

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

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Our Candidate

Our candidate did not run in this last election. When he comes to rule the world with a rod of iron, he will not need to campaign, for he is coming to take by force the kingdoms of this world. Right now he has members of his party quietly working to prepare a people for him who will be members of his ruling party when he comes. It seems inconceivable that these faithful members of Christ's party could be involved in any way with another political party which is to be overthrown by Christ at his coming. It is impossible to be in the service of two countries at once. If we are soldiers for Christ then we cannot serve or help choose any other commander-in-chief. If we seek a heavenly country, then we must be "strangers and pilgrims on the earth", as were the faithful of old who died in faith... Can a brother or sister of Christ walk together with the world? Christ's platform cannot be found in the political arenas of today. We must say with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Robert J. Lloyd

Editorial

“I will come like a thief”

*“If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief,
and you will not know at what time I will come to you” (Rev 3:3).*

A thief is a reprehensible person. He is, in the very nature of things, deceptive: he needs the element of surprise on his side. So he must do his work when least expected, or when his victim is not on guard. This can involve, for example, housebreaking in the dead of night (Matt 6:19; 24:43; Luke 12:39), or springing upon his victim in a secluded place, and with superior force (Luke 10:30,36).

A thief is intent on appropriating his victim's property, his treasures (Matt 6:19). If necessary, he may resort to killing so as to obtain what belongs to his victim (John 10:10); this amounts to “stealing” one's most precious possession — one's life!

Coming as a thief

How is it, then, that Jesus is plainly referred to as coming like a thief in his second advent?:

*“But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the **thief** was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him” (Matt 24:43,44).*

*“You know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a **thief** in the night” (1 Thes 5:2).*

*“The day of the Lord will come like a **thief**” (2Pet 3:10).*

*“I will come like a **thief**” (Rev 3:3).*

*“Behold, I come like a **thief**!” (Rev 16:15).*

The element of surprise

It is true that the element of surprise is prominent in all these passages: ‘if you had known what time’... ‘in the night’... ‘be ready!’ We do well to remember that, no matter how well informed we are (or think we are) on the course of future events leading up to the return of Christ, **the actual coming itself will be a surprise**. It can scarcely be avoided:

“No one knows about that day or hour” (Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32).

That can hardly be made plainer:

“It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1:7).

This most definitely does not say: ‘Study harder, and you will know’, or ‘Most people won't know, but you will’, or ‘Get all your prophetic predictions down perfectly, according to this preacher or that one, and then you will know.’ Nothing of the sort. We need to get that oft-implied idea out of our heads. The best Bible student, the most diligent follower of prophetic interpretation and the signs of the

times, will most likely feel one thing when Christ finally comes: not satisfaction ('I guessed right after all') so much as surprise ('Now?!').

That's what thieves do

But is the thief imagery only about surprise? No, it is also about losing one's most valuable possessions. Thieves surprise you by *stealing* from you; they don't surprise you by throwing you a birthday party, where they give you cake and presents.

This brings us to the key point: when the master comes "like a thief", it isn't just to catch his servants off guard. It is also, like a thief, to snatch away their treasured belongings.

Isn't it extraordinary that the Son of God, who never committed a sin, will come as a thief? Stealing is a sin, and a "thief" therefore must be a sinner — but how could Christ be a sinner?

However, there is at least one instance when a "thief" is not committing a crime, and that is when he is simply reclaiming (by stealth or surprise) what is rightfully his. This is exactly what David and his men did when they followed the Amalekites (who were the real thieves) and retrieved their kidnapped families and stolen goods (1Sam 30).

That seems to be exactly the point in these New Testament instances also: when he returns, Christ will be merely taking back what is rightfully his. The true "thieves" will be seen to be those servants who ate their *Master's* bread and drank his wine and enjoyed themselves in leisurely consuming their *Master's* property (see the parable in Matt 24:48-51 and Luke 12:45-47). Their crucial mistake was in forgetting they were mere stewards or caretakers, and acting as if all their *Master's* properties belonged to them.

If we are to be sure that Christ does not come like a "thief" to us, we must not act as "thieves" ourselves now, stealing from him what is rightfully his. We must remember that all we possess really belongs to the One who is our true Lord and Master. We merely hold it in trust, to be used to serve him. If he chooses at any time to reclaim his own property, it is his prerogative.

Jesus makes this same point in a parable about coming judgment. At the end of his parable of the talents, the master speaks about one of his servants, who had done nothing with what had been entrusted to him:

*"Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents.
For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance.
Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him" (Matt 25:28,29).*

There is an apparent contradiction here: the man who has nothing will lose what he has. How can we have nothing, and something, at the same time? The answer is quite simple: when what we have belongs to another, we may *seem* to have it, but we really have nothing at all.

It is in this sense that Jesus will be a thief when he returns. He will summarily seize from us what we *thought* we had. He will show in one stark revelation that

what we expressed in theory was always true in fact: we own nothing, not even our lives! All our precious delusions, about what *we* possess, are snatched away in the twinkling of an eye.

Storms, fires, and recessions

The last few months, especially, should have provided us some foretaste of this coming eye-opener:

1. Hurricanes: Particularly here in Texas we saw close by, an awesome hurricane, reminiscent of the devastating Katrina that tore into the low-lying New Orleans three years ago. Hurricane Ike hit Galveston, on a barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico, and to a lesser extent the Houston area just north of there. It wreaked still untold damage to property and life. The various news media showed us the terrible toll this disaster took on the lives and possessions of many Texans. The observer would have to have a heart of stone to witness such loss, and not pause for at least a moment to think: ‘That could have been my house, my possessions, my life.’
2. Fires: Very recently, many of us have heard of fires in southern California, which destroyed individuals’ homes and belongings, including those of some of our brethren and friends. ‘What a tragic thing,’ we think, ‘to lose so much.’
3. Financial woes: Lately, we have watched, perhaps with fear and foreboding, as a serious financial crisis swept through investment companies, mortgage companies, and banks. What started in the United States created a ripple effect that engulfed the world’s financial markets. Other nations, and other industries here, are seeing their wealth, and “market value”, melting away — like snowmen when the temperature rises. The crisis has touched most of us in some degree, with layoffs, foreclosures, declines in investments and pension funds, and inability to obtain loans we might have taken for granted only a few months ago.

Job’s “friend” Eliphaz taunted him:

“Your words have supported those who stumbled; you have strengthened faltering knees. But now trouble comes to you, and you are discouraged; it strikes you, and you are dismayed” (Job 4:4,5).

It has been said, rather cynically, that nothing is quite so interesting as seeing someone else’s calamity from a safe distance. As believers in the literal return of Christ, we may fall too readily into a sort of trap. We may see the problems of the world as signs of his imminent coming, but think somehow that those same problems are ‘out there,’ that they may be observed from a safe distance. But as such problems creep closer to us, touching our neighbors or our brothers, we may begin to wake up. We may think, ‘That really could be my family, or myself!’ Our concern for others’ losses naturally increases as we identify more with them.

We may come to an even greater test, as did Job, with the loss of his own wealth, children, and health. How do we react then? Do we feel that all those things rightfully belonged to us, and that somehow they have been wrongfully stolen away?

If not the loss of homes or jobs, we may well have felt wealth of one kind or another — money in the bank, investments, market values — slipping away from us over the last few months. It was not tangible in the same way as other things, but it seemed “real” enough to us. How do we react?

Do we feel, quite naturally, that someone has “stolen” from us? The list of suspects is long:

- Government officials may have made bad decisions, as we see it, decisions which trickled down to affect us adversely.
- Executives of financial companies may have exercised poor judgment, or even have lined their own pockets, while driving their businesses into the ditch. Now they want to be “bailed out”, and we the poor people will pay for it.
- Oil companies at home, or oil-producing nations abroad, may have gouged the consumers. Every time we fill up, we feel like someone is stealing from us.
- Poor people, or immigrants, legal or illegal, seem to ‘work the system’ to their advantage, and we — the hardworking middle class — pay the bill, in increased taxes or insurance costs.

We ought to stop and consider the words of Paul:

“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).

Financial adversities, while they may be blamed superficially on some human agency, are part of the “all things” through which God is working *for our good*.

Is God, or Christ as His agent, acting like a thief? Is Christ, with the Father’s authority, stealing what we *think* we own, but which really belongs to him only?

Perhaps — difficult though it may be — we should endeavor to see the “losses” of this life as little foretastes of the return of Christ. How do we feel when a storm blows away our home? Or a forest fire burns it to the ground? How do we feel when illness or disease takes away loved ones, shortens our life expectancy, or cripples our lifestyle? How do we feel, for that matter, when 10 or 20 percent of our net worth evaporates from one month to the next?

Are these some of Christ’s methods, to remind us of the brevity and uncertainty of *everything* in this life? Is he whispering in our ears?:

*‘You foolish disciples! You sang platitudes like “Take my hands, my life, my silver and my gold”, but you didn’t mean it. This very night all you **think** you possess will be stripped from you. I am the One who is coming like a thief. Then you will stand in my presence, finally realizing for the first time that in my hands I hold your life. Tell me again: **where** are your true riches?’*
(cf Luke 12:19-21; Hymn 163).

If we believe the words of Jesus, then, when the storms of life beat upon us, we ought to feel, not fear, but gratitude. We are being shown something of what the Judgment Seat of Christ will be like. At a time we least expect, our daily lives and all our worldly possessions will be snatched away from us, and we will stand before the Judge of all the world.

“A man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15).

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:21; cp Luke 12:34).

“The day of the Lord will come like a thief... Since everything will be destroyed... what kind of people ought you to be?... Live holy and godly lives... make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him” (2Pet 3:10,11,14).

George Booker

Exhortation

“Be of good cheer”

“Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you” (Matt 9:2).

The problem of sin and death begins, of course, in Genesis:

“And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years...” (5:3).

Adam’s days are now numbered. He is a dying man.

“All the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died” (v 5).

Adam’s offspring are like him:

“Adam begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth... So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years; and he died” (vv 3,8).

And so on through the lives of all the ancient ones, to the end of the chapter, and beyond.

Without exception, every human being shares Adam’s predicament. Sin and death hold all mankind in their grip:

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23).

“Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (5:12).

“The wages of sin is death” (6:23).

Sin is imputed

The Bible takes us from Adam to Moses. We come to the time when sin was imputed under the Law. At least, Israelites no longer had an excuse for not knowing their iniquities, transgressions, and sins. The commandment made sin exceedingly sinful.

At the same time, Israel celebrated an annual Day of Atonement. Everyone was implicated: Aaron, his house, and all the people. God held out mercy to every person who would take hold of it:

*“Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with the blood of a young bull as a **sin offering**, and of a ram as a burnt offering... And he [Aaron] shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats as a **sin offering**, and one ram as a burnt offering. Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which is **for himself**, and make atonement for himself and for **his house**... Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is **for the people**...” (Lev 16:3,5,6,15).*

The escaping goat

*“But the goat on which the lot fell to be **the scapegoat** shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, and to **let it go** [LXX ‘aphsei’] as the scapegoat into the wilderness” (Lev 16:10).*

The term “scapegoat” was coined by William Tyndale and first appeared in his 1530 translation of the Pentateuch. It reflects the meaning of the Hebrew word: the goat that departs. For Tyndale, the idea of the scapegoat was simple: it was *the escaping goat*.

Only later, in Jewish tradition, was the scapegoat not allowed to escape. It was taken away and destroyed. And only after the days of Tyndale, in Christian tradition, did the idea of a scapegoat come to mean a substitute; one who took the blame or punishment for something someone else had done.

But we don’t need to be concerned with these traditions. The lessons of the Day of Atonement led Israel to know the mercy of God. We, in our turn, can be grateful for the lessons.

Words have wonderful associations in the Bible. In the Greek Old Testament, “let it go” (Greek “aphiemi”) has several applications. None is lovelier than the one we find at the beginning of Psalm 32:

*“Blessed is he whose transgression is **forgiven** [‘let go’], whose sin is covered” (v 1).*

This is Day of Atonement language. The contemplation was David’s. The sin was his, and it was grievous. The contrition and confession were his, and they were genuine. The forgiveness was his. The mercy is God’s.

The Hebrew word for forgiveness in Psalm 32:1, “nasa”, has its application in Leviticus 16 as well:

*“The goat **shall bear** [‘nasa’] on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness” (v 22).*

As an Israelite, my iniquities are taken away on the Day of Atonement. Thank God!

When we come to the New Testament, the same Septuagint (Greek) word continues to be found in reassuring contexts:

*“**Forgive** [‘aphek’] us our debts, As we **forgive** [‘aphiemen’] our debtors” (Matt 6:12).*

*“They brought to him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, be of good cheer; your sins **are forgiven** you’... ‘the Son of Man has power on earth to **forgive sins**’ ” (9:2,6).*

“He who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Loose him, and let him go’” (John 11:44).

Continuing with the Day of Atonement

“Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness” (Lev 16:21,22).

As an Israelite, I watch. I see my sins disappear with the escaping goat, taken to a land uninhabited, released by the hand of “a suitable man”. The image and the blessing are impressed on my heart.

Later Jewish tradition held that the scapegoat should be taken away toward the east. This resonates with Scripture. The great blessing of the Day of Atonement is confirmed:

“He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear him” (Psa 103:10-13).

But a problem asserts itself. As an Israelite, I will enter into the atonement ritual again next year, and the year after that. The years will stretch into a lifetime, and the time will come for me to die. If I have been perceptive, I will have learned two things: God is merciful to me, but *sin simply will not go away*.

The escaping goat almost mocks me as the ritual is repeated over and over again. Sin is still with me and, in fact, it is not just the goat but my sin that continues to mock me — unless my faith sees something more on the horizon. It does: God will provide a suitable man to meet my most besetting need.

We leave Old Testament times with a promise on the horizon. It is the LORD’s promise of a “new covenant” with Israel, greater than the old covenant:

“I will be their God, and they shall be my people... For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer 31:31-34).

And so we come to the New Testament.

Sin is taken away

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect... But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Heb 10:1-4).

One bull was offered, each year, for Aaron and his household on the Day of Atonement, and only one goat was slain, each year, for the people. The plural — bulls

and goats — underscores the fact that year after year the sin of mankind was not taken away, so long as Israel worshipped under the law.

The mercy perceived in the escaping goat was wonderful, to be sure, but how much more wonderful to have no more consciousness of sins; no more annual reminders that I am still beset by sin, and that sin is still triumphant over all mankind. But how?

Words have wonderful associations in the Bible. God now provides a *suitable* man. The idea behind this is that of a man who is timely, prepared, and ready:

*“Therefore, **when he came into the world**, he said: ‘Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but **a body you have prepared for me**. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you had no pleasure. **Then** I said, ‘Behold, I have come — in the volume of the book it is written of me — to do your will, O God.’ **Previously** saying, ‘Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin you did not desire, nor had pleasure in them’ (which are offered according to the law), **then** he said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that he may establish the second. By that will **we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**” (Heb 10:5-10).*

Timely, prepared, and ready to do the will of God. Here at last is the man, the only one among men, who does no sin, and by whose sacrifice the sin of the world is finally taken away forever.

The cross

*“As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; **this is my body**.’ Then he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is my blood of the **new covenant**, which is shed for many for the **remission of sins**’ ” (Matt 26:26-28).*

In his body, by the shedding of his blood, sin has been slain forever.

We embrace the blessing of the New Covenant by dying with him in baptism. Now we are assured, by another great act of God’s forgiveness, that *our sins are dead in him*.

Our sins are gone in the death of Christ, not needing to be atoned for again next year or the next. Never again will they haunt us. Never again will they be remembered against us on the Day of Judgment. We need have no more consciousness of sins. The suitable man of God’s providing has borne our sins once and for all to an uninhabited land, even to death itself. Such is the mercy of God on those who fear Him.

Of us it can be said:

“The LORD has laid on him [the Man of sorrows] the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6).

“[Jesus] himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were

healed” (1Pet 2:24).

This is Day of Atonement language in its final outworking. If the escaping goat provided the Israelite with an annual depiction of the forgiveness of sins, the reality of the cross constantly reminds us that sin itself, including all of our sins, has been forever taken away.

How, then, shall we now live?

Our final change has not yet come. We still await in faith the day when Jesus will appear a second time, not to deal with sins again, but to save us (Heb 9:28). Meanwhile, over the years, faithful men and women have pondered the cross and been brought to their knees. Some have taken pen in hand to express the gratitude of their hearts. We close with the words of our late, beloved brother L.G. Sargent. His words become ours in the singing of Hymn 221. The hymn is cast in a minor key, helping to capture the wonder, solemnity, and depth of feeling we share at the foot of the cross:

Was it for me thy flesh was wounded sore,
Thy body lifted high on cross of shame?
Was it for me the King of Glory bore
So meek the scourge, and ruthless men's defame?

Was there no way for any man to live
But thou must die, no joy but through thy grief?
Is sin so dark that God cannot forgive
Save through thy sacrifice, and our belief?

Lord, let me learn thy sorrow, mark thy pain,
That no more heedless through the world I roam,
But come to take the pardon thou didst gain,
And find within thy fold eternal home.

Faithful brother, faithful sister, “Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” Yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Go your way. Don’t despair of the frailty which continues to be ours yet a little while, and with which we still wrestle. In the mercy of God, and through the sacrifice of His Son, eternal life is before us.

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)

“Cultivate my heart, Lord, so I may catch every word that falls from heaven — every syllable of encouragement, every sentence of rebuke, every paragraph of instruction, every page of warning. Help me to catch these words as the soft fertile soil catches seeds” (Ken Gire).

“Courage does not always roar. Sometimes it is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, ‘I will try again tomorrow’ ” (Mary Anne Radmacher-Hershey).

“There is true courage in the acts of everyday living” (Rick Beneteau).

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (15) Fear

“The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him” (Psa 147:11).

I am writing this essay while glancing at a newspaper on my desk with a boldfaced headline which reads, **“Economy: Depressing, but not a Great Depression”**.¹ The accompanying article goes on to compare the current economic situation with that which prevailed during the Depression that started with the collapse of the stock market on Black Friday, October 24, 1929, and reached its zenith in 1933. While it is too early to tell whether we will experience a similar almost total economic collapse, it is clear that fear is prevailing in the financial markets and in the public’s confidence in the economic system. It may be instructive to examine exactly what conditions existed at the height of what has become known as the Great Depression, and compare them with conditions existing today.²

The following benchmark measures of economic activity are associated with the Great Depression:

- The Wall Street stock market had crashed on October 24, 1929, sending a shock wave of financial collapse that would eventually spread around the entire world. By July 8, 1932, the Dow Jones average had declined 89% from its 1929 peak. As of November 18, 2008, the decline has been 36.5% from the peak of January 1, 2008.
- In 1933 the unemployment rate was 25%. Fifteen million people were out of work. Relative to the population today, that would amount to 45 million.
- By 1933 industrial production had fallen 50%.
- Farm prices had fallen 60%, forcing many farmers from their homes and farms and driving them into poverty.
- Two million people were homeless (equivalent to eight million today).
- Banks in 32 of the 48 states had collapsed and closed their doors, leaving depositors penniless. By 1933 10,000 out of 25,000 banks had failed, leaving their depositors nothing (there was no FDIC then).

The previous government of President Herbert Hoover had done little to correct the situation. Hoover had believed that free markets would eventually fix themselves, but they didn’t. By the inauguration of President Roosevelt on March 4, 1933, the country was in the grip of widespread fear. Parallels to the situation today are uncanny; a recent headline in Hearst newspapers read, “Economic uncertainty breeds fear.”³

It was a cold, gray, overcast day in Washington, DC, when FDR, hoping to cast aside partisan politics, delivered the famous line in his inaugural address that electrified the nation. The tag line from that speech was: “The only thing we have

to fear is fear itself.” That quote reveals a very basic truth epitomized in an old saying: “Fear breeds fear.”⁴ Roosevelt knew that the whole country had become consumed by fear, and when that happens a mental paralysis sets in that stifles all sensible action:

- Fear can lead to mob rule and vigilantism.
- Fear allowed Hitler to control the German people and turn a blind eye toward the plight of the Jews. The refrain, “I was afraid what would happen to me and my family if I spoke out”, was recited over and over again by ordinary Germans when asked after World War II why they didn’t speak out against the Holocaust.⁵
- Fear grows in companies under stress, where employees can be so afraid of making a mistake that all creativity is stifled.
- Fear can grip an ecclesia, or even spread wider in our community. Rumor and innuendo can breed suspicion and fear, and this in turn can lead to mistrust that can completely break down harmonious relationships.

Should the present economic uncertainties cause us to be fearful? Indeed, is there anything that can happen to us in this life that could cause us to be fearful?

The word “fear” has a prominent place in the Scriptures. Remarkably, two almost diametrically opposite circumstances have to be considered to appreciate the meaning intended when this word is used. In the first instance, having fear is absolutely essential for salvation. In fact, the use of the word in that context should be regarded as a first principle. However, under other conditions having fear is disastrous and can prevent us from obtaining salvation. How can these two seemingly polar opposite ideas be reconciled?

There are numerous references in our Bibles which instruct us to *fear the Lord*. Two that come to mind are:

“Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28, NKJV).

“Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling” (Psa 2:11, NKJV).

There are at least 40 verses in the Scriptures that tell us to fear the Lord, or alternatively fear God, or the Lord God. Bible critics have a great deal of trouble with these types of verses because they contrast them with the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, who taught a God of love, not terror:

“Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment” (Matt 22:37,38, NKJV).

They complain, ‘If God is a God of love, why should we fear Him?’ Ironically, fire and brimstone preachers also misuse the injunction that our God is a God to be feared. They emphasize the terror of mythical torments in hellfire to scare Christians into good behavior. Judging from the general morality of Christians, this doesn’t seem to be very effective any more (if it ever was!). The little English word “fear”, used in the context above, has a primary meaning, which is more aptly understood as “reverence” and not terror.⁶

A similar circumstance prevails in the New Testament, where we consider the Greek word that is rendered “fear”⁷ when used in relation to God:

“And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him” (2Cor 7:15, NKJV).

“Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king” (1Pet 2:17, NKJV).

Fear of God should not be a case of terror, but rather of deep reverence. It is the type of fear we should have for our parents, one of respect, based on mutual love and not trepidation (cp Heb 12:9). Such fear should motivate us to actions that are moral and just. This is readily illustrated by the passage in Leviticus 25:43, which instructs the children of Israel how they should treat slaves and by analogy how we should treat anyone beholden to us, whether it be an employee, colleague, child, spouse, etc.:

“You shall not rule over him with rigor, but you shall fear your God” (NKJV).

Fear, i.e., deep reverence, of the Lord God should motivate us to actions that are moral and just. We should fear, or revere, God — not out of terror of His retribution (though that will certainly happen) — but out of our love, so that we may emulate the character of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is another kind of fear that is appalling. If we allow it to control our behavior, it can prevent us from entering into the Kingdom of God. It is a fear that prevents us from doing what is right because we are afraid of consequences in this life, consequences that may touch us personally. This is illustrated by a story in the Gospel of John:

“But when his brothers had gone up, then he also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, ‘Where is he?’ And there was much complaining among the people concerning him. Some said, ‘He is good’; others said, ‘No, on the contrary, he deceives the people.’ However, no one spoke openly of him for fear of the Jews” (John 7:10-13, NKJV).

Here the Greek word interpreted “fear” is different from what we have cited in the contexts previously mentioned. Fear here literally means alarm, fright, being afraid (exceedingly), or terror.⁸ There is no connotation here that can be construed as signifying *reverence*. Plain and simple, they feared what their brethren would do to them. Failure to speak up here is not being applauded! We have a responsibility to do the right thing, not only when it is convenient and easy, but especially when it is hard and fraught with danger. Think of Daniel 6:9,10 and of course all the heroes recorded in Hebrews 11. As soon as Daniel knew of the king’s decree, he immediately defied it by going home and praying “*with his windows open*”. He could have easily rationalized the situation and said, *‘It doesn’t matter where I pray; much safer to do so in a closet.’* What would we do if faced with a similar challenge? Would we use the same closet rationalization and even justify it by Scripture (Matt 6:6)?

Failure to report a crime, when we have been an eyewitness to the event, is itself considered a crime in almost all jurisdictions. Hence, even the world recognizes

the principle of complicity with evil for one who remains silent when evil is perpetrated. How do the Scriptures treat this principle?

“If a person sins in hearing the utterance of an oath, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of the matter — if he does not tell it, he bears guilt” (Lev 5:1, NKJV).

The New Testament is just as emphatic in condemning failure to act in the face on wrong:

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

The Scriptures permit no loopholes. Unfortunately, we often confuse lack of courage for prudence. We fear for what might happen to us, or to those with whom we are associated. We are fearful of what others might think of us, or of privileges that we may lose. Ironically, we will often tell someone we are teaching the Truth that they might have to sever ties they previously had in the world. We emphasize that they may even have to cut loose from family associations if those relatives are opposed to them accepting the Word of God and being baptized into our community. Yet we will turn around and accept wrongful behavior by brothers and sisters if they are closely associated with us through family or ties of old friendships, and remain silent when they should be reprimanded for sinful actions! The Scriptures clearly tell us the consequences for us if we are silent in the face of sin:

“Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28, NKJV; cp also Acts 24:24,25; Rev 14:7).

Here the word fear⁷ refers to *reverence*. Plainly the Lord Jesus is telling us not to revere those who can only temporarily hurt us (even if they go as far as to kill us). Rather, we need to revere Him who can permanently destroy us by finding us undeserving of eternal life.

We have nothing whatsoever to fear in this life, because if we do the right thing we are assured of eternal life.⁹ Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered on the cross so that we might have the hope of things eternal. Even if we suffer dire consequences in this life for acting courageously, our heavenly Father will not forget us. Courage overcomes fear, and courage comes from our absolute faith in the Lord God:

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love” (1Jn 4:18, NKJV; also see Psa 23:4; 27:1; 34:7; 147:11; Isaiah 35:4, among others).

How can we even begin to compare the inconveniences and trials of this life with what the apostles suffered for their courageous efforts in preaching the Truth, often in the most hostile environment? The apostle Paul alludes to these trials in 2 Corinthians 11:23-33:

“Are they ministers of Christ? — I speak as a fool — I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned... in perils among false brethren... besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my

deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?" (NKJV).

Receiving 40 stripes even once was enough to kill a person; quite possibly the only way that Paul could have survived would have been the miraculous healing power of the Lord God. His trials were not only physical, but also emotional — he suffered because of false brethren and because of his concerns for the ecclesias. How many of us would be willing to go through suffering like that of the apostle for doing the right thing? Moreover, we must never forget the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it is said:

"...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).

The passage in Hebrews goes on to consider our own suffering in comparison to that endured by our Lord Jesus Christ. It asks us to *consider him* when faced with trials and tribulations. That consideration, in the first century, was literally a call to endure even death for upholding the Truth. Such a death was often carried out by the most horrible means, such as being thrown into the arena to be torn to shreds by wild animals, or crucifixion, or fiery immolation:

"For consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin" (vv 3,4, NKJV).

Sooner or later, all of us must be prepared to face trials and tribulations in this life. Assuredly many (if not most) reading this have had many difficult experiences already. They may be as simple as standing up for the right principles and behavior in the ecclesia, or as difficult and painful as enduring financial ruin, terminal illnesses or worse, or seeing unbearable suffering in one dear to us. Nevertheless, there is one thing that is certain: we need never give into our fears, nor abandon our faith. In the end there will come a day when all the sorrows and cares of this life will be forgotten, and we will ever be with our Lord.

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. *USA Today*, Tuesday, November 4, 2008, page 3B.
2. By "today" I mean November 21, 2008, which is the time that I am putting these words on paper. Obviously, conditions could, and probably will, change by the time you read this article, but the figures for 1933 are historic and will remain a benchmark for measuring economic fear and despair.
3. Dan Rather in his syndicated column of October 10, 2008.
4. Attributed to Byron Janis.
5. See D.J. Goldhagen, "Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust", Alfred A. Knopf, New York (1996), for more information on how the Nazis used "fear" to control and pervert one of the most educated and sophisticated nations in the world.
6. Strong's number 3374.
7. Strong's number 5399.
8. Strong's number 5401.
9. Luke 12:32.

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

"Fear is only as deep as the mind allows" (Japanese proverb).

"Clear conscience never fears midnight knocking" (Chinese proverb).

History

From Beyond Your Walls: Some Lessons from a Road Less Traveled

Sometimes we meet relatives we have heard about but have never actually met. It may be the crazy uncle of family legend. It may be the second cousin once removed who lives on another continent. It may be a close relative lost over time through the quirks of history and personal travail. But when we finally do cross paths with one of them, it is always a time of curiosity and wonderment. We see faint signs of similarity, but notice more immediately how different they seem. In every case, though, the lost relative provides a sort of mirror on our own lives, a chance to reflect with someone who shares so much yet who has traveled a very different path.

This is an account of just such a meeting. In this case, though, the familial ties are not in our DNA but rather in our spiritual parentage. I write as part of the family that has lived beyond your walls — the long-lost relative. I write as one who has taken the road less traveled. I write in the hope that there may be some lessons from which all members of the family can benefit.

A Life in the CGAF

I was born into a family with long ties to the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith (CGAF). Even more remarkable, I was born into a family that represented a very thin slice of the larger CGAF — no more than 5 per cent. As a boy, of course, none of this was obvious to me. What was plain was that my parents and grandparents loved the Bible. I also knew they defended their faith with unswerving dedication and vigilance. For me, that was underlined by driving 30 miles to church every Sunday, even when it meant going to a very small Sunday school class. What was also evident was that no one ever went hungry after meeting, since food was a frequent and common bond on Sundays — especially the pie and cake at the end. (One of the loving sisters in my home church believed to the day she died that no Sunday dinner was complete without *both* cake and pie!)

As I grew older, I would hear the tales of the dear brothers and sisters who shared our common faith. Names like Huggins, Long, Tabor, Titman and Ross were uttered with loving care and deep respect. In every case, they lived at least one state away, or even more. Yet they seemed much closer. My Grandpa Ernest and Grandma Laura would often regale me with tales of going to Bro. and Sis. Long's farm in Kentucky. Occasionally, there were stories of longer trips to the Carolinas with Bro. and Sis. Huggins. I knew these brothers and sisters lived far away. Yet the longer I listened to the tales, I came to realize they were also the pillars and beams of the CGAF.

When I was old enough to actually travel with my parents, I met some of these people of spiritual-family legend. They took on faces and smiles and voices. I

learned firsthand why my grandparents loved them so. They loved the Bible. They loved the Lord. And they held to the very first principles I was learning.

My world changed when I was 14, after my grandmother received a letter from a Christadelphian sister in Illinois. She had known Sis. Jenny Keller since the 1930s. Hers was another name that would occasionally arise in family conversation. They had met many years before when Bro. Robert Huggins went to Marion, Illinois, for a weekend fraternal gathering and invited along my grandparents and father. Sis. Keller's letter informed my grandparents of a new Christadelphian Bible School in West Baden, Indiana. She urged them to go.



**Left to right:
Sis. Laura & Bro. Ernest Drabenstott,
Sis. Edna & Bro. Robert Huggins on one of
their frequent trips together**

“Christadelphian” was not a strange name to me, but it had no face. My grandfather kept a tall stack of sundry Christadelphian magazines in his garage, right next to his rocking chair. Whenever my grandmother’s “to-do” list grew too long, he would slip out to the garage and start reading through the stack.

My grandparents decided to go to West Baden, and invited me along. When we arrived I was simply amazed. I was used to a Sunday school class with two others. Now I was surrounded by what seemed like a sea of teenagers. Thus began for me what has now been 40 years of contact with Christadelphians on four different continents.

Over that time, I have deepened my appreciation for the CGAF, but I have also benefited much from loving ties with many Christadelphian brethren. I have seen the very best of both

worlds. That said, I must also confess that, like all families, there are moments I would just as easily forget. I firmly believe more brethren — from all sides — would benefit from the blessings that sometimes only happen when you meet a long-lost relative.

What are we to make of these two groups? I leave it to each reader to draw his or her own conclusion. But based on 40 years of observation, I conclude these two communities of believers are members of the same spiritual family that has been separated for a very long time. As with any long-lost relatives, it is not surprising that initial meetings produce a natural wariness and suspicion. If we yield only to such human reactions, however, we will miss the real value of relatives — especially spiritual ones. *We can be stronger together than apart.* It is the divine law of all families. And it is certainly true with the body of Christ. By the grace

of God, we are entering a critical time period when, with His help, we can draw together with spirit and conviction.

A brief CGAF history

Whenever long-lost relatives meet, the starting point is always history. Each side wants to know where the other has been. It is part of piecing together common DNA and common ground. Because the CGAF is such a small spiritual community, we have actually known about and relied on our bigger “relative” for several decades. We make common use of Christadelphian books, magazines, preaching materials, hymnals, and events such as fraternal gatherings and Bible schools.

Yet the reverse is much less true. Because you are the big brother, you have ready access to nearly everything you need. Thus, I frequently encounter Christadelphians who know little if anything about the CGAF. Sadly, what they do know is often based on hearsay. And because there are actually two CGAFs, chances are they may only know the *other* one.

So, a bit of historical review is in order. The recent article by Bro. Peter Hemingway provides a helpful review of some common history [*Tidings*, Nov. 2008, pp. 497-502]. So rather than repeat his comments, I would like to focus on a few key points in CGAF history that are especially relevant to the current period of discussions on our common future. The first is the beginning of the CGAF and Bro. Benjamin Wilson. He is, in many respects, our Bro. Thomas. The second is the modern CGAF era defined by Bro. Robert Huggins. He is, in like fashion, very much like your Bro. Roberts. Both were towering Bible scholars, but they manifested fruits of the spirit that far transcended their knowledge.

Benjamin Wilson and CGAF beginnings

As noted elsewhere, there were several spiritual forerunners to the Christadelphians and the CGAF. As readers here know far better than I, Bros. John Thomas and Robert Roberts played a crucial role in forging the Christadelphian community that we all know today. In the same way, Bro. Benjamin Wilson was the pioneer who framed the CGAF community as we know it.

Christadelphians will know him best as the author of *The Emphatic Diaglott*. In my experience, however, the knowledge of his work often exceeds that of the author himself. For instance, I have often noted CGAF connections with Wilson only to hear the reply: “*Oh yes, he was a Russellite!*” I can assure you he was *never* such. The confusion probably arises because the copyright for *The Diaglott* was purchased in the early 20th century by an anonymous buyer who then donated it to the Watchtower Society. The fact that they published his work is a sad, ironic twist of history — nothing more. It must be emphasized that there was never any connection between Benjamin Wilson and the group now known as the “Jehovah’s Witnesses”. By the time they had acquired the copyright, Wilson had died, and there is no evidence at all that Benjamin Wilson ever came in contact with anyone from the “Millennial Dawn Bible Students”, as the denomination was popularly referred to before 1931. (There is a much happier ending to this story, as many may know. In 2004, the Abrahamic Faith Beacon Publishing Society brought

home *The Emphatic Diaglott* and re-published a new version of it, working in partnership with The Christadelphian Advancement Trust.)

Benjamin Wilson was a towering man of faith. He was a printer by trade and printed a newspaper, *The Western Mercury*, after he settled in Geneva — a small town west of Chicago — in 1844. But he was far more than just a printer. He was also a diligent Bible scholar, to which *The Diaglott* attests. This translation was truly a labor of love for him. Not only did he spend hours, days, and months poring over the Greek — he probably spent just as much time setting the type for its publication:

“I can now in my mind’s eye see my Uncle Benjamin, sitting at his desk, making a literal word for word translation of the New Testament. I remember seeing the Greek type arrive from England. Many readers of the *Diaglott* may not be aware that my Uncle not only translated the *Diaglott*, but took charge of the mechanical work as well. He electro-typed the entire book himself” (Thomas Wilson, “How, When, Where, and By Whom was the Gospel of the Kingdom First Introduced into the Western States?”, *The Restitution*, Nov. 28, 1906).

Benjamin Wilson believed in the virtue of independent Bible study. He fully understood that it falls to each of us to “prove what is true” and “hold fast that which is good.” It was evident in the many columns he wrote as editor of *The Gospel Banner* for some 15 years.

This leaning on the Word is nowhere more evident than the Confession of Faith that he, along with fellow brethren, crafted in 1868 when they formed their first congregation of believers in Geneva. It is both elegant in simplicity and gracious in expression. The main points are listed here:

CONFESSION OF FAITH

To the Congregation of Disciples of Jesus Christ
assembling at Geneva, Illinois;

DEAR FRIENDS: Having for some time been engaged in examining the teachings of God’s Word, we now respectfully present the following as a synopsis of our Faith:

1. We believe that there is but “one God, even the Father, who is above all, and through all, and in all them that believe; and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things.” (Eph. 4:6; 1 Cor. 8:6.)
2. We believe that the Scriptures are of Divine origin, and that the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles spoke by the inspiration of the Spirit of God. (2 Tim. 3:16.)
3. We believe that on account of the disobedience of Adam, all mankind are rendered mortal, and placed under the law of sin and death. (Gen. 3:19; Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21.)
4. We believe that God in His mercy has provided a way by which man may be delivered from the law of sin and death, and attain to life and incorruptibility through Jesus Christ.

5. We believe that a partial unfolding of this way of life is found in the promises which God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom He gave by promise, and to their seed, the whole land of Canaan, for an everlasting inheritance; and that in them and in their seed should all the families of the earth be blessed, and that this promised seed is Christ. (Gen. 12:2,3,7; 13:15-17; 15:18-21; 17:7-8; 26:2,4; 28:12,14; Gal. 3:16.)
6. We believe that a further development of the plan of redemption is contained in the promises which God made to David, concerning his seed, "which should be of his sons", who should sit upon his throne forever. (2 Sam. 7:12-14; 1 Chron. 17:11-15.)
7. We believe that this promised seed is Jesus the Anointed; who, being begotten by the Holy Spirit, was born of Mary, who was of the Royal line of David; and hence Jesus is the Son of David and of God. (Matt. 1:8-20; Luke 1:26-76; Matt. 3:17.)
8. We believe that this Jesus, when He had finished the work which the Father gave Him to do, "was taken and by wicked hands was crucified and slain"; that His death was accepted by God as a sacrifice for the sins of the world; that He was buried, and rose again from the dead, for the justification and pardon of all who believe the things concerning Him. And that, having been with His disciples for the space of forty days "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," He was parted from them and carried up into heaven, where God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name "which is above every name," and has given to Him "all power both in heaven and on earth." (John 17:4; Isa. 53:5-7; Gal. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:3; Heb. 2:9; 9:9-26; Matt. 27:59-66; 28:5,6; Luke 24:50; Acts 2:33; Matt. 28:19; Phil 2:9.)
9. We believe that, while Jesus is in the heavens, He is acting as High Priest and Mediator between God and His people. (Heb. 8:1; 1 Tim. 2:5.)
10. We believe that this same Jesus who is gone into heaven will return when "the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled"; and that His return will be signalized by the resurrection to life of the sleeping saints, who will be changed from a corruptible to an incorruptible state; and the living ones from a mortal to an immortal state. (Acts 1:11; 3:20,21; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-56.)
11. We believe that Jesus is appointed the Judge of the living and the dead, and will "give reward to his servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to all that fear his name both small and great"; and will appoint them as rulers in His Kingdom; while the "wicked will he punish with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (1 Peter 2:5; Acts 10:42; Rev. 11:18; 2 Thess. 1:9.)
12. We believe that Jesus, at His return, will "assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth," and establish them in the land promised to Abraham, as the subjects of His Kingdom, with Jerusalem as its capital; and that the Kingdom will increase until it has absorbed all nations into it. (Isa. 11:12; Jer. 3:17,18; Rev. 11:15.)
13. We believe that Jesus will then be the Prince of Peace; that the nations will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; na-

tions shall not rise up against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." And that over this peaceful renovated earth, Jesus and His glorified saints will reign for one thousand years. That "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." "For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet." "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." "Then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." (1 Cor. 15:24-28.)

14. We believe that the appointed means by which men may obtain remission of sins, become children of God, and heirs with Abraham and Christ, is through a belief "of the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ," (as briefly developed in the foregoing synopsis), repentance (by which we understand reformation of life), and immersion in water for the remission of sins, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." For, says the Apostle Paul: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?... that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Then, by a "patient continuance in well doing, seeking for glory, honor, and immortality." (Gal. 3:26,29; Acts 8:12; 2:38; Mark 16:13-16; Matt. 28:19; Rom. 2:7; 6:3-4.)
15. We believe that it is the duty of all who have taken upon them the name of Christ to meet regularly on the first day of the week, to attend to the breaking of the memorial loaf, and the drinking of the memorial cup, and the teachings, exhortations, prayers, songs of praise, etc. (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:23-29; Eph. 4:11-16.)

We, therefore, desire immersion at your hands, that as faithful soldiers of Christ, we may "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life."

(Signed)

[The foregoing "(Signed)" indicates that all candidates for baptism were expected to subscribe to the "Confession of Faith" and to sign it.]

* * * * *

Benjamin Wilson knew Bro. Thomas when he lived in Illinois. There is strong suggestion that Bro. Thomas was the one who baptized him. While that is not conclusive, it is ironic that the two were together in Illinois. Both had emigrated from Britain (Wilson coming from Halifax). Both were editors of magazines and had an in-depth understanding of the printing trade. Both had associated with Alexander Campbell, but both had been led by the Bible to go much further in their faith.

Notwithstanding these many things in common, their relationship ended in some difficulty. There was intense interest in resurrection and judgment at the time, coupled with a strong desire to nail down the details. Even after his final baptism, John Thomas continued to develop his thinking on certain details, and finally treated them as first principles. Benjamin Wilson maintained slightly different

views on some of the same details, but concluded the particular details were not first principles. Even so, Wilson's complete views on "incorruptible" and "immortal" are not altogether clear.

What is clear, however, is that Wilson believed strongly that the CGAF and the Christadelphians needed each other as brethren. Even more, he felt it was wrong to be divided. An address he gave in 1868 is typical of the spirit he presented:

"I know there are extremists on both sides: there are those attached to us in particular, as well as those of the Christadelphian order, who run to opposite extremes, and who endeavour to reason the thing out, the one against the other, that each other is out of the faith, and consequently they cannot receive one another. It is hard to talk with such. It is harder still to reason with such, and yet I would, if possible, endeavour to bring these extremists together."

Robert Huggins and the great divide

The CGAF prospered in the late 19th century. There are written accounts of several hundred congregations scattered throughout the greater Midwest. This rapid growth was due in part to zealous preachers of the Word, preachers who devoted their lives to spreading the gospel message. One fine example of this work was Bro. Almus Adams of Omaha, Nebraska. He would leave Omaha by train on Sunday afternoon, visit various places to preach the gospel, then return the following Saturday afternoon to spend Sunday meeting with his family. Some suggest that during his prolific life of faith he baptized more than 1,000 people.

Throughout this period, the CGAF was largely a loose confederation. There were family connections and occasional state conferences, but the CGAF community was mostly a collection of small congregations, often located in farm towns, much like the one in which I grew up in Indiana.

The one common thread at the time was a CGAF publication, *The Restitution*. This weekly publication was actually published like a newspaper, and distributed beyond CGAF members themselves. (*The Restitution* was the successor publication to Wilson's *Gospel Banner*.) It supplied the "glue" that held the CGAF together. It also became the focus for a great turning point in the history of the CGAF.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, storm clouds gathered over the CGAF community when a group of "reformers" came onto the scene. The reformers appear to have been influenced by the Christian Advent church — some of these churches had contact with the CGAF in the late 19th century. A small but powerful group of CGAF leaders began fomenting a significant shift from Wilson's founding set of beliefs. In



**Sis. Elizabeth and
Bro. Almus Adams from
Omaha, Nebraska**

particular, they pushed forward three issues: (1) universal resurrection; (2) open communion, and (3) the idea that sincerity of one's belief is more important than *what* one believes.

The Restitution was the bulwark against the “reformists” during this period. Its editor at that time, Bro. A.R. Underwood, consistently upheld the Scriptural merits of the Geneva beliefs [See *Confession of Faith*, above]. Unable to win on Scriptural merit, the reformer antagonists attacked the character of Bro. Underwood. Secret meetings were held to accuse him of fraud in the finances of the magazine. The five members of the so-called “Ministerial Association” were the driving force in this attack.

Underwood was a steadfast brother. Despite the stinging and unfounded attacks, he refused to give in. Above all, he wanted *The Restitution* to remain the voice for the first principles espoused by Wilson and others in Geneva. To avoid having it fall into the wrong hands, therefore, he handed over the job of editor to his assistant, Bro. Robert Huggins. So it was that in 1911 *The Restitution* moved from Plymouth, Indiana (Underwood's home) to Cleveland, Ohio (Huggins' home).

Unable to wrest control of the CGAF organ, the Ministerial Association did an end run. They started their own publication, *The Restitution Herald*. Its first editor was F.L. Austin, one of the five members of the Ministerial Association.

Ironically, the new publication was issued from Oregon, Illinois, less than 50 miles from Geneva. *Theologically, though, the distance was much greater.* They adopted universal resurrection (also referred to as “broader hope”) and open communion as standing doctrinal planks. The Illinois group built a strong organization. In 1921, they founded The National Bible Institution, which led in the 1930s to Oregon Bible College, where pastors were trained. This college continues today in Atlanta, GA. *The Restitution Herald* claimed to be the official CGAF organ, and due to its name and the false charges still swirling around Underwood, many believed the claim.

More than 95 percent of the CGAF churches in existence at this great turning point ultimately affiliated with the Oregon, IL, organization, which declared itself the Church of God General Conference. However, many individual churches still kept their old signs, “Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith”.

The Church of God General Conference has been a source of no small confusion for many Christadelphians. Several of these churches still use the name “Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith”, so Christadelphians naturally have some serious questions once they see some of the doctrines that some of these congregations hold (these now include belief in a personal devil). I can assure you that Benjamin Wilson, Robert Huggins, and all of us who follow in their footsteps have the same objections to the General Conference! *It must be clearly understood that, since this great divide, the remaining CGAF congregations have neither fellowship nor formal ties with the General Conference.*

Bro. Huggins was our true shepherd through this turbulent period. Under his leadership as editor of *The Restitution*, five CGAF congregations (Cleveland, OH;



The Cleveland, Ohio congregation, circa 1910

Unionville, OH; Salem, OH; Roll, IN; and Perryville, KY) stood together against the General Conference. They disassociated themselves through their teaching and their fellowship practice. These five became a closely-knit band largely cut off from other believers.

Fellowship bonds within the five churches were strong and intensely personal. These were the stories of my youth around the dinner table. The fellowship transcended many miles and slow mail Service — mail that took a lot longer to deliver than the instantaneous communication to which we are now accustomed. Through it all, there was devotion and dedication to the faith of those who went before.

Having watched the loss of so many churches to new doctrines, Huggins wrote prolifically to defend Bible first principles. He began a series of twelve Bible lessons in 1917 and completed them a year later. These were published in *The Restitution*. These lessons became the definitive theology of the CGAF. Importantly, they were written to rebut the doctrinal battles of the day with the General Conference. Robert Huggins was the pivotal figure in that battle. Sometime in the 1920s, the twelve lessons were “epitomized” to become the CGAF “Confession of Faith”. The Confession was adopted by all five churches as their statement of faith. Later, Huggins would write *The Bible: Its Principles and Texts*.

Like Bro. Wilson, Bro. Huggins had strong connections with Christadelphians. In fact, he was baptized in 1895 by a Christadelphian brother in Henderson, Kentucky. He would maintain ties with Christadelphians all his life.

Above all, like Benjamin Wilson, Huggins was convinced that the CGAF and Christadelphians were members of the same spiritual family. He steadfastly followed a fellowship principle of welcoming Christadelphians to the memorial table (a principle never written down, but which has been a guiding CGAF principle for more than a century). He was similarly steadfast that the CGAF practice a closed fellowship with respect to other Christian churches, including the General Conference Church of God. By common consent, that has remained the practice of the CGAF to this day.

A strong family, a strong house

When long-lost relatives meet, it can be a time when the family is made stronger. A stronger family can create a stronger house, one better able to withstand the storms of life. This principle is also true in our spiritual family and in our spiritual house. The CGAF is acutely aware of this principle because we are a small group of believers, and a small group — like a small house — feels those storms more intensely. That said, the storms are hitting *all* of us.

My home church in Roll, Indiana, provides a vivid illustration. There was a time when that congregation numbered upwards of 100 people. At the turn of the 20th century, they built a large building to hold their meetings. The community of Roll thrived on the twin economic engines of natural gas (there were gas fields literally in the middle of town, and gas lamps in the building!) and farming. However, over time the natural gas ran out, and the farming began to change. The church building remained, but many of the members were gone.



Bro. Cantwell Drabenstott (my great uncle) and Bro. Vaughn Long (the brother who baptized me). Both were both baptized at Roll in the early 20th century and were CGAF stalwarts

Roll has been a wonderful home base for many brothers and sisters, a special place that gave me as well as others our first spiritual compass. But there is an important fact today that cannot be ignored: those of us who are *formerly* Roll members clearly outnumber those who are *currently* Roll members. To be sure, following Christ is not just about the numbers. The congregation in Roll today is a wonderful, loving, faithful bunch. Yet the congregation there would themselves admit that their walk of faith is made more difficult by their dwindling numbers.

Roll is not alone in the CGAF community — and the Christadelphian community is familiar with similar stories. A careful review of the numbers would bear out that many of our ecclesias, whether CGAF or Christadelphian, have fewer active members today than they did at their peak. In many cases, that peak came more than a few decades ago. This trend should give us all pause.

In every congregation, critical mass is an important issue. It was God's wisdom to place believers together in congregations. They are the crucibles in which our faith grows. Yet a critical mass — a certain threshold of membership — is necessary to create a rich environment conducive to maximum spiritual growth.

This principle is founded in the instructions given to Israel for keeping the Passover:

"Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month they shall take every man a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for

a household; and if the household is too small for a lamb, then a man and his neighbor next to his house shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb” (Exod 12:3,4, RSV).

Why did the Lord want the small houses to join together? Was His deliverance granted only to homes that reached a certain threshold number? His angel surely knows those who are His! No, the reason was because there is strength in numbers. The Lord knew that His people, by joining together, would draw strength from one another. *As with Israel, so with us: we draw strength when those who are few in number come together to share our Passover lamb.*

The CGAF and Christadelphians both have much for which to give thanks. But the trend lines cannot be ignored. We are on the verge of losing critical mass in some of our congregations and ecclesias. The time to address that is while we still can — not when it is too late. What is more, we have an obligation to consider the spiritual future of those who will live in places far beyond our traditional sites.

We will bequeath a stronger spiritual home to our children and grandchildren if we build it together. Building a home together with brethren is the right thing to do. It upholds the Passover principle — joining those near us when we lack critical mass. It honors a doctrine many of us have lovingly practiced for a century and a half, *that the unity of the body of Christ is first among first principles*. It will benefit those in our midst who are moving to new places, while also strengthening those who remain where our roots have long been planted.

Building a strong spiritual house is, in fact, a recurring theme in the writings of the apostle Paul. Over and over, he exhorts us to be “house-builders”. This is the very essence of our responsibility as both disciples and shepherds of our flocks. Both of these Scriptures use the same Greek root word that literally means “to be a house builder”:

- “Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual *upbuilding*” (Rom 14:19, RSV).
- “Therefore encourage one another and *build one another up*, just as you are doing” (1Thes 5:11, RSV).

Together, we have a choice to make. The CGAF and Christadelphians are long-lost relatives who have finally met. We can go our separate ways — each building our own house. Or, we can build one house together. As we make that decision, though, let us clearly understand the consequences. If we build together we will *all* have a stronger spiritual home, better able to withstand the perils and trials ahead.

Based on my 40 years of experience, I believe *both* communities, working together, can contribute to *one* stronger house. For our part, CGAF brethren are faithful and loyal, with a long history of devotion to preserving gospel truth. We have a weeklong summer gathering, other gatherings, and an outstanding youth camp. In addition, we have other qualities that can lift the spirits of our Christadelphian brethren. We are generous and charitable. We emphasize the fruit of the spirit. We are enthusiastic and willing workers. Our musical worship is important to us; we sing well and with all our heart!

Christadelphian brethren also have much to contribute. You are faithful and loyal, with your own history of devotion to the truth. You are dedicated to preaching the Word, both at home and abroad. You offer opportunities for eager workers to help in spreading the gospel. You have many Bible schools, gatherings, and youth activities, which provide an ongoing stimulus to growth in grace and knowledge.

A final and important consideration is that both sides have meetings near those of the other, highlighting regions where mutual support would be welcome.

Complementary strengths

God's natural creation offers many lessons for the spiritual. As a farm boy at heart and an agricultural economist by training, I have witnessed many of these in agriculture. Today's corn plants yield upwards of 200 bushels per acre, roughly double the level of 50 years ago. Those incredible gains were made possible through the ongoing development of powerful hybrids. A hybrid plant brings together traits that would otherwise lie separate. The real power is realized only when the traits are combined. Without such combination, corn yields in the United States would be half what they are today, and more of the world would go hungry.

The apostle Paul was no agronomist, but he certainly understood the power of bringing together complementary strengths. This was, in fact, his oft-repeated exhortation on how we should view the body of Christ. He used the human body to illustrate the principle. The human body needs eyes, hands, feet, ears, arms and legs. Each brings a completely unique "trait" to what is an incredibly powerful hybrid. It would be silly for the eye to say, 'What good are you, hands?' We all know how important hands are to the human body!

Yet one of the lessons I take away from my 40 years of experience with both communities is that there are brethren on both sides who confuse unity and uniformity. Unity is a Biblical principle; uniformity is a human one.

Uniformity believes that unity derives from everyone being exactly the same. It holds that strength comes from similarity. It would have the body of Christ become all eyes, or ears, or noses, or feet.

Unity, on the other hand, is Paul's principle of strength founded on complementary skills. It holds that there is one body, but many members. It recognizes the importance of common Scriptural first principles, but it knows that by God's grace we all have quite different gifts. It understands that the body of Christ can do far more together than apart.

These are, in fact, the very elements of Paul's powerful exhortation on the one body in Romans 12. He implores us to begin with a humble spirit. He reminds us that we are one body yet many members. He urges us to take advantage of the many talents in our midst. And above all, he reminds us that it is love that binds us together, as well as the faith we share (the same points are made in Ephesians 4:1-16).

Seizing the future

The CGAF and Christadelphians have lived apart for 150 years. There is a lot of inertia on both sides. Bringing the long-lost relatives into the same house will not happen easily. But the benefits are unmistakable. Whether we look to Paul's analogy of the human body or the wonder of a modern corn plant, the lesson is the same: *we will be stronger together than apart*.

Building this house together will not happen by itself. We all have work to do. Hard feelings on both sides must be salved. Assurances on our common faith must be concluded. Yet what will be far more important than any of these is our commitment to building a stronger house *together*. Such commitment can be found on both sides, but it must be fortified, especially against those who want only uniformity and not true unity.

Though the world has changed much since his time, Bro. Benjamin Wilson would be a loud voice for moving forward together were he alive today. Indeed, his words from 140 years ago ring as true today as they did then:

“What is to be done? Have we not a duty to perform? I should be most happy, my brethren, if any word or advice of mine would be useful to any of you in endeavoring to call your attention to the fact of the important truth that there cannot be two bodies of the Anointed One... I would endeavor to teach [all] the lesson that we are taught in the Scriptures — that, as they believe they are members of the body of Christ, as they believe they are Christ's, they should bear and forbear one another in love. The spirit of forbearance, you know, is taught, and as disciples of Jesus we are bound to carry out these principles of the gospel of Christ. We are to love as brethren, to be pitiful, to be courteous. How this is lost sight of! Are we always courteous to one another? Do we not rather at times frown and retaliate, and inflict a wound, rather than heal it? This should not be. This is not the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus. He has said, ‘Learn of me’ — mark the injunction — ‘for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls.’ We are to learn of Jesus the spirit of meekness, the spirit of lowliness, and we shall find that the same doctrine is inculcated all throughout the apostolic epistles — to forbear with each other, to learn these lessons of humility and lowliness, and not to think more highly than we ought to think, but to think soberly... Brethren, let us then cultivate this spirit of affection and love, this unity of the faith, and I think we may counteract some of the pernicious tendencies of others, who are too domineering in their spirit, and too overbearing, and who do not exhibit the spirit of Christ. And, oh, let us as brethren in the Christ, live like Christ; let us cultivate all those traits of character which were so pre-eminently developed in him... We shall be lights to irradiate the darkness by which we are surrounded, and be as cities set on a hill, which cannot be hid” (Address by Benjamin Wilson, October 25, 1868, Edinburgh, Scotland, published in *The Messenger of the Churches*, Vol. IV, No. 12, December 1, 1868).

Mark Drabenstott (Kansas City, MO)

Editorial Note: Critical Mass in Christadelphian History

Bro. Drabenstott's mention of the concept of critical mass suggests certain thoughts. In part, they arise out of the editor's own 40-plus years of experience in, and observation of, the brotherhood. In part, they are the result of research.

About 50 years ago, a smaller "fellowship" of Christadelphians — call it the B Fellowship — was part of a reunion, or renewed unity, with a larger group, the C Fellowship. Of course, as these matters go, the unity was not absolute. There were those who stood aside from the general unity. Their reasons for remaining separate sound familiar to practically every Christadelphian with any experience in such matters:

- 'We are not sure that Bro. So-and-so [who had died a whole generation earlier] was totally sound in the faith.'
- 'I have heard that there were those in C who taught the doctrine of ____.' [Fill in your favorite hearsay about a possible "false doctrine".]
- 'Our ecclesias may break up because of this! We may have family members on both sides!'
- 'That other group is just too worldly.'

These sorts of fears may be summarized as different questions: one about the past, a second about the immediate future, and a third about the more distant future:

- (1) Firstly, the past: ***'Should we have been separate in the first place?'***
- (2) Secondly, the immediate future: ***'Will this initiative create, not unity, but more division?'***
- (3) Finally, the more distant future: ***'Where will our children, and grandchildren, be — if time tarries?'***

As for the past, Bro. Drabenstott's discussion of CGAF history demonstrates that there *are* times when minorities need to separate from majorities. That time is when the Truth is truly in danger of being lost. But we know there are also times when those on both sides of a divide plainly believe the same fundamental gospel truths. Such divisions have happened in Christadelphian circles, when the differences were largely about the interpretations and opinions of a few among many, and it was difficult, if not impossible, for others to know where matters stood.

Some questions can never be answered satisfactorily, until by the Father's mercy we come to the Kingdom of God. However, we can say that to live too much *in the past*, and worry about old controversies and past wrongs, is to run the risk of making serious mistakes of judgment *in the present*, as well as *for the future*. Can we know for certain whether Bro. So-and-so was in error? No. Can the past be changed? No. Best to put such questions to the side, leaving them to the Judgment Seat of Christ, and with them all the disputes about past errors, real or imagined.

Let us assume, in this case, that those on both sides of the divide plainly believed the same fundamental gospel truths. With this assumption, let us consider some

very true-to-life cases of what happened 50 years ago. As we do so, our own history may help us with answers to the last two questions above, about the immediate future and the more distant future. (I will use letters, but not names, to identify the participants in this historical sketch. The numbers, while quite accurate, are not necessarily exact.)

Case One: Ecclesia D

Ecclesia D was a sizeable ecclesia (99 baptized members) in the B Fellowship. About 50 years ago, it was pondering joining the C Fellowship. Among its members there were uncertainties, doubts, and fears. Nevertheless, Ecclesia D decided to join the reunion. Of its 99 members, 94 voted to join, that is, to accept all C-group ecclesias into their fellowship. But the other five not only voted 'No'; they also did not go along with the rest of their ecclesia, as they might have done. Instead, they decided to remain behind in what was left of the B Fellowship.

Fast forward to the present. What has happened in two generations?

The reorganized B-group of Ecclesia D has — with additions, deaths, and losses — dwindled from the original five, who refused to go along with the majority, to its current level of three members. Three B-Fellowship Christadelphians in a large metropolitan area.

What happened to the 94 who joined the reunion? Over 50 years, their numbers have grown. Through younger generations growing up to be baptized, marriages, other believers moving to the area, and outreach efforts, the one ecclesia of 94 has become four C-Fellowship ecclesias, with 252 baptized members at last count.

Put aside the question about the past; it will always be a fruitful field for disagreement and argument. How do the two questions about the future stack up?

- (1) 'Will this initiative create, not unity, but more division?' In this case we are certain. Though not unanimous, the reunion initiative created a much, much greater unity for 94 believers. It did create a further division for five, *but it was by their own choice!*
- (2) 'Where will our children, and grandchildren, be — if time tarries?' Again, the answer is simple: three Christadelphians remain divided from the larger body, and 252 are united in the much larger body.

Case Two: Ecclesias E and W

Fifty or so years ago, two B-group ecclesias, Ecclesias E and W, existed in a second major metropolitan area. Alongside them was one C-Fellowship ecclesia. The numbers in B-group and C-group were roughly equal: between 120 and 130 in each fellowship, respectively.

Ecclesia E and W, faced with the same choice as Ecclesia D (Case One), decided to reunite with the C Fellowship, and with the local C-Fellowship ecclesia in particular. Again, as with Case One, a very few believers chose to stay behind in the B Fellowship and "hold fast to what remains". Thus, in short order, two more-or-less equal fellowship groups of, let's say, 125 each were reorganized into (a) a very small fellowship group (one ecclesia in the depleted B Fellowship) of

about 12, and (b) a much larger fellowship group (now three ecclesias in the C Fellowship) of about 238.

Again, we go forward 50 years. What do we find this time?

The one B-group ecclesia of 12 that remained behind no longer exists in any fashion; there is not a single representative of the B Fellowship in the city at this time.

The three ecclesias in the C Fellowship are a very different story. There have been quite a number of offshoots from the three original ecclesias, but some of the growth has sprung from other C-group ecclesias in the wider area.

This makes it difficult to trace to what degree the two Ecclesias E and W grew, since its members have, over time, moved to various other ecclesias, mingled and intermarried. There has been preaching, as well as the establishing of other C-group ecclesias. Fifty years later, by a best guess, the approximately 238 members in those three ecclesias who were in the C Fellowship have become about 576 members in ten ecclesias. Assuming that growth has been proportional, the 113 members of Ecclesias E and W who joined the reunion have become approximately 271 (113/238, or 47%) of the 576.

Case Three: Ecclesias G, L, and P

The same fifty years ago, three major B-group ecclesias, Ecclesias G, L, and P, were effectively all alone in another region. There were no other significant ecclesias either of the B or the C Fellowship nearby. In this case, 226 of 230 baptized members went into the reunion, while only four chose to remain separate in what was left of the B Fellowship.

Fifty years later? Those of the B Fellowship who remained behind have all died or moved away, not to be replaced by any others. But the other 226 or so who joined C Fellowship have grown to about 750 members in more than a dozen ecclesias.

Summary

Original B-group ecclesias	Ecclesia D	Ecclesias E & W	Ecclesias G, L, & P	Totals (approx.)
Original numbers	99 (100%)	125 (100%)	230 (100%)	454 (100%)
How many joined C group?	94 (95%)	113 (90%)	226 (98%)	433 (95%)
C numbers after 50+ years	252	271	750	1,273
C group growth or decline	168% growth	140% growth	232% growth	194% growth
How many stayed in B group?	5 (5%)	12 (10%)	4 (2%)	21 (5%)
B numbers after 50+ years	3	0	0	3
B group growth or decline	40% decline	100% decline	100% decline	86% decline

Conclusions

Now it is readily conceded that numbers alone mean very little. But *if* those who comprise the numbers plainly believe the Truth, on both sides of the divide, then the numbers themselves tell a story.

Considering the 433 B-group members of six ecclesias who joined the reunion: **If a critical mass can be achieved and maintained (and given that the community continues to adhere to the true gospel), then reasonable (if not spectacular) growth ought to result.**

It won't, necessarily, produce dazzling numbers. But it will produce what God surely desires: a generally healthy, spiritual environment. This will be an environment in which His children, whatever their total numbers, will have the opportunity to accept the Truth and be baptized, find a husband or wife in the faith, and grow in grace and knowledge to become productive believers in a spiritual family atmosphere.

On the other hand, there were 21 of the original 454 B-group members in this survey (about 5%) who remained behind. If they had experienced the same growth as the 95% who joined the reunion, we might expect to see 62 (the 21, increased by 194%) B-group members at the end of 50 years. But there were only three. The question demands an answer: *Where are the missing 59 believers?*

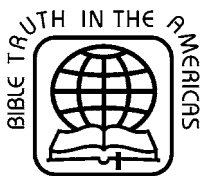
Thus our second conclusion: ***If a critical mass cannot be maintained (or is lost), then — even if those who stay behind preserve the Truth as a theory — the resultant community can expect to experience, not growth, but significant decline or dissolution.***

We may ask: By which method do we have the better opportunity to preserve the Truth and do our part to help it grow in the hearts and minds of people?:

- (a) by embracing in faith others who believe the same as we, even if we have minor reservations about the past and personalities? Or,
- (b) by hunkering down behind fortress walls to protect our “heritage” at all costs, and to justify our separateness by searching long and hard for all the little flaws we can discover about the “others”?

Are we divided?

One last observation: we hear much about how divided the Christadelphian body is, and what a shame and a tragedy it is. Certainly, any unscriptural division is wrong, and an affront to the One God who called us, and the One Lord who died for us. But we really ought to realize that, in a world of instant communication and multiplying websites, the dissenting voices on the fringe may appear far, far more significant than they really are, as regards numbers. In fact, there is an extraordinary degree of **unity** in the Christadelphian brotherhood today, probably more than ever in our 150-year history. It is reasonably estimated that somewhere between 95 and 97% of all who call themselves Christadelphians are currently members of the worldwide Central Fellowship. For that we can give God thanks, while still endeavoring to achieve Scriptural unity with other true believers.



Bible Mission News

My Experience on Spanish Truth Corps

I left my home in New Zealand to serve on the Spanish Truth Corps program for the CBMA in Bolivia, South America. I landed in Santiago, Chile, and traveled overland from there, culminating in a bitterly cold bus trip across the Altiplano by night, finally arriving at the Ritz Hotel in La Paz, Bolivia, on August 19, 2008. Then, when the cheaper hotel across the road opened up at 6 am, they kicked me off the lobby sofa, and ever since I've been living with Bro. Jacob and Sis. Fiona Styles, the resident missionaries here in La Paz. My role here is to assist the CBMA with its work in Bolivia for one year. The aim of this short article is to offer a small glimpse of what exactly this entails from day to day, and some of my experiences thus far.

My main task to date has been to learn the language; I arrived in South America with practically no Spanish at all, and in La Paz with the little that I tried to glean from browsing the Lonely Planet phrasebook on long bus trips. In several cases this was actually worse than nothing; I realized some weeks later that I had been knowledgeably explaining to bemused Chileans and Argentinians that 'You don't speak Spanish', and 'You don't understand' — silly them! So within several days of arriving I was signed up with one of the language institutes here, and since then I have been attending classes two hours a day whenever possible.

Learning Spanish is hard work, and especially for someone with a monolingual background, but it can be done, "poco a poco" (little by little). Somewhat like the seed that grows, "he knoweth not how", my level of proficiency is slowly but surely improving. I've found that, with three months of practice, I can now get around day to day more or less all right, and well enough to start contributing with readings and prayers on a Sunday morning. Currently I understand about 50% of a conversation, although speaking is a much more difficult and humbling experience. Nonetheless, the aim is to be able to contribute with short exhortations and classes from about five or six months on, and thereafter to be pulling my weight in time to leave (and eventually come back one day).

Besides studying Spanish at the institute and then studying at home, which takes up at least half my time, my other official tasks here include administrative jobs for the postal correspondence courses, and general odd jobs at the hall like drawing up rosters and washing windows. We also advertise the correspondence courses and our weekly preaching classes in leaflets which I hand out a few hours a week to complement our newspaper ads. In this review it's worth mentioning that handbilling in La Paz is not like it is back home. Never in New Zealand have

people crossed the street to tap me on the shoulder so they didn't miss out on one of my leaflets! Neither do I know of any other city in the world where you can handbill zebras (La Paz has *real* zebra crossings). However, I haven't yet decided whether they have pockets to put them in, or just have to eat them.

The ecclesia here in La Paz has been very welcoming and accommodating of the time that it takes to learn Spanish. It's been great getting to know everyone better, and especially as my language skills have slowly improved. Additionally, I've also had the chance to briefly meet several of the brethren in Argentina and Peru, and to attend the recent public conferences in Lima and La Paz. At the same time, I've also been able to enjoy some of the spectacular and varied scenery for which South America is justly famous. God willing, the new year 2009 will bring further opportunities to meet with some of the brothers and sisters around Latin America... and hopefully to talk with them this time!

So there's a brief summary of what it's like to join the Spanish Truth Corps. I especially hope that this might be useful for any others considering a stay in the mission fields of Latin America. I certainly feel very blessed by our Father to be here, and am grateful for the support of the CBMA, the Styles, and the small but friendly ecclesia here in La Paz.

Sam Alexander (New Lynn, NZ)



Mount Chacaltaya in the Andes of Bolivia shows the magnificence and splendor of God's creation.

CBMA Mission Visit to Peru and Argentina September, 2008

Lima, Peru

Lima is a convenient non-stop flight from Los Angeles, so little time is lost in travel. We left on a Tuesday afternoon and arrived late the same day. The first talk was held on Wednesday evening and was well supported. In fact, attendance is usually very good on weeknights in Lima, something we have not found to be true of most cities.

It was wonderful to see our new Bros. César Franklin and Julián Enríquez, who had been baptized by Bros. Don Luff and Robert Alderson since our last visit. They faithfully attended all six days of activities, always arriving early. An average of ten interested friends came out to each of the talks, in addition to the brethren and several children, giving a total of 27 different visitors over the four days of public lectures. The last two days were dedicated to a breaking of bread and study sessions with our new brethren and a couple who hope to be baptized soon, God willing. César and Julián plan to continue studying with them.

With a population of nine million, Lima is an enormous beehive of a city. It has long been our most fruitful source of responses to internet advertising, and there is good potential for the growth of the Truth. God willing, local newspaper advertising will begin again in the new year, finances permitting.

Buenos Aires, Argentina

After an overnight flight from Lima, we finally had the pleasure of meeting Sis. Margaret Hamlin. Margaret is a senior citizen, born in England but raised in Argentina. Bro. Hugo Petrilli has visited Margaret regularly over the years, making the three-hour bus ride from Rosario to break bread and share Bible studies with her, but Jean and I had never had the opportunity to get to know her personally. Though Margaret now lives outside Buenos Aires, she made the six-hour bus trip into town to see us at an apartment she maintains there. We spent a lovely afternoon together, breaking bread and sharing tea. It was fascinating, on looking through her picture album, to see the record of her long life in Argentina, and to find photos of Bre. Ron Hicks, Jack and Kay Collister, and David and Mima Collister and their children, Danny and Sandra — all good friends of ours! The Christadelphian family is a wonderful thing.

Córdoba, Argentina

Argentina's second-largest city, Córdoba, is in the middle of the country, a short flight from Buenos Aires. On arriving here we were shocked and worried to discover that Bro. Francisco (Pancho) Gilardoni, 89, was in hospital with heart trouble. As we were making plans to visit him there, we found out that he had told his doctors he couldn't stay any longer because he was expecting visitors from his church! So after changing his medication, they let him go home on the condition that he stay put for a few days. We spent a lovely afternoon with Pancho, his wife Sis. Elizabeth (Eli), and Bro. Hugo Petrilli, chatting, doing the readings and having tea. Pancho assured us that he and Eli would be out to meeting on Sunday, in spite of what his doctors thought. And they were, at both the Breaking of Bread and the two talks that followed!

The three nights of public lectures held at our hotel were well-supported by members, a few old friends and one new visitor, a very engaging young lady. She had come across the CBMA's Spanish-language website, labiblia.com, and was full of questions.

On Saturday Bro. Ruben Barboza rented a minibus to take us, his family, and most of the ecclesial members to the town of Villa General Belgrano. There we were to

visit a friend named Ercilia, who has been doing the Bible course with Jean for more than two years. The town consists mainly of German expatriates — with architecture, food and Oktoberfest all reflecting the culture. Ercilia, her husband and two friends listened attentively to a class on the Kingdom, given in her living room. Then we were treated to a delicious supper, including a wonderful variety of homemade German pastries.

Argentine culture is very European in many ways, and so it is not always easy to find serious interest in the Bible here, but we were blessed to be able to spend useful time with ten visitors who came out to the different talks. One young couple, whom we hadn't met before, has been attending meetings regularly for several months; they hope to be baptized in the not-too-distant future, God willing. The ecclesia has just five members at present but receives frequent support from Bro. Hugo Petrilli of Rosario, who lives a six-hour bus ride away.

Systematic mission work in South America is still in its infancy and needs the strong support of the brotherhood if it is to continue to grow. The ecclesias are small, young and isolated from each other by the distances on this large continent. Frequent visits from CBMA workers are essential to support the members and encourage the interested contacts towards baptism. Please keep this work in your prayers and give it your financial support. May God bless and prosper the spread of the Truth in Latin America.

*With much love in Christ Jesus,
Jim and Jean Hunter*

Lima, Perú — Repeat Attendees!

One of the most encouraging aspects of the mission work in Lima, Peru, is the repeat attendance of correspondence course students at the regularly scheduled weekend lecture series. Several times this year, members of the CBMA Latin America committee have visited Peru. A trip in May resulted in two baptisms, after a number of years of study and personal contact. We are also pleased to report that two more long-term contacts (Flavio and Gloria) are preparing for baptism.

During a recent visit to Lima in November, between ten and twelve visitors attended three consecutive evenings of lectures. Most of them had been present on previous occasions. On Sunday, November 13, a memorial service was held during which both Bros. César and Julián helped with the daily readings and prayers, and Flavio and Gloria attended as well. We pray that God will give the increase and guide these individuals to make a commitment, who are showing such consistent interest.

Don Luff, CBMA representative

La Paz, Bolivia — Renewed Advertising Results

Bro. Sam Alexander is on Spanish Truth Corps in La Paz (see companion article) and had to leave Bolivia due to the fact that his three-month tourist visa was about to expire. He took the bus to Lima for the lectures and also returned to La

Paz to be with Bros. Robert Alderson and Don Luff. Robert gave the Bible class Monday evening, November 14, to members and friends who attend weekly. The pleasant surprise was the fact that 40 visitors came out to a special lecture the following evening; the ecclesial rental room was full. The talk was prophecy-related and many stayed afterward to talk and enjoy refreshments; almost every piece of literature was taken! Robert left Wednesday to visit brethren in Chile, Argentina and Brazil.



Members and group of regular visitors at La Paz ecclesial hall.

Some of our regular contacts are, front left, Jose and, front right, Alberto. Next to him are Justina and Aleyda who are studying for baptism.

More special lectures took place in La Paz on Friday and Saturday of the same week, with 25 and 30 visitors consecutively. A number of people attended all three talks that week; about ten had attended lectures held at the ecclesial hall before. Bro. Jacob and Sis. Fiona Styles, the resident missionaries in La Paz, initiated the new advertising campaign this year. Three different newspapers have been used to advertise the correspondence course, plus regular and special lectures. Approximately 100 more people are on the correspondence course as a result of renewed advertising.

Ten thousand fliers were distributed in a number of busy pedestrian areas prior to the November special lectures. It's a pleasure to handbill in La Paz. Pedestrians readily take the fliers and in many cases thank you for them. If you miss someone in the crowds going by, they may even bring it to your attention! There was one new visitor at the meeting Sunday, November 16, as a result of the week's activities. More had indicated that they would start attending the weekly Thursday evening Bible class. That certainly was the case: a total of 16 contacts showed up on Thursday evening, and six on the following Sunday afternoon to the first of a series of four follow-up lectures!

Only time will tell, but the talk on prophecy, along with lectures related to the rapture, the preexistence of Christ and baptism certainly appeared to have provoked a positive response to the clear teaching of Scripture. We pray that the Word which falls on good ground will "bring forth fruit with patience".

Don Luff

Like Going Home! Quito, Ecuador

It was before dawn on October 30 when Bro. Paul Osborne and I met at our gate in SeaTac airport for our flight to Houston, and then on to Quito. Paul had driven down from Vernon, BC, to Seattle with his family the night before, arriving around 1 in the morning, and I'd flown over from Victoria and spent the night in an airport hotel. Unable to get through security because of the hour, Paul spent his time talking to the janitorial staff, while I spent much of the night working on my talks. We were heading down to Quito for a quick five-day trip, to attend and teach at a study weekend and visit the brothers and sisters.

Our first flight together took us to Houston in about four hours. After a few hours in the airport there to talk, grab lunch and stretch our legs, we embarked on the six-hour Continental Airlines flight to Quito. We arrived at about 11 pm; the pilot managed to put the plane down shortly before they closed the airport due to the thickening fog. From there we went straight to our downtown hostel to recharge our batteries and spend the night getting used to the thin Quito air. Though we (the Hunter family) had spent most of the last six years in Quito, the last five months have been at sea level, so I was looking forward to some breathless days ahead of me.

We awoke the next morning and, after a nice breakfast at the hostel, caught a cab out to the north end of the city, where we picked up our old van (currently in storage). We were taking it up to the "convivencia" (conference) location, since we had several older members who had some misgivings about being that far from medical attention without transportation handy. From the warehouse we drove straight to Sis. Clemencia's home and visited with her for about an hour and a half. She's recently been struggling with the results of her husband's stroke. Though he wasn't completely incapacitated by it, it took quite a few weeks before he got himself back to some semblance of normal mobility and health. Thankfully, her youngest daughter Glenda (in her early thirties) had agreed to stay with her father while Clemencia came along to the study weekend with her sister Bertha (who attends another church, but is a frequent attendee at the monthly sisters' classes).

From there we drove out to Bro. Cesar and Sis. Mariana's house, down in the eastern valley outside Quito, through the town of Cumbayá, for a chat over an excellent lunch. Afterwards I spent some time working with Sis. Mariana on the postal course database, sorting out some software problems on her computer and clarifying the instructions on a couple of areas of the site. She's been doing a great job with it, but when she bogged down on the database, she had to move the data to cards for a bit. After getting things sorted out, we'll be glad to see the back of those.

As evening approached, Paul and I drove back to Quito by way of Bro. Augusto and Sis. Fanny's house for a brief social visit. Then we returned to town for dinner and a little shopping. We ended our day back at the hostel, for Paul to catch

up on his sleep and myself to finish up my talks. About 11 that night I ventured out again looking for an all-night internet cafe where I could print my talks, and eventually found a hotel with a 24-hour business center where I got it sorted out. Walking around downtown Quito near midnight on Halloween was an illuminating experience.

On Saturday we were up around 7, and we nipped quickly out to the hall (the meeting spot for the drive to the study weekend), so I could have time to get together with Bro. Manuel Duchi. Bro. Manuel had been intending to attend the convivencia but had been called in at the last minute for an emergency meeting at work. Manuel works for a Spanish oil company, Repsol. The company had just had its ongoing contract negotiations with the government brought to an abrupt close, and they were afraid their facilities in the country would be taken over by the military. So they called an emergency staff meeting to brief everyone and prepare for any eventualities. It wasn't the sort of thing Manuel could afford to miss, and thus he ended up not being able to attend the studies, which was *very* unfortunate, as he'd planned to bring both his own children and his brother Miguel's (they were long term, regular Sunday school attendees). However, we'd arranged to have a walk and a chat Saturday morning, which we did. It was good to see him and at least catch up and discuss a number of the life challenges he's been working through.

At 9 am the bus was there, right on schedule, as were most of the members — shocking! We left a few minutes later, with me taking Augusto and Fanny in the van, along with Sis. Nelly and Sis. Grace. Paul went in the bus with the rest, and made a quick friendship with Luis Alfredo, an ex-Sunday school attendee. Luis had recently completed a one-year student exchange in Montreal, where he'd picked up English. His mother, Mariana Rivera, continues to attend faithfully, as she has done pretty much since we arrived in the country six years ago. Luis Alfredo and Paul were a perfect match, and Paul got much more out of his visit than he might have otherwise, by having Luis along at all stages. Likewise Luis might have felt somewhat out of place there without Paul, as pretty much everyone else there was quite a bit older.

The trip up was marred by the travails of Sis. Clemencia. Unfortunately, Glenda (her daughter) didn't make it back from a friend's place in time for Clemencia to go on the main bus, so (thanks to cell phones) Clemencia managed to get her other daughter, Sis. Kathy to take care of her husband. Kathy had been looking after their four children for the weekend while her husband Kleber was in seclusion, having just undergone radioactive iodine treatment. On short notice Sis. Kathy got all her gear together, and I picked her and the children up, dropped them at Clemencia's, picked up Clemencia, and we were off. Unfortunately, Clemencia, through a mixture of stress and stomach flu, felt ill all the way up, and suffered an upset stomach for much of the convivencia. However, she bore it all bravely, and still got a lot out of the weekend.

The topic for the weekend was the letter to the Hebrews, which I had divided into four themes: the supremacy of Christ — the work of faith, the exhortation

to persevere, and some practical lessons. I also exhorted from Hebrews, mainly from chapters 2 and 4. The real highlight for me was getting to see the brethren and friends interacting together and having some solid, uninterrupted time to get to know each other. It was also very encouraging to see the growth that everyone has had over the last six months, as many of them have overcome serious challenges.

Bro. Carlos, for example, has lost 80% of his vision, yet continues to be active in the ecclesia in every way, including delivering public lectures from 30-plus pages of large, bold-type notes. Bro. Vinicio, in isolation down in Ambato, has flourished recently, and is a joy to converse with as he seasons his conversations with the fruit of many, many hours spent in study of Scripture. Sis. Lucia, who took over as ecclesial treasurer, has also grown even more committed to the ecclesia and is an energetic contributor to all events. Bro. Cesar and Sis. Mariana are true leaders, participating in every activity, helping with anything they can.

The location for the study weekend was ideal. We held it in an area called El Chota, which has produced some of Ecuador's greatest soccer players. Though we didn't have the facility to ourselves (the only downside), the rest of the people there were mostly families with kids, there to relax. The meals were fantastic — soup, then main course, then dessert — taking about an hour each time. This gave everyone ample opportunity to just sit and chat, unlike meals we hold at the hall where at least half the members are involved in preparing and serving the meal, and don't really get to stop and talk at all.

On Monday morning we had breakfast together, followed by the daily Bible readings. Then I gave the last talk on Hebrews (on more practical things, mainly from Hebrews 13). Then, just before lunch as we were all reflecting on how everything had gone so well, a regular visitor, Eduardo Leon, had a seizure; for about 20 minutes things were very tense as we tried to get him breathing properly again. Fortunately there was a fire hall with emergency staff on hand about 50 yards up the street, and they zipped down in an ambulance and helped him out. As he regained consciousness, he couldn't remember where he was or how he'd gotten there, and he didn't stabilize to a point where we felt comfortable driving him back. He was ultimately taken to a hospital in Ibarra by the ambulance, and the doctors there decided to keep him overnight. As I write this (November 17), he has spent a few days in hospital in Ibarra, and continues to be in hospital in Quito until now. No one is entirely sure what happened. A lesson to be learned was that, though he'd been visiting us for years, when he was unconscious we had not the faintest clue whom to call, and it took some time before we were able to connect with someone at his home (a nurse, it turned out). But we didn't have any contact information for any of his relatives. Next time we'll be sure to collect emergency contact information for everyone.

On our last day in Quito I began by escorting Paul down to the market, where he planned to take his life into his hands to do a little shopping, while I tried to track down a few members who haven't been attending lately. Both of us had successful mornings, and we met up again about 3 pm to head back to the north

of the city to drop off the van and have dinner with Bro. Galo and Sis. Ana. They recently sold their house in the damp south of the city and picked up a nice place in the north, where the weather is warmer. We had a pleasant dinner, though Paul's stomach was by this time complaining about something, so we only stayed for an hour or so and one quick Bible reading. We wrapped up the evening by printing our boarding passes at a hotel, and then returned to the hostel to pack and get ready to go.

On our final day in Quito, we were up at 4:30 am for a quick run to the airport. Aside from being gouged with the \$40 exit fee, in the customary way, we had an uneventful checkout and perfect flights home.

God willing, we'll both have the opportunity to return to the isolated ecclesias of South America in the new year to continue supporting the Spanish-speaking brotherhood in the area. It is a source of true joy to visit countries many thousands of miles away — where we can share fellowship with our brethren and sisters, rejoicing in the one hope, fervently discussing the Scriptures, and enjoying the overwhelming beauty and diversity of the world God has made.

*Kevin Hunter,
CBMA linkman for Ecuador*

Building a House for our God

When God made His great promise to David, He told him that one of David's sons would build a house for God's name. While we know that Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, the greater House of God is the spiritual house that Jesus is building to the glory of his Father. He is the "precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation", of whom Isaiah speaks. As Peter comments, we ourselves are "living stones... being built up as a spiritual house", conforming and molding ourselves around the cornerstone.

The task of the CBMA is to continue this work in the Americas, following the commission Jesus left with his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel. More "living stones" for God's house are being chosen and shaped — quietly and largely unnoticed in many countries — as they wait for the return of our Lord Jesus and the day when all the stones will become part of the great temple of our God, to His honor and glory.

When the first house of God was being built it was very much a community effort. Moses called on everyone to help so that all could look on the Tabernacle as their own:

*"Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the LORD's contribution...
Let every skilful craftsman among you come..." (Exod 35:5,10).*

Later on,

"They came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him, and brought the LORD's contribution... So they came, both men and women. All who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and armlets, all sorts of gold objects..." (vv 21,22).

The account continues; everyone who possessed beautiful objects or precious metals brought them to donate to the building of God's house:

"And every skilful woman spun with her hands... and they all brought what they had spun... All the men and women... whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work... brought it as a freewill offering to the LORD" (vv 25,29).

The offering was so generous and abundant that the craftsmen told Moses:

"The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the LORD has commanded us to do..."

Moses actually had to restrain the people from bringing more offerings:

"For the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more" (Exod 36:5-7).

As a community, we too have been entrusted with the work of building a house for our God. It is a great work, as the builders of the Second Temple also recognized:

"We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the house..." (Ezra 5:11).

Unfortunately, here in our own time, beginning in 2009, the gospel proclamation being carried out in Latin America and the Caribbean will have to be seriously cut back because of diminishing contributions to the CBMA. There are many isolated brethren and sisters and interested friends studying for baptism who will not receive the visits they need to build them up and prepare them for God's kingdom.

This is a plea to our community to continue generously to support this important work. There is no better use for the riches with which we have been blessed than bringing Bible truth to those who are searching for it. The Word of God offers eternal health and wellbeing to the world. Our community has received the commission to take this good news to those who are still in darkness. As when the Tabernacle was built, it requires the support of us all. Even the women's brooches and earrings were used in the building!

There are many ways each brother, sister, ecclesia and CYC can help support the outreach work overseas. One possibility is using your air miles to purchase tickets for the workers traveling on mission visits. Check and see which airlines allow this. Get your young people involved in fundraisers for the Bible Mission; it will get them interested in the work and perhaps encourage them to travel to mission areas to help out. Remember the CBMA in your will. Invite a CBMA worker to give a "mission night" at your meeting, and encourage brethren and sisters to support the work.

Just as when the first House of God was built, so now the work depends on the willing hearts and generosity of the people of God. Please remember the CBMA in your prayers and in your financial support. Thank you so much for the support you have given in the past.

Jean Hunter

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 88, 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
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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

AVON, IN

We welcome by transfer Sis. Katy Wuthrick (Paris Avenue, OH) and Bro. Jordan and Sis. Susan Hatch, and Sis. Kayte Hatch (Jasonville, IN). We look forward to walking together toward God's kingdom with them.

We have also been blessed with many visitors since our last report, and would like to thank those brothers who have provided us with words of exhortation: Gary Evans (South Florida); Aaron Riegle (Kouts, IN); John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI); Richard Palmer (Birmingham, UK); David Brown (Coventry, UK); and Bill Folkerts (Pittsburgh, PA). Also we would like to especially thank the following brothers for their special classes: Mike Livermore (Detroit Livonia, MI); Trevor Snow (Milford Road, MI); Paul Sparacino (Milford Road, MI); Jim Dillingham (Hudson, NH); and Kevin Flatley (Paris Avenue, OH).

Dean Brown

BALTIMORE, MD

On April 27, 2008, we were privileged to witness the baptism of BENJAMIN LINK, son of Bro. Bill and Sis. Carol Link. We rejoice with Ben and his family as together we press toward the mark and await our Master's coming.

It is with pleasure that we welcome to our ecclesia Sis. April Chen Wight. We enjoyed the fellowship of her mother and sister during their recent visit from China. Meeting believers from so far off reminds us of the power of the gospel, and its spread as prophesied by Christ. We feel blessed to witness the fulfillment of that prophecy in these last days. Bro. Frank Musonda has also recently joined us. He moved to this area from Guam with his family. We are grateful to our heavenly Father for the sweet fellowship Bro. Frank brings to us.

We rejoice in the birth of Skylar Rose, daughter of Bro. Josiah and Sis. Jenny Hewitson, on October 2, 2008. We offer our love and encouragement to these new parents as they raise their child in the way of truth and righteousness.

This year the Baltimore Ecclesia benefited by hosting two study weekends and the Baltimore/Washington Gathering. Our thanks to Bre. Andy Bilello, Bill Link, Ryan Mutter and Mike Moore for their helpful classes. We also appreciate the continued support of the Washington and Petersburg Ecclesias in providing speakers.

Andy Bilello

BRANTFORD, ON

We are very happy to report that two of our Sunday school students, SASHA MOORE and LEXI RIDDLE, were both baptized into the hope of Israel on November 29, 2008. This is an encouragement to all of us. We thank Bre. Roger Long and Don Pearce (UK) for speaking at our "Signs of Our Times" Prophecy Day, as well as the many visitors who came for the day from near and far, resulting in standing room only. God willing, our Junior CYC and Little Disciples "Apps Mills" Gathering are to be held on February 7; the Senior CYC Gathering is to be held on February 14.

Daniel Billington

CRANSTON, RI

We were very pleased to have Bro. Devon Walker (Manchester, UK) and family visit in the New England area following the Eastern Christadelphian Bible School. Bro. Devon led a Bible class and also a CYC class at Cranston.

We are pleased to receive in fellowship, Bro. Curtis Brittle (Livonia, MI).

We rejoice in the marriage of our Sis. Kayleigh MacAdams, daughter of Bro. Jim and Sis. Kim MacAdams, to Bro. Morgan Nevers, son of Bro. Craig and Sis. Gayle Nevers, all of Cranston. May our heavenly Father's richest blessing be upon them as they walk together as one in Christ Jesus toward the Kingdom of God.

The Cranston Ecclesia was pleased to host the 77th annual New England Christadelphian Fraternal Gathering on Sunday, October 5, 2008. We were pleased to welcome a good number of brothers and sisters and families from the New England ecclesias and beyond. We are indebted to Bro. Jim Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI) for his classes on the theme "Be Ye Doers of the Word", and also for his Cranston study day on October 4 on "Law and Grace".

We thank our visiting brothers (along with their wives) who took part in our fall series of Bible talks on the theme, "The Distinctive Beliefs of the Christadelphians": Jim Harper (Meriden, CT); Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH); Bruce Waite (South New Hampshire); and Ken Willis (Westerly, RI). Our brothers also brought us the word of exhortation, and most led the adult Sunday school class.

Sis. Joan Pride is no longer in fellowship.

Paul Houghton

ECHO LAKE, NJ

Sis. Kavita Shivkumar has resigned and is no longer in fellowship.

We are very pleased to report the birth of a healthy daughter, Diane Phoebe, on February 22, 2008, to Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Jean Link. May our heavenly Father bless their young family.

In October our ecclesia hosted a study weekend given by Bro. Carl Parry (Salisbury, Adelaide, So. Aus.) on Zechariah. We thank our Bro. Parry for his ministrations on our behalf.

Since our last report we have been blessed with the following visitors: Bro. Matthew Link (Washington, DC); Bro. Steve McKay (Kitchener/Waterloo, ON); Sis. Sarah Waite, and Bro. Robert and Sis. Barbara Faust (Moorestown, NJ); Bro. Scott Wallace (Boston, MA); Sis. Rhonda Manser (East Torrence, Adelaide, So. Aus.); Bro. Des Manser (Enfield, Adelaide, So. Aus.); Bro. Russ and Sis. Betty Patterson (Verdugo Hills, CA); Bro. John Elton (Punchbowl, NSW, Aus.); Bro. Carl and Sis. Ginny Parry (Salisbury, Adelaide, So. Aus.); Sis. Odette Ward, Bro. Matthew Ward and Hagannah Ward (Cardiff, Wales); Bro. Steve and Sis. Mary DeMarco (Honesdale, PA); Bro. Ron McPhee (Petersburg, VA); Bro. Joel and Sis. Amy Robinson (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON); and Bro. Andrew Aitkenhead (Bishops Stortford, UK).

We thank the following brothers for their enlightening words of exhortation: Matthew Link, Steve McKay, Des Manser and Carl Parry.

God willing, on March 14-15, 2009, we plan to have a study weekend. Our guest speaker is to be Bro. James Harper (Meriden, CT). Contact Bro. David Link by email

at dlink44131@aol.com or by phone at 973-696-3316.

David Link

NEW WESTMINSTER, BC

We welcome Bro. Levi and Sis. Betty Polder, who have transferred from the Vancouver Ecclesia, and look forward to their fellowship and service among us. We thank all those brethren, local and from afar, who have come to assist at our meetings. Particular thanks to Bro. Gordon Dangerfield for his part in a spiritually energizing fraternal on the Easter weekend, and Bro. Stephen Hornhardt for an uplifting and enjoyable Sunday mini-fraternal in August. We extend a cordial invitation to join us at our fraternal on Easter weekend 2009, when Bro. Rob Posey (Rogue Valley) is to lead the sessions on a theme from Philipians, "The Mind of Christ".

Art Bull

PANAMA CITY, PANAMA

We are happy to report the baptism of MELIDA GUERRA on October 19, 2008. She was introduced to the truth by Bro. Marcos Lockwood. Bro. Marcos's mother, Sis. Alda Lockwood, took her through instruction. Melida was studying with the Jehovah's Witnesses, but decided that wasn't for her! Another man is preparing for baptism, so we hope to have more good news in the future.

Don Luff

VERNON, BC

We are pleased to welcome by transfer from Victoria, BC, Bro. Mark and Sis. Kayla Higgs. Their youth and enthusiasm bring a much appreciated addition to our midst. We are also happy to announce that Sis. Starr Saunders has been accepted back into fellowship after several years' absence.

Sis. Marianne Hutchison of our ecclesia, who lives in isolation with her husband Bro. Ray, has been receiving treatment at the cancer clinic in nearby Kelowna. It has been wonderful to have her at the memorial meeting over the past several weeks. Her treatment period has now ended and she has returned home. However, we ask for prayers on her behalf, and also for our Sis. Starr as they both battle cancer.

This year marked the first time our members have participated in the Run for the Everlasting Cure. Over 30 enthusiastic members and families walked and ran the five-km circuit. Young children in strollers, up to our oldest participant at 84 years, enjoyed the fresh air and took time to reflect on those affected by cancer and serious illness. Without the power of our God and the wonderful hope He has offered, we would truly be lost.

We continue to enjoy the fellowship of our Bro. John and Sis. Jessica Gareau, who with their three children have recently moved to our area.

Bro. Tony Funnel is no longer in fellowship.

David Zantingh

Bible Message Calendars

Sis. Maritta Terrell is now the North American distributor for the Bible Message Calendars, which are now published by the Christadelphian ALS. She has the 2009 calendars, the theme of which is "Aspects of Jesus"; they cost \$5 each. You can contact her at mt-ct@swbell.net, or at P.O. Box 3729, Cedar Park, TX 78630. At this time

she has a limited supply of the 2009 calendars; so first to contact, first served! If you wish a regular number each year, please let her know. This information will help the publishers prepare the proper number of calendars

An interesting story about this calendar connection: Back in the mid-1970s Bro. Dan McDonald and Bro. Cliff Terrell, both of the Houston Ecclesia then, had the idea of a Bible readings/message calendar. The calendar was at that time a fundraiser for the Texas Bible School, now called the Southwest Bible School, which the Texas ecclesias were organizing.

When Sis. Maritta went down to Texas for Truth Corps in 1977, it was the second year of calendar production. Bro. Cliff gave Maritta a few calendars to take back to Canada to sell. After a few years, the number of calendars requested grew, and others took over the production and began producing and distributing them.

Maritta did not sell calendars very long in Canada, since she returned to Texas and married Cliff in 1980. Now a portion of the calendar distribution has come practically full circle, back to Cliff's home, with his wife as the North American distributor.

Paris Avenue, OH, Ecclesial Meetings

The Paris Avenue, OH, Ecclesia would like to make everyone aware that we currently have two groups of brothers and sisters meeting in the central part of our state.

One group is meeting in Columbus, OH, every Sunday at 10:30 am at the Columbus YWCA on 65 South 4th Street. If you are interested in attending and, if possible, serving, please contact Bro. Kevin Flatley by email at kflatley@insight.rr.com or at 614-933-8535; or Bro. Mike Coy by email at michaelfcoy@yahoo.com or 614-875-5464.

Another group of brothers and sisters is meeting in Coshocton, OH, each week for midweek Bible class, and every Sunday at 9:30 am for Sunday school and 10:30 am for memorial, at the home of Bro. Paul and Sis. Debbie Prater. If you are interested in attending and, if possible, serving, please contact Bro. Paul Prater at pdp1648@sbcglobal.net or 740-623-858; or Bro. Jordan Canady at jordancanady5@hotmail.com or 740-630-5638.

If you find yourself in the area, or are attending university nearby, the brothers and sisters in Columbus and Coshocton would be pleased to have you join with them around God's Word in remembrance of our absent Lord and master.

Josh Bates

Texas Spring Youth Retreat

We are pleased to announce that the annual Texas Spring Youth Retreat, sponsored by the Austin Leander CYC, will be held March 13-15, 2009, at the T4C camp near Buffalo, Texas. Our speaker this year will be Bro. Will Jackson from the Austin Leander Ecclesia. The Youth Retreat is for ages 13 and older. The cost is \$15 per person with a \$45 family cap. To register, please contact Sis. Nicole Nevers at nlnevers@gmail.com, or 203-815-0911.

"If I have ever made any valuable discoveries, it has been owing more to patient attention than to any other talent" (Isaac Newton).

Minute Meditation

Seeing is Not Believing, But Believing is Seeing

The old saying “Seeing is believing” is disproved every time a magician tricks his audience into seeing what is not true. He cuts the lady in half; we see it happen, but fortunately she is quite well and all in one piece.

Many people believe things that they have seen are true when they are not, and many times people do not believe what is true. Our eyes play tricks on us. Magicians are expert in deceiving us into seeing things that are not true. We cannot depend on what we see. Even though the horizon looks like a flat line, the earth is not flat as most folks thought at one time — which shows that just because everyone believes something is true does not make it so.

How then are we to know what to believe? Sometimes things we have not seen are true although we have never seen them. Jesus specifically blesses those who have never seen him and yet believe on him. John tells us about a conversation between Jesus and Thomas where Jesus tells Thomas, “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

Certainly none of us have ever seen the Lord, but we believe in him. Many who did see him did not believe, so seeing was not believing for them. Even Saul of Tarsus, who thought that he was a real student of the Word of God, did not believe in Jesus and was out to punish those who did believe in him. It was not until the Lord spoke to him from heaven and struck him blind that he finally believed. Then he saw, even though he was temporarily blind.

This same man, now the beloved apostle Paul, later wrote to us, saying that the things which we can see are all temporary, while things which are not seen are eternal. We need to get, as it were, spiritual glasses in order to believe in the unseen. The Kingdom of God is coming and there is a time when every eye shall see him, but right now, we only see it through the eye of faith. Our faith is fed by reading about it in the Bible.

So many who saw Jesus when he walked the dusty paths of Israel did not believe in him even though they saw the miracles that he performed. Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.” Some Pharisees heard him and asked, “What? Are we blind too?” Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.”

The very last time Jesus spoke to the multitude, “there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast.” They came to Philip with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” Thankfully they saw and heard him in this, his final discourse. Yet, shortly thereafter, “When he had finished speak-

ing, Jesus left and hid himself from them. Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.”

It is so important for us to see what they did not see and believe what they did not believe. Jesus said, “But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

Through the eye of faith we do see Jesus now, and we long for the time soon to come, described by John: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

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.)

JANUARY 2009

3-11 Sydney (Australia) Youth Conference. Studies led by Bre. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA), James Rasmussen (Australia), and Craig Blewett (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. Senior 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

7 Brantford, ON Junior CYC and Little Disciples “Apps Mills” Gathering. For information please contact Sis. Rhonda Manz 519-758-8149 rhondamanz@sympatico.ca. Children's workbook may be downloaded at www.brantfordchristadelphians.com

14 Brantford, ON Senior CYC gathering. Bro. Jim Keating (St. Johns, NF): “Preparing for the Kingdom”

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

13-15 Texas Youth Spring Retreat at T4C camp near Buffalo, TX. Bro. Will Jackson (Austin Leander, TX). Cost \$15 per person, \$45 family cap. Contact Sis. Nicole Nevers at nlnevers@gmail.com or 203-815-0911 for registration.

14,15 Echo Lake, NJ Study weekend. Bro. James Harper (Meriden, CT). Contact Bro. David Link dlink44131@aol.com 973-696-3316

14,15 Victoria, BC Spring study day. Bro. Bill Link (Baltimore, MD): "Proverbs: Guidelines for Godly Living". Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen 250-652-3318 info@csll.ca

21 New England Little Disciples Gathering Barton Conference Center, New Oxford, MA. "The Early Life of Jesus", from Luke's gospel. Bible lessons and fun for children ages 3-12, sponsored by Boston and Granite State Ecclesias.

27-29 Men in the Truth Camping Weekend Cachuma, CA. Subject: Servant Leadership. Contact Bro. David Lloyd davidlloyd@earthlink.net 818-352-6486. Register with Sis. Tammy Rundle at nelittledisciples@hotmail.com or 781-829-4410. A workbook, to be completed in advance and information, is available at www.nelittledisciples.com

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 Circle Square Ranch. Bro. John Mark Ghent: "Friendship: A Study of David and Jonathan". Ages 12 to 20, limited space available. Cost is \$75. Registration information: sussexspringcamp@live.ca or write Sis. Marie Baines, 140 Bryant Drive, Sussex, NB E4E 5M9 or 506-433-5254

JUNE 2009

21-27 Rocky Mountain Bible School Glenwood Springs, CO. Bro. Peter King (Worcester, UK): "Moses in the Fourth Gospel"; Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch, NZ): "Philip the Evangelist"; Bro. Jim Livermore (Ann Arbor, MI): "That the Works of God May Be Revealed". Contact www.denverchristadelphians.org

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

JULY 2009

5-11 Southwest Bible School Schreiner University, Kerrville, TX. Bre. Frank Abel (Shelburne, ON); Mark Vincent (Boston, MA); Anthony Whitehorn (Maidenhead, UK). Registration information available at www.planofgod.org or contact Bro. Fred Bearden, 2204 Downing Lane, Leander, TX 78641 or 512-259-4631

19-25 Pacific Coast Bible School Idyllwild, CA. Bro. Michael Ashton (Shirley, UK): "John the Baptist"; Bro. Matt Norton (Lismore, NSW): "The Life of Lot"; Bro. Gary Cousens (Cambridge, ON): "James". Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau mail@gelineau.org or 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065, or Bro. Gary Patterson garympatterson@hotmail.com or visit www.californiabibleschool.org

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.nfcbbs.com or contact Bro. David Brierley david.brierley@sympatico.ca or 416-236-5295