to the next. Before you know it, you may find yourself in the courtroom being sworn in with the entire group of prospective jurors. Then you are being introduced to the lawyers for the prosecution and the defense in preparation for the jury selection process. Here the lawyers may question each juror as to suitability. After hours of sitting around the jury pool waiting room, everything is now moving extremely fast. It is beginning to look like you are going to be in the jury box before you can explain your position. Some have had to interrupt the proceedings, raise their hands and, when acknowledged by the judge, state their requests. It can be difficult.

What should you say?

Should you write out your position, along with Scriptural references?

It is doubtful you will have a chance to present anything in writing to the judge beforehand. However, writing your position out is an excellent way to organize

your own thoughts. In thinking through our position and what to say, ***we should be careful not to lose sight of the forest for the trees.***

Jury duty, serving on a town council, voting, and military service are all trees in the same forest. Whether it is voting for the president of the nation or in a school bond issue, serving in the military in wartime or being a policeman, it is all of a piece. We may think of each of these services as a tree; taken together, they make up the forest of government. We have to be careful when we examine a single tree, or else we find ourselves explaining our position in a way that may be turned against us. Unlike the often hard-to-see relationship between some of our decisions and their effects on others, the lack of a consistent stand by some in our brotherhood can compromise the position of others, especially those of our young men if the draft should be reinstated.

The Christadelphian position

Our position is simple. ***We are not to be involved in the things of this world, and there is nothing that is more “of this world” than participating in its governing and defense.*** This position is a 180-degree change from that of the Israelites in Old Testament times. They were citizens in a nation of the world, and were expected to contribute toward its functioning. But this came to an end, and true Christians were seen as having no worldly nation, but rather being citizens of the coming Kingdom of God. Just as we believe the Mosaic institutions surrounding the Law and the sacrifices were done away with by Christ’s teachings and example, so also we believe his teachings instruct his followers to abstain from participation in the governments of this world during these times.

Jesus’ prayer sets forth both his and our relationship to this world:

“I have given them thy word and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14-16).

Jury duty is a form of participation in the functioning of this “world”, specifically the courts of the country and the application of its laws.

Shortly after this prayer, Jesus stood before Pilate:

“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from here” (John 18:36).

From a purely human standpoint, if ever there were a just cause, fighting to deliver the only sinless man who ever lived from a crooked court and an unjust verdict would certainly qualify. And the time will come, at Jesus’ return, when fighting at his command will be proper, as it was when God so instructed during the Mosaic age. Wars are not justified by the reasoning of men (who seem able to justify all wars, at least at the outset), but by God’s commands. The current “kingdom” in which we live, whenever and wherever it may be, is not Jesus’ kingdom now, nor can it be ours.

In his Olivet discourse Jesus, our true king, referred to these days as the “times of the Gentiles”. These times will have to run their course until they are finished:

“And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive unto all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:24).

Ultimately the kingdoms of this world are going to gather together to fight against Jesus:

“For I saw the spirit of demons, working miracles, that go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Rev 16:14).

Imagine being a Christadelphian in a country that is sending young people off to *that* war!

The whole tenor of Jesus’ teaching, in both example and words, is incompatible with being part of any government in this world. Try reconciling the principles stated in the platforms of the major political parties with the Sermon on the Mount. Can you imagine the apostles campaigning for office? No candidates can suggest their party adopt principles that espouse the qualities of meekness and turning the other cheek.

Nor do we suggest that governments can effectively function during these times with those principles. In fact, we believe that when Jesus returns he will rule with a rod of iron. The human condition can only be governed under a strong hand. What we do believe is that Jesus has called men and women to come out of this world and live as he lived, while leaving the governing of this world’s affairs now to those who wish to do so.

Cautions about certain verses

We differ with mainstream Christianity in our understanding of many basic doctrines; however, it can be a mistake to think that no one else knows the Bible. There are many sincere Christians in North America, more and more of whom are being exposed to Bible study groups in their churches. They can be serious about both their Christianity and their service to their country. The following are three examples of Scripture passages we have heard brethren cite in defense of our positions. We suggest that they are not the best responses for the following reasons:

1. Regarding jury duty: *“Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt 7:1)*. Quoting this verse as a reason for not being able to serve on a jury can cause a problem. In response, our interviewer might quote John 7:24: *“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”* When I asked to be excused because of my religious beliefs, the judge asked me if it was because I would not be able to deliver a judgment. I said I probably would not do so, but that my reasons were based on broader principles regarding non-participation in government. I did not want to get into a debate about the single “tree” of “judging”. I knew the judge could say that all I needed to do was weigh the evidence and deliver an “opinion”, and that he would

hand down the actual judgment. I was also concerned about the possible fine points between a “civil” case and a “criminal” case.

2. Regarding voting: *“The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men”* (Dan 4:17). The point of citing this verse is that, since God decides whom to put in power, I would be wrong to express my opinion because I might find myself voting against God! Therefore I should not participate in this process. A problem with using this passage is that the righteous Daniel, when he made this statement, was a key participant in a worldly kingdom, as was Joseph before him. Joseph, and probably Daniel, had the authority and responsibility to sit in governing counsels and make decisions involving incarceration and, we may assume, capital punishment as well. We must remember that our position today is based particularly on Jesus’ teachings, and not just the Old Testament.
3. Regarding military service, police, jury duty, etc.: *“Thou shalt not kill”* (Exod 20:13). This has sometimes been referred to as the reason Christadelphians cannot serve in the military or police or agree with the death penalty. But this passage presents a problem, both from the Hebrew and the context. The root word “ratsach” (Strong’s 7523) is only translated “kill” twice, “killed” once, and “killing” once in the Old Testament and always in the context of murder. The Jewish Old Testament English translation in the Soncino Pentateuch translates the word in Exodus 20:13 as “murder”. Strong’s defines the word as meaning “especially to murder”. We know that, contextually, the sixth commandment was not an absolute prohibition against killing, since the Law of Moses required that the death penalty be exacted in certain specified crimes.

Again, in contrast to the above approaches and some other “easy fixes”, our position is best set forth in the context of Jesus’ teachings that we are to be separate from this world and its current governments.

Early Christians in regard to their governments

The Christadelphian position in respect to governments is the same as it was in the earliest Christian communities. The following is a quote from Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Harcourt, Brace and Company, p. 288):

“The primitive Christians derived the institution of civil government, not from the consent of the people, but from the decrees from heaven. The reigning emperor, though he had usurped the scepter by treason and murder, immediately assumed the character of vice regent of the Deity. To the Deity alone he was accountable for the abuse of his power; and his subjects were indissolubly bound by their oath of fidelity to a tyrant who had violated every law of nature and society. The humble Christians were sent into the world as sheep among wolves; and since they were not permitted to employ force even in the defense of their religion, they should be still more criminal if they were tempted to shed the blood of their fellow-creatures in disputing the vain privileges or the sordid possessions of this

transitory life. Faithful to the doctrines of the apostle, who in the reign of Nero had preached the duty of unconditional submission, the Christians of the three first centuries preserved their conscience pure and innocent of the guilt of secret conspiracy or open rebellion. While they experienced the rigor of persecution, they were never provoked either to meet their tyrants in the field, or indignantly to withdraw themselves into some remote and sequestered corner of the globe.” [My emphasis]

The practice of Christians becoming full partners with government was institutionalized under Constantine in the fourth century. It was one of many doctrines that became corrupted along the way.

Reconciling obedience to authorities with God’s commands

How do we reconcile the Scriptural passages, those that teach obedience to the law, with our apparent unwillingness to obey the law by serving on jury duty and in the military?

We need to reconcile Scriptures which instruct us to obey our governing authorities (e.g., Rom 13:1-7) with the quandaries we can face now. How do we refuse to obey the authorities when they command us to do something opposed to Scripture? This can be quite difficult, and it can require personal courage.

The specific situations may sometimes be unclear in our minds. Fortunately, the general principle we must follow has been clearly set forth by the apostles. When the Sanhedrin forbade them to preach about Jesus Christ, they gave a clear, unequivocal answer:

“But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye” (Acts 4:19).

Scripture and our own experience teach us that there are times when a law will conflict with Bible teaching. The instruction to obey those who have the rule over us is not an absolute. For example, God has said homosexuality is wrong, while increasingly the governments in North America are supporting the position that it is not wrong, but merely different. Some of us who are school teachers may find ourselves in the uncomfortable position of being asked to teach a position on this subject which is opposed to God’s teachings.

As for another example, God has given us all clear instructions about disciplining our children:

“He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him early” (Prov 13:24).

“Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from Sheol [the grave]” (Prov 23:13,14).

However, the tendency of government to overreact in the pursuit of the goal to protect children from abuse, which is itself laudable, may put us in the position of having to decide whether to obey God or man.

The importance of Christadelphians being consistent

It is easier for our conduct toward the world to be consistent when we keep all the “trees” in perspective and always remember they are all part of the same “forest”. If we find ourselves living in another country, the fact that we are not “of this world” with regard to most of these “trees” becomes plainer. No one votes in one country when he or she is the legal citizen of another. We in Canada and the United States enjoy freedom from religious persecution, to a degree virtually unheard of in the past. But if one day the wind blows from another direction, then consistency will stand us in good stead. Our boat can be sailing very nicely at a good clip, but we always need to pay close attention to what the wind might do next. If we are caught off guard by a sudden gust from another direction, the boom can swing around violently, hit us in the head and knock us overboard. We need to keep one eye on the direction of the political “winds” at all times.

This was very important in the past when the military draft was in force. Where some religious organizations had a known, consistent position of requesting conscientious objection status and performing alternate service in mental hospitals and forest fire fighting, etc., their young men were often quickly approved. Being sentenced to jail for the duration of a war, with that on your record for life, may seem like an unlikely prospect today. But it might not be in the future. And in other countries our young brothers face extreme tests in this regard. Christadelphians in North America organized themselves to present a unified position to their governments in the past, and a few brothers have made it their business to continue to stay abreast of current events in this area. The draft may be reinstated sooner than we think. The current limited engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, which are on an extremely small scale compared with World War II, for example, are straining the capability of the armed forces to meet their voluntary recruitment needs at this time.

Consistency in less well-defined activities

There was a time, not too long ago, when our young men had to:

- a. go to the local post office when they turned 18,
- b. ask for the registration form for the draft board,
- c. fill it out,
- d. submit it, and then
- e. face a five-man board of volunteers in their own community (some of whom were devout churchgoers), where they had to defend their request for conscientious objection status, both Scripturally and by their previous conduct.

If we knew we had to do this again, we would all be taking this matter very seriously. We should, for example, be keeping records of attendance at meetings. This could document a consistent pattern of behavior if the need should arise to prove it.

We could be using Sunday schools, or CYC classes, to be sure that our young brothers (and sisters) are Scripturally prepared to stand up to any investiga-

tions or questions. For all of us, there are many other questions — perhaps less well-defined and upon which we may have differing opinions — but questions nonetheless, about which we could at least think among ourselves, or perhaps individually. Some examples:

1. Are we continuing to examine our thinking about pledging allegiance to the flag?
2. Do we sing the national anthem?
3. What do we think about playing or marching in school bands that perform at patriotic functions?
4. Do we participate in the quasi-military activities of such organizations as Boy Scouts?

Our “water cooler” conversations, and respect for others

While we were still in the jury pool room, and before we could ask the judge to be excused, the clerk came in and told us there were two trials for which jurors would be selected from the pool that day. One would be a typical three or four-day case, but the other might run for 20 days. Our names would be called first for the 20-day trial and we should respond as to whether or not we could serve that long. If we could not, we should go up to Window #1 and give our reasons. If those reasons were accepted, then we should return to the pool to be in the jury for the shorter trial. If we could serve, we should go up to Window #2 and receive our instructions. One by one those called responded, and most said they could not serve that long. One woman responded, “Yes”; we all looked at her and saw she was very old and very frail. Carefully she rose from her chair; as she started to walk towards the window she turned to the rest of us and said, “I’m 84; I hope I can make it to the end of the trial.” The whole room erupted in laughter. But I thought: if she ended up being selected by the lawyers, she was making a huge sacrifice for her community.

Our neighbors are being called upon to make big sacrifices in service to the community in which we live. And some of them see it as very much their Christian duty, as well as their civic duty. When I think about what I have done for my neighbors, I can’t really think of much. I have never given three or four full days to help out, and there are areas of need that are not opposed to God’s teachings. Twenty full days away from work and pay is a big sacrifice. In fact, for that matter I don’t recall ever giving 20 consecutive days of service to my ecclesia.

Our comments and behavior, as it relates to perceived inadequacies and injustices in the legal system, and in politicians and the political process, should be minimal and respectful. There are some sincere Christians, who hold beliefs with which we disagree, who nevertheless are trying to the best of their abilities to reconcile their beliefs in the course of implementing the governing process. It would be wrong to think they do not have battles of conscience in some of the situations they deal with.

We should not be critical of those who rule over us, or join in the ridicule at the water cooler that may be the current conversation when a political scandal

erupts. It is always unfitting to criticize the work of others when we do not pitch in ourselves — regardless of the reasons.

We would like others to respect the sincerity of our position. We do not like to be considered “cowards” because we will not serve in the military, or “parasites” who benefit from the hard work of others while we will not help with that work. For the most part, people with sincere, consistent religious beliefs in these areas are treated respectfully in North America. We would do well to treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated.

Kings and priests in training

Isn't it odd? We are undergoing a training or probation process in order to become kings and priests. The vision of the Kingdom Age speaks in the past tense, although referring to the future:

“And [he] hath made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev 5:10).

In some ways, we are a government in exile, waiting for the coming of our king, when he will call us to active service. Yet one of the principles of our training is to refrain from participating in governing and priestly functions in the present institutions of this world. We work in and guide our ecclesias, but we do not rule them in the sense that governments rule. Our king has no interest in most of what is involved in governing during this dispensation.

We abstain from participation in government now — even when we know it to be a necessity that such governments function. In this, we do well to remember that we are truly living by faith, every day.

Ken Sommerville (Simi Hills, CA)

God's “Kings and Priests”

Consider the words that are sung by the symbolic four living creatures and the twenty-four elders: “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” [Rev 5:9,10]. We know who literally answer to this description. Christ did not die to redeem 24 elders and four creatures: he died to redeem those that were under the law (Gal 4:4), and also to gather together the children of God that are scattered abroad (John 11:52) — the other sheep he had which were not of Israel's fold after the flesh (John 10:16), viz., of the Gentiles, whom he afterwards visited by the hand of Peter and Paul, to take out of them a people for his name (Acts 15:14; 26:17,18). Consequently the 24 elders and four living creatures, who in song affirm these things of themselves, are but the symbols of that element of the kingdom of God which consists of the glorified brethren of Christ in their numerical totality.

Robert Roberts, Thirteen Lectures on the Apocalypse

History

The Historical Interactions Between the CGAF and the Christadelphians

Introduction

The current CGAF (Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith) was formed in 1921 as a group of five churches or congregations in Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky. It has since grown to nine by adding affiliated meetings in Florida and Missouri. In 1921 it split from a much larger community, known generally as the Church of God (General Conference). Some of the General Conference churches are also known as “Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith”, or variants. This has been a constant source of confusion to many Christadelphians. The General Conference has approximately 100 associated churches in the USA, with perhaps 5,000 members. The CGAF group, which is the focus of this article, and the Church of God (General Conference) have no current connections or fellowship. We will briefly cover the interactions between the current CGAF and the Christadelphians from their common roots in the 1840s down through the present time.

Common origins: John Thomas

The Christadelphians trace their origin primarily to the work of one man, John Thomas (1805-1871), who emigrated from England to the USA in 1832. Arriving in Cincinnati, he was initially associated with the group formed primarily by Alexander Campbell (first called Campbellites but later the Church of Christ). But he soon became estranged from them over doctrinal issues and was re-baptized by one John Walsh in 1847. He had become convinced of the necessity of the “Hope of Israel”, otherwise known as the “Abrahamic Faith” or the “Age to Come”: the belief that the return of the Jews to the land of Israel would precede the return of Jesus, which in turn would usher in the future Kingdom of God on the earth.

During the period from 1840 to 1860 or thereabouts, John Thomas was part of a larger group of fellow believers, who shared his views on the falsity of the Trinity and the immortal soul, among several other areas in which they differed from the much larger nominally Christian community. This larger group had no organized structure, but traced their origins to three primary influences: those of Alexander Campbell, Elias Smith, and William Miller. Not all had the same set of initial beliefs or origins, but the group essentially coalesced around a set of magazines from John Thomas, Joseph Marsh, and Benjamin Wilson, among several others. During that period, the three groups — Christadelphians (followers of John Thomas), Adventists (remnants of William Miller’s followers), and Church of God (Marsh/Wilson followers) — were largely one body.

Common origins: Benjamin Wilson

Benjamin Wilson is best known for producing *The Emphatic Diaglott*, a Greek-English interlinear translation of the New Testament. After a century of being pub-

lished by the Jehovah's Witnesses, this translation is now published jointly by *The Abrahamic Faith Beacon* (a CGAF publication) and a Christadelphian trust. Born in England in 1817, Wilson and his family joined the emerging Campbellite movement in 1840, eight years after John Thomas. Soon after, he became acquainted with the magazine of John Thomas, and emigrated with his family to the USA, arriving in Geneva, Illinois, about a year after John Thomas left the area. Leaving the Campbellites shortly thereafter, he corresponded with John Thomas for many years before the two finally met in 1856. Commencing in 1855, Wilson published *The Gospel Banner*; it continued until 1869. Moving to California in 1871 as a result of his wife's ill health and the death of his son, Benjamin Wilson devoted himself to tending his wife and a small flock in Sacramento.



**Benjamin Wilson
and wife**

Common origins: Joseph Marsh



Joseph Marsh

Joseph Marsh was born in Vermont in 1802. After moving to Rochester, New York, he joined the “Christian Connection”, the group founded by Elias Smith. He took over their publication, *The Christian Palladium*, in 1839. Soon after, he came under the influence of William Miller, and joined with him in proclaiming the return of Christ in 1843. When there was no advent and this expectation turned into “The Great Disappointment” of 1844, Marsh continued his studies and came to believe in the Abrahamic promises around 1847, with John Thomas contributing to this change of views. (The Millerites also believed that the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21 would occur at the start of the Millennium.) Thomas and Marsh became acquainted in 1847, and

the two corresponded and visited for many years. Marsh always believed in the doctrine of “once baptized, always baptized”, the implications of which we will discuss below. He focused much more on the consequences of conversion than on the requirements of true doctrine. It is arguable that the emphasis on these two aspects was one of the main factors in the separation of the current CGAF from the rest of the Church of God, General Conference, as discussed below.

The initial estrangement

In 1864 John Thomas was forced by the impact of the Civil War to name his followers Christadelphians. By this time, the larger community had divided into three distinct groups of approximately equal numbers, with no clear distinction between many Adventists and the Church of God. This estrangement was initially

much more among the leaders than the members: for many years afterwards the same names appeared in the various magazines. There are stories from as late as the last part of the nineteenth century about isolated groups who happily turned out to hear and fellowship visiting preachers, whether they were Church of God, Christadelphian, or Adventist.

The estrangement was over several issues:

- Initially, there were some differences between Wilson and Thomas over what might be called behavioral questions, such as teetotalism and the eating of pork. But finally a more serious estrangement developed over what Christadelphians came to call “immortal emergence”. This will be discussed below. When Benjamin Wilson left for California in 1871, it seems the geographical distance between them may have precluded continuing communication.
- Between Marsh and Thomas, estrangement was over the former’s refusal to be baptized (ie., re-baptized) after coming, with the help of Thomas among others, to the correct belief in an Abrahamic faith. Marsh wrote the book entitled *The Age to Come*, which was for many years the touchstone of this doctrinal position. Marsh lost the argument when his congregation in Rochester deserted him for Thomas; this was the origin of the current Christadelphian ecclesia in that town.
- The relationship between Marsh and the Adventists on the one hand, and Thomas and Wilson with the Adventists on the other, was always difficult. Marsh was a follower of Miller prior to the “Great Disappointment” of 1844, when Miller’s predictions of the return of Christ proved inaccurate. Afterwards, he did not join in the attempts to unite, but beat his own different drum through the pages of his magazine. Thomas always disagreed with Miller, but used his access to members of the Adventists for his own preaching. Benjamin Wilson had in fact never really associated with the Adventists, although his nephew, Thomas Wilson, may have been. (Thomas Wilson later founded *The Restitution*, using the same press Marsh has used. It was also in large part a continuation of *The Gospel Banner*, because Thomas Wilson had, in 1869, merged his *Herald of the Kingdom* with it. *The Restitution* was for many years the magazine of the Church of God.)

In 1866, when a member of the Cleveland Church of God tried to fellowship with the newly-formed Christadelphians in New York, she was refused by John Thomas. This gave rise to some considerable correspondence, with Newell Bond of Cleveland complaining, but this incident brought to light the developing rift between the two groups.

In 1868 Benjamin Wilson, while on a visit to Scotland, gave an account of the scene in America. By that time the gulf had widened between himself and John Thomas — and he expressed great sadness over the divided state of the brotherhood in North America. He consistently advocated the unity of the body, and exhorted all parties to close the breach among brethren. In that account, he also gave a detailed overview of most of the Christadelphian ecclesias as well of those of what we would call the Church of God. A common thread that distinguished both groups was the concept of the “Abrahamic Faith”: the idea that believers,

as the spiritual seed of Abraham, look forward to the inheritance with Abraham in the Promised Land, which is the Kingdom of God on earth, when the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

Immortal emergence

Immortal emergence is a Christadelphian term for the belief that the righteous dead emerge from the grave in an immortal state. John Thomas and Benjamin Wilson seem to have shared a common view on the resurrection in the 1850s. However, Thomas either modified his view over time, or clarified the misconceptions that might have arisen from his quotation and exposition of the relevant (and admittedly difficult) passage, 1 Corinthians 15:52 (“The dead shall be raised incorruptible”). By 1864 for certain, and perhaps much earlier, John Thomas believed that resurrection and judgment will occur before immortality is bestowed. Wilson continued to believe that the responsible faithful would be raised immortal (or, to put it another way, ‘raised *to* immortality’). Wilson argued this should not be a test of fellowship, but Thomas came to view it otherwise.

Origin of the Cleveland Church

By far the largest Church of the CGAF is that based in Cleveland. The Cleveland Church was founded on October 4, 1863, with 14 members, according to Maurice Joplin writing a year later in *The Gospel Banner* as evangelist. Both Benjamin Wilson and Mark Allen had visited and preached in Cleveland, and the latter was asked to preside at the event, which was held at the house of Newell Bond. This congregation continued in its original faith for many years, growing and expanding. Around 1888 it appears to have settled on the name by which it is now commonly known, “The Church of the Blessed Hope”. Joplin continued as leader down through his death in 1907. Two “Christadelphians” were pastors from his death into the 1940s, as discussed below. With its undoubted roots mainly in the teachings of Benjamin Wilson, the Cleveland Church maintained its faith through the turmoil of 1921, when the remnant split from the much larger General Conference. This church was in large part the glue that held the CGAF group together, sending speakers to the other churches on a regular basis.

Origin of the CGAF

The origins of the Christadelphians is clear: this united group of Bible-believing Christians all acknowledge the initial leadership of John Thomas, followed by Robert Roberts as the acknowledged leader after the death of Thomas in 1871. Although there were many divisions — some later healed, some of which still persist — the common heritage is undoubtedly traced back to the re-baptism of John Thomas in 1847.

On the other hand, it may be said that the CGAF only came into existence in its present form in 1921. The true origins of the Church of God are more difficult to discern, since they lacked a central organization. It appears that in 1858 they separated from the larger Adventist Movement, largely over the question of “open fellowship”: the Adventists held that being a good Christian was sufficient, but the Church of God insisted that much more was required, including a belief in the

Second Coming of Christ. There was no single central organization prior to 1921, although statewide conferences were often held, regional conferences were occasionally held, and ministers traveled widely among the various congregations.

Beginning in about 1911, a group of five ministers (the self-proclaimed Ministerial Association) tried to exercise control over the emergent group. They attacked the then-editor of *The Restitution*, A.R. Underwood, falsely accusing him of financial fraud. Consequently he transferred the magazine to his assistant editor, Robert Huggins, whom we will discuss later. This transfer was wholly intended to ensure that *The Restitution* would continue on the established CGAF basis of the faith.

The Ministerial Association, meanwhile, would not be thwarted in their attempt to wrest control of the CGAF congregations away from *The Restitution*. They established a new magazine, *The Restitution Herald*; this magazine has remained the house organ of the larger group to this day.

In 1921, the new group — known as Church of God, General Conference — held a conference in Waterloo, Iowa. As part of its rules, this conference included the statement: “As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” This declaration, which may be characterized as “once baptized, always baptized”, meant there would henceforth be no further conditions upon any baptism, such as a prerequisite belief in any particular set of doctrines. This assertion, with its associated doctrine of “universal resurrection”, proved divisive.

Arguably, the dispute goes back to the dual roots: in the groups associated with Joseph Marsh, and those associated with Benjamin Wilson. To simplify, the larger group followed Marsh. The much smaller group, led by Robert Huggins of the Cleveland Church of the Blessed Hope, emphasized the importance of true doctrine. And so, with the five churches which followed his lead, the group we now call the CGAF came into being.

This handful of congregations stood apart from the rush to “universal resurrection” and hunkered down. For more than 50 years they continued steadfastly and quietly. In most cases, there were only occasional ties among the five congregations; the ties that did continue were mostly family ones. But the Bible roots of these groups were strong, and they defended the statement of faith that was first developed in Geneva, Illinois, by Benjamin Wilson around 1868. Beginning in 1954 Howard F. Ross from Miami guided a dialogue to unify the CGAF statement of faith. In 1966 those efforts resulted in a unified statement that was adopted by the six main churches. In about 2002, after prayerful consideration, several congregations modified it to align more closely with the Christadelphian position on “immortal emergence”.

Beginning in 1976, the six groups assembled together for the first time at Earlham College (Richmond, Indiana) for a fraternal gathering. Today, that annual Gathering is a seven-day Bible school held at Dennison College in Granville, Ohio. As many as 350 people have attended to hear Bible classes and share fellowship.

Note that there are differing opinions as to the origin of the name “Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith”. Some hold that Benjamin Wilson coined the term,

during or just after the Civil War, although there is no contemporary use of that term in his magazine. What is certain is that some churches were using that term by the 1880s, when it appears in *The Christadelphian Advocate* magazine.

Christadelphian influences



Robert Huggins

We have already mentioned Robert Huggins. He was baptized a Christadelphian in 1895, and one may find numerous references to his writings and preaching work in both *The Christadelphian* and *The Christadelphian Advocate*. In 1907, after the death of Joplin, Huggins took over the leadership of the Cleveland Church. Starting in 1913, he wrote a series of 12 lessons, published in *The Restitution*, which later became the basis of the Cleveland Church Statement of Faith. He also wrote *The Bible, Its Principles and Texts*, which includes a statement of faith quite similar to the Christadelphian Statement of Faith, as well as a section on “Doctrines we Reject”. It is not, I believe, a coincidence that he took over as leader of the Cleveland Church from A.H. Zilmer.

A.H. Zilmer had been a prominent evangelist and minister in the Lutheran Church. But coming to question many of their doctrines and learning a better way, he abandoned the Lutherans and joined the Church of God in 1897. In 1906, he left them to join the Christadelphians, with whom he traveled and preached extensively and where he became the editor of *The Christadelphian Advocate* in 1914. In fact, Zilmer and Huggins remained strong friends and associates down through the 1940s, for there was regular correspondence between them in Zilmer’s later magazine *The Faith* as late as the 1940s. (A.H. Zilmer died in 1951.)

During World War II, there were associations between CGAF members and Christadelphians who served together in work camps. At that time, some CGAF congregations permitted non-combatant military service for those with conscientious objection to fighting, but this changed in the 1980s as a result of the experience of some of those who served, particularly in Vietnam. Thereafter CGAF groups taught and counseled the same more absolute conscientious objection to military service that characterizes Christadelphians.

Beginning in the 1970s, the CGAF began to associate more strongly with the Christadelphians, attending their Bible schools, and inviting Christadelphian speakers to their annual Bible school. Around 1988, tentative discussions began with the goal of achieving a formal union between the two groups. The story of these interactions is part of another account.

Peter Hemingray (Detroit Royal Oak, MI)

Note on sources

This account is based largely on rare, sometimes unpublished sources. I have therefore prepared an electronic version, with sources stated and copies of all such attached. It also includes a select bibliography. Please contact the author at phemingray@gmail.com for information.

Seal of Zedekiah's Secretary Found in Jerusalem

According to Etgar Lefkovits (*The Jerusalem Post*, July 31), an intact seal impression belonging to a minister, or secretary, of King Zedekiah, dating back 2,600 years, has been uncovered during an archaeological dig in Jerusalem's ancient City of David. The seal impression, or bulla, with the name Gedalyahu ben Pashur, who served as minister to King Zedekiah (597-586 BC), was found a few yards away from a separate seal impression of another of Zedekiah's ministers, Yehukual ben Shelemyahu, which was uncovered three years ago. This was reported by Professor Eilat Mazar, who is leading the archaeological dig at the site.

The first bulla was uncovered inside an impressive stone structure, which Mazar believes is the Palace of David, while the second bulla was found at the foot of the external wall of the same structure, under a tower that was built in the days of Nehemiah. Each bulla, measuring about half an inch in diameter, was found among the debris of the destruction of the First Temple period. The letters are in ancient Hebrew and are very clearly preserved, Mazar said.

The excavation at the City of David, located just outside the walls of the Old City, has been a treasure trove for archaeologists. "On the one hand it is so unexpected to find such a fragile bulla in such harsh conditions of excavation, while on the other hand it was logical to find precisely here the bulla of Gedalyahu ben Pashur — only meters away from the place where we found the bulla of Yehukhal ben Shelemyahu — since these two ministers are mentioned side by side in the Bible as having served together in the kingdom of Zedekiah," Mazar said.

Gedalyahu ben Pashur is the "Gedaliah son of Pashur" mentioned in Jeremiah 38:1, and Yahukual ben Shelemyahu is the "Jehucal son of Shelemiah" of Jeremiah 37:3; 38:1. Both ministers are mentioned in Jeremiah 38, along with two other ministers, when they came to King Zedekiah demanding the death of the prophet Jeremiah for exhorting the besieged city to surrender.

Prof. Mazar said it was "absolutely fantastic" to have uncovered the seals "complete and in perfect condition" after 2,600 years. "It is a discovery... in which real figures of the past shake off the dust of history and vividly revive the stories of the Bible." Mazar, who rose to international prominence for the excavation that uncovered the probable palace of King David, has been at the forefront of a series of Jerusalem archaeological finds.

Other Biblical-era bullae have been found previously. In 1982, the Israeli archaeologist Yigal Shiloh discovered a collection in a nearby site, including one with the name of Gemaryahu ben Shaphan ("Gemariah son of Shaphan": Jer 36:10-12), an official and scribe during the reign of Jehoiakim (608-597 BC). Gemariah was the first cousin, once removed, of Jeremiah himself; he assisted Jeremiah's secretary Baruch in the public reading of Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer 36:10,25).

Reflections

Bro. Julian Webster



It is now 16 years since my brother Julian Webster passed away suddenly on November 3, 1992, aged 20. He was a wonderful example in Christ as well as a fun-loving person to spend time with. Although years have passed now, all his immediate and extended family remember him as a unique individual and continue to look forward to the day of Christ's return when "the dead in Christ shall rise first." The Webster, Mannell and Krassavin families in Ontario would like to share some of Julian's reflections from a letter he wrote to me nine months before his death. Somehow the profound words are more touching and meaningful as time goes on and we think that everyone will agree that they are applicable and meaningful for all time.

*With love in our great Hope,
Sis. Eleanor Mannell*

Julian wrote:

I don't know if this is just me or whether everyone finds the same thing, but time just seems to fly by. Before I know it I will be an old man. When I look back on things, they seem to be a blur, all blending together, shortening their actual time to seem like only yesterday. I am already well over halfway through my work term, and will soon be back at school. But I know that will also fly by and then I will be working again. To slow things down, I think one has to savor the present and enjoy every moment as it is now, no matter what is being done. Everything can be enjoyable! If everything being done now is looked at as something not liked, the events of the future are anticipated without thinking about the present. But what I find is that things I have looked forward to come and go and I haven't enjoyed them any more than anything else. But always being in eager anticipation means the time between big, exciting events is gone, leaving no imprint in the memory. Hence vast voids of time exist and the big, memorable things are all squashed together, making the past appear to have gone by quickly. I think every moment of our lives should be memorable. This is also a reason to look forward to the Kingdom, when with eternal life, time will not exist. The largest possible period of time we can think of is still 0% of all time. Isn't this a wonderful concept! We will be together as long as we can imagine, and then some.

[Note: Young Bro. Julian died of an unanticipated heart condition. He was perfectly healthy to all appearances, but collapsed and died after enjoying one of his usual runs with his younger brother, Andrew.]

“Then the land had rest from war”

“So Joshua took the entire land, just as the LORD had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions. Then the land had rest from war” (Josh 11:23).

“But that rest did not come quickly, nor was it realized until war had achieved the high purposes of God...” Furthermore this “does not mean that there was to be no more war, for in the settlement of the land the separate cities were involved in war. It rather declares that rest was reached through war. It has often been so in the history of man. Through blood and fire and vapor of smoke, the signs and symbols of conflict, God cleanses the land, and the heart of man, from those evil things which produce human feverishness and restlessness; and thus, through the terrible ordeal, leads men to quietness and rest. When passions are purified, and evil thoughts are no more, war will cease... Till then God makes it the awful instrument of cleansing and renewal” (Campbell Morgan).

In his second Inaugural Address in 1865, President Abraham Lincoln surveyed the devastation of almost four years of all-out civil war upon his country, and spoke these words:

“Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman’s 250 years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said 3,000 years ago, so still it must be said the ‘judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether’ [Psa 19:9].”

The melancholy fact is that, by God’s will, war **must** continue until the world is prepared to accept Christ’s Kingdom of peace and righteousness. Mankind might find it easy to accept peace, that is, the cessation of war by itself, but it will not be so easy to accept the righteousness that must accompany it. Isaiah wrote,

“When your judgments [O LORD] come upon the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa 26:9).

God’s judgments, of which war ranks high on the list, with revolution, famine, earthquake, and pestilence just behind it (Matt 24:6,7; Mark 13:7,8; Luke 21:9-11), are the means of cleansing the world, and renewing it, by leading men to righteousness. It is a fierce and frightening prospect, at which we shudder and from which we recoil. It is the great wind and fire that sends us scurrying into the cave for shelter, as it did the prophet Elijah. Nevertheless it is the Hand of God, and we must acknowledge it. Furthermore, it is the necessary prelude to the gentle whisper, or the still, small voice, that calls us into the presence of our Lord (1Ki 19:11,12).

And so again, as the prophet says, when...

“the law will go out from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem”...

then, and only then will the LORD, through His Son Jesus Christ...

“judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They

will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore” (Isa 2:3,4).

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

Sis. Arlene Gordon

Sis. Arlene Gordon of Montgomery, West Virginia, fell asleep in Christ October 14, 2008, after a brief illness. She is survived by her husband Ronnie, and a brother and nephews, nieces, and cousins who live in New Jersey. Arlene was baptized into Christ on March 24, 2006. I had the privilege of meeting Arlene when I was blessed to have the opportunity of doing some work with the MidAtlantic A.S.K. program in the fall of 2004. Sis. Jean Cheetham of Moorestown, NJ, insisted that I visit Arlene when looking up contacts in West Virginia. Jean had been in touch with Arlene by mail and could see great potential with her.

When we first met, we bonded immediately. I found Arlene to be sincerely looking for God’s Truth, and we ended up having an extended Bible study that first day. I gave her more literature to read, to go along with what Sis. Jean had sent her, and the truth started to take hold. Although I had many contacts to look up, I kept being drawn back to Arlene. She was an avid reader of all Christadelphian writings she could get her hands on. With little or no preconceived ideas, she was open to believing God’s Truth. So she read her Bible and studied for about 1 1/2 years. Arlene had any number of physical problems which kept her from walking or functioning at a normal level. She had need of a catheter and used to joke that she could crawl some, but looked funny when going up and down steps. She had a way about her — a spirit that, despite her physical limitations, absolutely endeared herself to me and to all who knew her.

In the spring of 2006, I was able to drive through West Virginia on my way to New Jersey, and I again stopped by to see her and to see how far along she was in understanding the first principles of God’s word. I was pleased to find, upon giving her an interview, that she had come to understand the truth on most of the questions for baptism. This allowed me to go through those questions she had answered incorrectly, looking up passages so that she could see the truth on those topics. On my return trip, to my delight, she had done her homework and finished the examination getting all questions right. We discussed the possibility of baptism, but I was careful not to push her. I told her that either I or some other visiting brothers and/or sisters could baptize her at a later time. But I did point out that there were any number of great Scriptural examples showing the urgency of doing the right thing — of following Christ’s command. Acts 2, and the 3,000 who repented and were baptized upon hearing Peter’s words, made a strong impression. She was convinced, and then she was baptized. We were able to break bread together for the first time.

One of the things I stressed again and again with her was the uniqueness of the spiritual family that we have in the truth — that if and when she decided to obey

Jesus and get baptized, it was a far different thing than simply joining the local church. She was becoming a part of a worldwide family, of believers who believed the same truths, who loved the same God and the same Jesus, and who shared the same hope of eternal life in God's kingdom. This concept was one she had never experienced before. She did have a loving husband, but was not really close to her natural family members who were still living. And as far as her former church membership, when she was young with the Catholic Church, she could immediately see the difference. I told her that I would get her names, phone numbers and addresses of brothers and sisters all over the continent, and I did — on a continuing basis. One contact with one sister in Christ would lead her to inquire about another, and then another. Though she was technically in isolation, she made the very most of being a member of this new family. Many brothers and sisters made special efforts, either to go by and see her on their travels, to email her or to talk with her on the phone.

Arlene and I had a wonderful relationship. We talked on the phone about three times a week on average. She was not shy in asking me for help in getting some book she had heard about or seen “written up” in one of the magazines. She especially enjoyed receiving *The Christadelphian Tidings* and *The Glad Tidings* (from England). The last thing that I sent her, just a few days ago, were the final three lessons of the Exploring the Bible course from thisisyourbible.com.

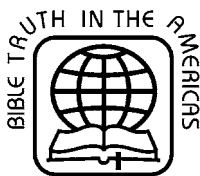
I can remember very vividly one incident. We were going through a lesson on the kingdom and how it would be established on the earth when Jesus came back. We started looking up and reading verses to show what this marvelous kingdom would be like, and we read Isaiah 40:31:

“Those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

Along with all the other impressive prophecies about that great age, this one really hit the mark with her. I can still see the twinkle in her eyes when she asked me if it was really true — if one day she would be able to do all those things, and I told her that it surely was. After that initial discussion, it seemed like every other time I saw her, she brought up that point again — just to make sure that nothing had changed in the meantime — one day her non-functioning body would really be empowered to function in that marvelous way.

Arlene was a beautiful person in many ways. She will be truly missed by all who loved her. I will miss the phone calls, the emails, and the Bible questions that would come up when she tried to witness to her friends and neighbors. And I will miss her friendship. May we all have the honor and privilege of meeting her one day in that glorious kingdom when we, like her, are blessed to enter into the joy of our Lord. Then we all, with glorified bodies, will run and not be weary and walk and not faint.

*With love in Christ,
Wesley Booker
(Austin South, TX)*



Bible Mission News

Guyana Report

Sis. Bibi of the New Amsterdam, Guyana, Ecclesia reports that they continue to function with the limited resources they have at their disposal. Although very few in number, they consider themselves truly blessed in many ways.

Shortly after the Bible school at Eccles, they were visited by Bro. Clive and Sis. Christine Drepaul, along with Bro. Richard and Sis. Dorothy Badlu, from Brooklyn, NY. Bro. Clive led Bible study, CYC, and Sunday school classes in New Amsterdam and also baptized Sis. Bonita Arjune, granddaughter-in-law of the late Bro. Abdool and Sis. Taj Hack. Sis. Dorothy was also able to do some studies with the sisters' class.

In June Bro. Ted and Sis. Dolores Sleeper visited Berbice, all three of the ecclesias. Bible classes, along with a joint CYC and Memorial Service, were held in New Amsterdam to coincide with the visit. A breaking of bread service was afterwards held at the homes of Bro. Vernon Yearwood and Sis. Nesha Hanif, two of the aged pillars of the ecclesia who are no longer able to make it to the meetings due to ill health.

Bro. Stafford and Sis. Leila Paltoo, from the Washington, DC, Ecclesia, and Sis. Miriam Scipico, from the Bronx Ecclesia, also visited during the summer. A joint memorial service was once again held among the three Berbice Ecclesias to facilitate the visit.

On August 1, the ecclesia had an outing at a water resort in Demerara. It was a beautiful day of fun and games for the entire family. We want to thank Bro. Sase and Sis. Amna Ramloachan (Barbados) and the Sacramento Ecclesia (California) for their contribution toward the cost of the trip.

The Annual Youth Camp was held in August at Plegt Anker. However, since New Amsterdam has many small children who were unable to attend the Camp, a vacation Bible school was held at our hall.

In September, Bro. Andy Bradshaw visited from Manchester, UK. Previously, he had been directly involved in instructing our now newly baptized sister, Sis. Bonita. He had also instructed Sis. Nafiza Phillips and Bro. Deo Budhan, who were baptized during his previous visit.

New Amsterdam is now preparing for the Sunday school year-end activities, and they wish to thank all the kind brethren who contributed to making this a

wonderful event for the children. Especially helpful were Bro. Nesbit Amos and the CSTCF committee for the Sunday school materials received.

God willing, New Amsterdam Ecclesia will once again be hosting the Guyana Bible School in April 2009, during the Easter weekend. We thank all those who continue to remember us in prayers, and we extend an open invitation to all to visit our ecclesia, especially at the Bible school next year!

Costa Rica

It was 10 years before I was baptized!

I was born and raised in a rural area of my country, in a home consisting of eight children and my parents. My entire family was conservative and very Catholic. When I was a young girl, my cousin moved close to our home. She was Evangelical, and would meet at her home with some of the members of her church. One night, I walked by her home and noticed the group praying during one of their meetings. I stopped to listen, and was very impressed with what they did and how they prayed.

Even as the years passed, what I felt that night persisted in my heart. At age 16, I began to take dance lessons, which I really loved. Then I soon realized there was an Evangelical church very close to my dance class. Therefore I began to combine both activities; I would dance for a while, and then go to church. Two years later, I met my husband.

A couple of months before my wedding, I asked a gentleman who supposedly knew about the Bible to teach me how to read and look for books and verses in the Bible. At that time, I admittedly had never opened a Bible. What I was most interested in learning was why the Catholics say that the evangelical Bible was different from the one they used. Then I began to generate questions that he was unable to answer, which led to a recommendation to speak to a gentleman from an Evangelical church. His name was Miguel Miranda (he is presently a Christadelphian brother). I accepted his offer and started to study with this man. After a few days, he invited me to his church. This was in 1984.

It was not too long until I decided to be baptized into the Evangelical Church and attend all the meetings I could. As the classes began to advance, contradictions began to emerge between the pastor of the church and Miguel Miranda and Francisco Ramirez. I used to listen; at first I thought that they could never contradict anything in the Bible, and that maybe these apparent contradictions were due to my lack of education. As this persisted, I began to have doubts. Around the same time, a lady from church found an announcement in the newspaper about a group that did not believe in the trinity, which was one of the topics being discussed by the pastor of the Evangelical church. She showed it to some other brothers.

Francisco Ramirez decided to visit them, and surprisingly, this group not only explained that the trinity did not exist, but he also discovered that the devil was not what we thought it was. Francisco Ramirez returned to us perplexed, and

talked with Miguel Miranda about these things. After this, both of them began to study the Scriptures in more depth, separating themselves from the Evangelical Church. They began to meet in Francisco Ramirez's home, with the group of people from the newspaper ad (the Christadelphians).

My curiosity regarding the topic of the devil made me attend some of these meetings. I wanted to hear what was said about the non-existence of a devil; I could not accept this concept — I could accept everything else, but not this. I started to attend more frequently. I enjoyed the way these topics were explained, and especially without any contradictions that I previously encountered with the other church. I stopped attending the Evangelical Church, along with other members that were also attending these classes at Francisco Ramirez's home.

Shortly after this, my second son was born, and I decided not to baptize him in the Catholic Church. My mother became very worried and registered me for a three-day instruction class called "Journey for Women." This was led by a group of Catholic priests in the community. She insisted in me joining this community activity to get rid of all the ideas with which she thought I had been brainwashed. I attended this group, but by the end of the class, it was proven even more to me that what I was learning from the Christadelphians was really the Truth. This experience motivated me even more to attend the Christadelphian courses.

Soon, many brothers and sisters from the Evangelical Church were baptized into the Christadelphian faith. Due to the fact that I was afraid to make the same mistake as I did with the Evangelical Church, it took me 10 years to get baptized. Presently, in this year 2008, I've been a Christadelphian for 24 years. I am a very happy woman, for God has called me to the knowledge of His Truth and made me part of His beautiful promise.

*Love in Christ,
Sis. Nidia Salas Alfaro, Santa Bárbara de Heredia, Costa Rica*



**Left to right, Sisters Gladys Barrantes, Doris Barrantes,
Nidia Salas, Lidieth Arias, and Elieth Salazar.**

This is Your Bible

If you haven't looked at the redesigned www.thisisyourbible.com website yet, please take a few minutes to have a look. It has a different look than the last one and has additional features both in front and behind the scenes.

The survey question for the most recent reporting month on the website was: 'What happens when we die?' The people who answered the survey said this:

- 57% Death is like a sleep from which those in Christ will be awakened at his return.
- 24% Our immortal soul goes to heavenly bliss or burning hell.
- 9% When we die, that's it. We are extinct forever.
- 6% We are reincarnated as another person, and the cycle of rebirth continues.
- 4% I don't know.

In addition to the survey, the booklet "After Death, What?" was read 92 times. We hope those reading the pamphlet were the ones who had given the incorrect answer to the survey.

There were also 118 questions received in August, as follows:

- | | | |
|-------|--------------|------------------|
| • 33% | 39 Questions | Bible Study |
| • 20% | 23 Questions | Life Issues |
| • 24% | 28 Questions | First Principles |
| • 8% | 10 Questions | Christadelphians |
| • 15% | 18 Questions | Technical |

Note that the "Technical" category includes people asking for password resets, etc. and comments and questions from various Christadelphians.

Want to help?

- Visit the website (www.thisisyourbible.com) to find out what it's all about.
- Become an on-line tutor; you can see from the statistics above that we need your help.
- Hand out the business cards available in your ecclesia. Let us know if you need more.
- Advertise the website in your local newspaper or as a link on your ecclesia's website — since the contacts in your area will come back to you and can be managed by your ecclesia.
- Continue your CBMA/CBMC financial support either individually or as an ecclesia. If you are not a CBMA/CBMC sponsoring ecclesia, please consider becoming one to support the important work on the website and in the mission field.

Jan Berneau
CBMA/CBMC Publicity

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

(For tax ID numbers please contact the Editor)

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Domestic Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make US dollar online donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Charles Brinkerhoff, 15925 La Ronda Cir., Hacienda Heights, CA 91745-4244

Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC) supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit www.cbma.net for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 86, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: wcfoundation.org

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.

Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696

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jdhunter@gte.net, 626-303-2222

Christadelphian Heritage College

Donations may be sent to Christadelphian Heritage College, c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

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provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas. For details see: www.christadelphianchildren.com

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Joy Fund, Inc., provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation

provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF)

provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF, c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371

Christadelphian Care Line provides a service for those who need fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. We now have Canadian Charitable status. 866-823-1039

Alcohol Help Line provides a service for those who need fully confidential help overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

News & Notices

AUSTIN LEANDER, TX

We are pleased to report the baptism of BRIAN CAMARILLO on July 27. He is a friend of our Bro. Mark Berry, and he has been coming to CYC and Sunday school for several years. On June 28 Bro. Joshua Hefner and Sis. Brittany Ishman were united in marriage at our hall. We wish them every happiness.

We welcome to our ecclesia Sis. Nicole Nevers, transferred from Meriden, CT. Bro. Michael and Sis. Julie Herrera, formerly of the Seguin, TX, Ecclesia, and now in isolation, are welcomed as associate members. We are also pleased to receive back into fellowship Bro. David Ishman and Sis. Kim White.

Sis. Edith Scott fell asleep in Christ October 2; she now awaits the resurrection together with her husband, Bro. John, who passed away in 2000. She is the grandmother of Sis. Kimberly Smart, formerly of this ecclesia, and now of the East Texas Ecclesia.

We welcomed Truth Corps in July and were pleased to have them for two weeks, helping with giving presentations and our first Vacation Bible School. Team members included Bro. Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA), Bro. Ben Ridgway (St. John's, NF), Sis. Robin Sternad (Simi Hills, CA), Sis. Ruth Shivkumar (Echo Lake, NJ) and Bro. Jeremiah Hefner of our own ecclesia. Bro. Bob and Sis. Diana Stodel (Victoria, BC) led the team. Some of the students from the VBS are still attending our Wednesday evening kids' class.

We have also welcomed the following additional visitors from out of state: Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK), Bro. Mark and Sis. Jean Giordano (Norfolk, VA), Sis. Connie Goodlander (Avon, IN), Bro. Bruce Chisholm (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON), and Bro. Scott and Sis. Cindy Nevers (Meriden, CT). We thank the following brothers for their words of exhortation: Roger Long, Jason Hensley, Scott Nevers, and Shannon Strickland (North Houston, TX).

We would like to thank Sis. Gerry Ann Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA) for leading classes on "The Challenges Facing Sisters Today" at our sisters' study weekend in Glen Rose. Due to Hurricane Ike, those in Houston were not able to attend, but we are thankful God brought everyone in the Houston area safely through the storm.

Bro. Mack Lucas has been undergoing chemotherapy to battle leukemia, which has sent him to the hospital several times. Please keep Bro. Mack and Sis. Lori in your prayers.

Fred Bearden

BEDFORD, NS

We were elated when 16-year-old DAVID CRAWFORD was baptized on September 16 in St. Margaret's Bay. He is an example to our youth.

Guests have been Bro. Steve (who exhorted) and Sis. Jane Petrou and daughters Julia and Paige; also Andrew and Karen Petrou and daughter Hannah (Toronto West, ON); Bro. Brian Mukendi and son Kadima (St. John's). We had a successful study weekend September 20-21 on Micah 6:8 with Bro. Shawn Snobelen (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON). His wife, Sis. Marnie, and son Kaiden accompanied him, along with thirteen visitors

from Sussex. Our L.T.R.T.B.E. Seminar has started again with good turnouts.

Ronald A. A. Hill

BRANTFORD, ON

We rejoiced with HIROTAKA IWAMA (Johnny), who was baptized into the hope of Israel on August 8, 2008. Johnny had been in contact with the truth for many years through longtime family friend Sis. Marion Clayton, to whom he has been like an uncle/father. We enjoyed fellowship with our Bro. Carl and Sis. Ginny Parry (Australia), and thank them for visiting us as well as our Bro. Carl for leading us in an uplifting series of studies on “The Prophecy of Isaiah”.

Daniel Billington

HONESDALE, PA

Sis. Helen Gibson has transferred membership from the Florida area to Honesdale, and is breaking bread here. GARY GOODMAN was baptized into the saving name of our Lord on August 24. We were blessed that weekend with visiting Bro. Jim and Sis. Esther Harper (Meriden, CT). Bro. Jim exhorted and performed the baptism, for which we were very grateful. Gary is the husband of Sis. Arleen; he had attended here for over 20 years as an interested friend.

Jerry Frisbie

MERIDEN, CT

We’ve enjoyed the company of many visitors since our last report. Brothers and sisters have joined us at the Lord’s table from Austin Leander, TX; Baltimore, MD; Boston, MA; Cranston, RI; Echo Lake, NJ; Honesdale, PA; Moorestown, NJ; Southern New Hampshire; Wachusett, MA; Washington, DC; and Westerly, RI. We’d like to thank Bro. Ethan Bearden and his father Bro. Fred Bearden (Austin Leander, TX) for their exhortations when they visited in Meriden.

A lot has been happening in 2008! Stella Adin Cicero was born to Bro. Jason and Sis. Debbie Cicero on March 3. Little Stella, “star,” and her parents are doing just fine. Then in April we rejoiced in two baptisms. ALYSSA RAYE TUCK was baptized on April 6, followed by her brother, JOSHUA PHILIP TUCK, on April 27. Josh and Alyssa are the children of our Sis. Vickie Tuck and grandchildren of Bro. Warren and Sis. Dot Phillips.

In June our annual spring Bible study weekend was led by Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON). Bro. Dev presented a very exhortational series on the life of the patriarch Jacob, culminating in the Sunday exhortation, “I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord”. We welcomed many visitors, and the weekend ended with our annual Sunday school picnic. We are very thankful to Bro. Dev for his kind work on our behalf.

Bro. Devon Walker (Manchester, UK) lectured in July after speaking at the Eastern Bible School. His special midweek presentation, “Countdown to the Kingdom”, was well attended, including a number of our young people and several friends from past Bible seminars. The evening began with dinner and ended with discussion and dessert after the lecture.

In August, we rejoiced in another baptism. LAURA ELIZABETH HAMMOND was baptized on August 17. Laura is the younger daughter of Bro. Rob and Sis. Nanette Hammond of our meeting and the granddaughter of Bro. Skeet and Sis. Betty

Hammond of Rhode Island. Laura's request to complete her Bible studies and be interviewed for baptism came right after Bro. Devon Walker's special lecture. Things moved forward very satisfactorily from there.

We are delighted to welcome Bro. Louis and Sis. Shirley Budney into the Meriden Ecclesia. They transferred from the Pittsburgh, PA, Ecclesia in July. Bro. Lou and Sis. Shirley have already been a great help in many ways, and we are happy to have their fellowship. In August our Sis. Nicole Lynn Nevers transferred ecclesial membership from Meriden to the Austin Leander, TX, Ecclesia. We commend her to the brothers and sisters in Austin. Sis. Nicole will be starting college in Texas this fall.

We also had the company of Sis. Deborah Andrews at the Lord's table this summer. Sis. Deborah is the youngest daughter of Bro. David and the late Sis. Karolyn Andrews of Georgetown, Guyana. We very much enjoyed having Sis. Deborah with us for the short time she was in Connecticut.

A few members of our meeting have suffered the loss of close relatives in recent months. Sis. Ros Smith's brother died in March. Bro. Ray Demarest's father died in July. Bro. Dom Daddona lost his mother in August. Our hearts are with our dear sister and brothers in their bereavements.

Jim Harper

MILFORD ROAD, MI

We are thankful for the many thoughts and prayers for our Bro. Grant Anderson. Our heavenly Father has certainly blessed him from the severe auto accident by the amount of progress he has made over the past year. Bro. Grant is slowly walking and an active member of our ecclesia, with his prayers and readings during the memorial service. Please continue to pray for Grant and the Anderson family during this time.

We welcome by transfer Sis. Linda Putnick (Detroit Livonia, MI). We transferred Sis. Annette Ammons to the Ann Arbor Ecclesia.

We are happy to announce the births of two little additions to our ecclesia: Kegan David Dreffs was born to Bro. Dave and Sis. Lauren Dreffs on June 23; Alexandra Rose McCracken was born to Bro. Drew and Sis. Sara McCracken on June 27.

We very much appreciate the many visitors we have had over the past months; we especially thank Bre. Ken Comito and Peter Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI) and Bro. Nick Giroux (Detroit Livonia, MI) for their exhortations.

Jeff Livermore

OTTAWA, ON

With much joy we announce the baptism of CATHERINE SINCLAIR, wife of our Bro. Matthew Harrison, on September 7, 2008. We pray that our Heavenly Father will be with our new sister on her walk to the Kingdom. We welcome Bro. Mike and Sis. Hannah Jenner (Watford, UK), who have moved to Ottawa for a two-year work placement.

Over the past months our ecclesia has benefited from the fellowship of brothers and sisters from across North America, as well as Australia, New Zealand, Trinidad and the UK.

Charles Archard

PORT MARIA, JAMAICA

We are happy to inform the brotherhood of the baptisms of another into the saving name of Christ. We pray that his mind will remain focused on seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. He is HAROLD CAMPBELL.

Dave Clarke

ROUND HILL, JAMAICA

We rejoice in the baptism of seven young people, and one somewhat older person, into the saving name of Christ. We pray that they keep their faith unto the coming of Christ. They are LEECROFT BLAIR, LEVONNIA BLAIR, AISHA ELLIOTT, LASMINE ELLIOTT, RONIQUÉ ELLIOTT, TANESHA HONEYGHAN, VANESSA LEVY, and ELGA REID.

Sonia Blair

VANCOUVER, BC

We are thankful for the benefits of our worldwide fellowship, evidenced in the many visiting brothers and sisters from around the world who join us in fellowship at our Lord's Table. Our special appreciation goes to visiting brothers providing spiritual messages: Paul Billington (Brantford, ON), who gave fraternal talks on "Remember the Covenant" in 2007; Edward Hart and Dan Osborn (Maple Ridge); Gordon Dangerfield, Clive Daniel and Mike McStravick (Victoria); Tony Ball and Paul Skinner (Seattle, WA); David Lawrence (Prince George); and Stephen Snobelen (Bedford, NS). We thank our brothers for their uplifting Sunday messages and Bro. Dana Kohlman (Calgary, AB) for leading our 2008 Manning Park Youth Conference.

With sadness we report that Sis. Carol Lowe fell asleep in June; she now awaits the resurrection. We miss Carol's bright and positive outlook and cheerful greetings.

We rejoice with Bro. Einar and Sis. Debra Halbig as a new baby, Yzabelle, joined their and our ecclesial families in July 2007. We also rejoice in the May 2008 marriages of Bro. Shaun Budden and Sis. Jodi Mapstone, and Bro. Adam Seagoe (Olympia, WA) and Sis. Amanda Massey. We pray for our Father's rich blessing upon them as they walk as one to his kingdom.

Sis. Jolene Budden returned to us in September 2007 by transfer from Brantford, ON. Bro. Mike and Sis. Anne Bull came to us from New Westminster. Sis. Amanda Massey transferred to Olympia, WA, in March 2008; Bro. Art and Sis. Sharon Wood transferred to Victoria in August 2007; and Bro. Lee and Sis. Betty Polder transferred to New Westminster in September 2008. We pray that our Lord will bless them in their new ecclesias.

We look forward to our October 2008 fraternal gathering with Bro. Andrew E. Walker (Milnsbridge, UK) on "Life before the Flood."

Phil Snobelen

WORCESTER, MA

The brothers and sisters of Worcester and the surrounding New England ecclesias wish to thank Bro. Devon Walker for leading a study day the weekend following the New England Regional Bible School, at which he also taught. His labor in our Lord's vineyard is an inspiration to all!

Mark Fulmer

Minute Meditation

Life is a Temporary Assignment

None of us are going to be around here very long, so we should not get too attached to things.

The Bible uses many metaphors to describe the brevity of our lives. We read that our life is like a mist, a breath, a wisp of smoke, a flower of the field, a morning cloud, as the early dew, and as smoke out of the chimney. Hosea includes several of these expressions in one sentence when he says,

"Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney."

David prayed,

"Show me, O LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life."

Repeatedly the Bible compares life in this world to living temporarily in a foreign country. Where we now live is not where we belong. David says,

"I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me."

Peter explains,

"Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear."

And Paul tells us,

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

An ambassador lives in a foreign country, and he represents the government who appointed him to serve there. The ambassador is expected to obey the laws of the country in which he is living, such as driving on the left side of the road if that is the case, but he would not dare to get involved in local politics. He could not vote and should be cautious with expressing his opinion about the candidates that might be running for office in the country to which he is temporarily assigned.

Our role right now is to represent the Lord who has chosen us to be his ambassador. Peter explains,

"Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul. Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing right you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God."

It is so important for us to realize that very soon our Lord will return to establish his kingdom on this earth. If we have been a part of this present order of things, we will not be asked to participate in his kingdom as kings and priests. Jesus tells us that we cannot serve God and Mammon. He did not say that we should not. He said that we cannot.

Joshua issued a challenge to the children of Israel: choose you this day whom you want to serve. Joshua even gave the Israelites several options that were all wrong choices. Then he concluded by saying,

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

We must make this choice now as we await our Lord's coming to call us to his kingdom. We really do not belong in the culture where we now live if we "desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one." If we choose to serve God rather than belonging to this world, we are told, "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called our God," and, "He has prepared for us a city" as part of a better future for us to share with the faithful of all ages.

Robert J. Lloyd

God or Mammon?

From this position [a lofty mountain... the adversary] showed Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world... and the glory of them". He knew that Jesus was destined to possess them all; but that he was also to obtain them through suffering. Jesus knew this, too. Now, as the flesh dislikes suffering, the tempter proposed to gratify the desire of his eyes by giving him all he saw, on the easy condition of doing homage to him as the god of the world. "All this power", said he, "will I give thee, and the glory of them; for that is delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine" (Luke 4:6,7). But Jesus resisted the enticement, and said, "Get thee hence, adversary: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve". "Having ended all the temptation he departed from him for a season." And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.

In this manner, then, was he put to the proof in all things... He preferred the grace of God with suffering, to the gratification of his flesh with all the pomp and pageantry of this vain and transitory world... If those who possess it, such as kings, priests, nobles, etc., were what they pretended to be, they would follow Jesus' example, and renounce them all... What fellowship hath Christ with Belial? Certainly none.

John Thomas, Elpis Israel

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

(Please send in notices at least two months before the date of the event.
Three months is preferable.)

NOVEMBER

7-9 New England Bible Study Weekend. Barton Center, No. Oxford, MA. For adults: Bro. Mark Vincent (Boston, MA): "Learning to Be Holy: the Law of Moses for Today". For young people: Bro. Steve Harper (Meriden, CT): "Be Ye Separate — A Nazarite unto God". Contact Bro. Craig Nevers craignev@cox.net or Sis. Judith Nevers jnevers@verizon.net

8 Brantford, ON Prophecy day. Copetown Community Centre, 1950 Governor's Road, Copetown, ON. Doors open at 12 noon; first talk starting 1 pm. Bro. Roger Long (Coventry Grosvenor Road, UK): "Daniel's Prophecy of the Kingdom of Men"; Bro. Don Pearce (Rugby, UK): "Gog's Roadmap: Russian Bear on the March"; Bro. Paul Billington (Brantford, ON): "In the Hebrew Tongue: Armageddon". Classes for children ages 3 to 8 during the 2nd and 3rd talks. Contact Bro. Gary Smith 519-758-0362 hgarysmith@sympatico.ca

14-16 Austin (Leander), TX Fall fraternal gathering. HEB Camp in Leakey, TX. Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI): "Little Words" and "The Bible and Science". Contact Sis. Maritta Terrell, mt-ct@swbell.net, 512-331-5575

14-16 New Hamburg, ON, Brothers' Weekend. Contact Bro. Nathan Badger 519-568-7830 natebadger@yahoo.com

28-30 Washington, DC Bible study weekend, Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. Bro. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA): "Only Forgiveness". Contact Bro. Robert Kling 301-498-5245 rkling@acm.org

29 Run for the Everlasting Cure: A Christadelphian worldwide prayer and 5 km run/walk to support those we know who suffer from cancer and other debilitating diseases. Please participate with your ecclesia/CYC/Sunday school. Website www.christadelphia.org/rftec. Prayer requests to www.new.facebook.com/group.php?gid+5595409986 or email for more information Rebekah and Kevin Hunter at bible@christadelphia.org

30 Ann Arbor, MI Thanksgiving gathering, Holiday Inn North Campus, Ann Arbor, MI. Bro. Malcolm Cross (Doncaster, UK): "Christ in you, the hope of glory". Memorial service 11 am; afternoon Bible talk 2 pm. Contact Bro. Peter Bilello webmaster@tidings.org 734-424-9254

DECEMBER

27 - January 3 Fourth Annual Texas Youth Conference. Texas Christadelphian Camp and Conference Center, Freestone, TX (near Buffalo, TX). Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON): "The Life of Jacob". To register, contact Bro. Jeremy Wolfe wolfe518@gmail.com. Information at www.texasyouthconference.com

28 - January 1 Bozeman, MT CYC Winter Conference. Bro. Graeme Osborn (Vernon-Okanagan, BC): "The Call to be a Faithful and Wise Servant: Matthew 25 — 'The Ten Virgins.'" Contact Sis. Briana Bittinger 406-388-7735 briana1614@hotmail.com

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JANUARY 2009

10 Thousand Oaks, CA Day with the Word. Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA): "Exhortations from the House of the Lord". Begins 9:15 am with continental breakfast. Contact Bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com

FEBRUARY 2009

22-27 Palm Springs Bible School Palm Springs, CA. Bro. Tec Morgan (Birmingham Washwood Heath, UK) and Bro. Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA). To register contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or visit website www.californiabibleschool.org

MAY 2009

1-3 San Luis Obispo Sisters' Weekend. Sis. Jane Tunnell (San Diego, CA): "My Husband, My Lord" (Theme: Preparing ourselves as the Bride of Christ). Sunday memorial meeting conducted by ecclesial brothers. Contact Sis. Ann Crouse 805-239-3517 RoanCrouse@aol.com. Cost \$150; enrollment may be limited

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

— of the Kingdom of God —

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No. 11

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

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Editor: George Booker

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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).*

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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!

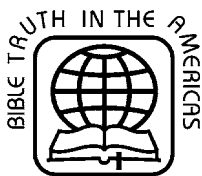
Philip Jones (Calgary, AB)

"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.terrannotabibleschool.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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