

THE CRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Editor: George Booker

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Assistant Editor

We are pleased to announce that Bro. Dev Ramcharan has agreed to become Assistant Editor of The Christadelphian Tidings. Dev and his wife Sis. Rose are members of the Toronto West Ecclesia (Ontario, Canada). They are the parents of three daughters: Grace (19, and baptized), Esther (17) and Ruth (15).

Dev has traveled extensively, throughout North America and elsewhere, speaking and teaching at numerous Bible schools and gatherings. He is quite familiar with the brotherhood as a whole, and we feel sure that this experience will be of great benefit to the magazine, and through the magazine to brothers and sisters in Christ everywhere.

Bro. Dev has worked in project management in the communications industry (wireless, internet and cable) for over 20 years. Currently, he manages a team of project management professionals. Dev's professional and ecclesial background will add to a very diverse mix of experience in the Tidings production team. We welcome the addition of Bro. Dev to The Tidings staff, and look forward to the advice and help he will surely give us.

Editorial

The Significance of the Memorial Meeting

Our Sunday service is properly a memorial. It is not a sacrifice, but it memorializes a sacrifice. It is not a sacrament, that is, an act which mechanically appropriates grace to the doer. Rather, it is simply a memorial, a means of remembering the act that conferred grace upon us:

“Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me” (1Cor 11:25).

If we are to live up to the New Testament pattern, we must be a family gathered around a table, partaking of a meal and in so doing remembering an absent member. It is an uncomplicated act, an act of loving companionship, of warmth and familiarity, not of pomp and ceremony.

We do not break bread and drink wine in order to assert any superiority over outsiders. We do not break bread and drink wine as a substitute for the rigorous discipline of service to God in its many features, to which the Truth calls us. Neither do we break bread and drink wine to encourage personal feelings of self-righteousness or complacency. (We must beware, because frequent repetition, instead of fostering memory, can in fact encourage forgetfulness of the principles involved.)

Purely and simply, we partake of these emblems in order to remember: first, God’s love; second, Christ’s sacrifice; and third, our duty.

There are two absolutely essential aspects of worship: baptism and the memorial supper. Baptism is the process by which the believer is “born” into his new, spiritual family. And the Breaking of Bread is the perpetuation of that family life begun at baptism, by the repeated affirmation of the believer’s membership in the marvelous family of God.

Why are there two different emblems? The obvious answer is that the bread represents Christ’s body and the wine his blood. But that answer seems somewhat inadequate since either one alone might symbolize, almost as well as both together, his sacrificial death. Is there some further distinction?

In part it is this: the bread represents the strength of our Lord’s life, a life totally dedicated to the will of the Father. The wine more aptly represents his death, the blood willingly poured out as a climax to his life’s work.

The bread was broken and passed to each disciple. Each disciple drank a portion from the cup. But we must not suppose that this dividing up of the emblems implies, in any sense, that Christ can be divided among us, or that we in any sense partake of only a portion of the blessings involved. All the blessings belong to every individual among us. The bread must be broken in order that many can share it; there is just no other way to accomplish the practical object of providing each brother and sister a portion to eat. But the body that the bread represents,

Christ's multitudinous spiritual body, cannot be broken; it is one:

"Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body" (1Cor 10:17).

And the body is united, "held together" or "knit together" in love with the Head, which is Christ himself (Col 2:2,19).

The component parts of the Memorial Meeting

It may be profitable to consider, item by item, the component parts of the Memorial Meeting, as to the significance of each:

1. First of all, in keeping with Habakkuk 2:20, we should enter the meeting room and take our seats, as much as possible, in a spirit of ***quietness and meditation***. Now is the time for serious thought, preparation and self-examination. Despite the ordinariness of the surroundings, if that is the case, we are nevertheless coming into the very presence of God. As for being late, when it is avoidable: This is not just wrong because we have the potential of disturbing our brothers and sisters, but also (and especially) because it is an appointment with God. Is this important? Consider the parable of the virgins in Matthew 25:1-13: the foolish virgins, not being prepared ahead of time, came late to the marriage feast to find the door shut against them.
2. ***General appearance and dress***: In this, as in many areas of our life in the Truth, no hard-and-fast rules can (or should) be imposed. But surely we can be governed by intelligence and common sense. How would we dress for a special occasion such as meeting some important human dignitary? How would we behave at such a meeting? Let us answer such questions for ourselves, and then realize, with wonder and awe, that on Sundays we are going to meet the Lord of the Universe and His Son!
3. ***The presiding brother***: Presiding is perhaps the most important duty of all, more important to the memorial meeting as a whole than exhorting. The presiding brother's is the first voice to be heard; it is his duty to set and maintain the tone of the meeting. By his presence, attitude, and words he brings unity and continuity to the whole service. His duty is also to introduce the central feature of the whole worship service, the partaking of the emblems. This should require preparation (and prayer) at home, even before coming to the meeting. Our minds are drawn to that first Memorial Meeting, in the upper room in Jerusalem, where Jesus was the first presiding brother, conveying a pervasive calm and confidence to his brethren, by which he demonstrated to them God's presence and God's love.
4. ***Music and singing***: This can become something of an ordeal in some meetings, when those who play and those who sing may be very aware of their inadequacies. So it must be remembered that our hymns are not important as a display of technical skill, but only for the spiritual quality of the worship itself. It is entirely possible to sing (and play) in the spirit that Jesus condemned:
"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (Matt 15:8).

In short, the words and their message must always be the motivating principle in our hymns.

5. **Bible readings:** The crucial point to recognize here, as in every Bible reading, is that God is speaking to us:

“This is what the LORD says: ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?’ declares the LORD. ‘This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word’ ” (Isa 66:1,2).

As with prayers, there should be no unnecessary movements, no interruptions, and no noise. Whether we speak to God (in prayers and hymns) or God speaks to us (in Bible readings), we are dealing with divine communications.

6. **Collection:** Although we were not redeemed by corruptible things such as silver and gold, we cannot escape from their use in the service of God. It is our privilege to consecrate what we have of this world’s goods to the service of the Giver of all things.

In our day there is the need for money and resources in God’s service. There is the rent or purchase of a meeting room or hall; there are the poor, the elderly, the children and young people to whom we have special responsibility. The word must be preached, and the meetings advertised; there are the funds collected centrally for special causes and special occasions.

How do we give? How much do we give? We should give willingly, as though giving were — which it is — a service to Christ personally. How much? That depends on the giver. Two factors govern how much we give: our ability to give (income), and our spirit (generous or otherwise). Typically, Christadelphians downplay this aspect of worship. But our own low-key system should not be an excuse for minimum contributions. Our financial contribution is one means of showing our heavenly Father how much we value His love.

7. **Prayers:** Public prayers should be relevant (i.e., related to the object at hand, whether an opening prayer, prayer on behalf of others, thanks for bread or wine, etc.) and not repetitious. Prayers should be fresh and spontaneous, if possible. Prayers are best when offered in common, everyday language — not archaic, artificial ‘Sunday only’ speech. If we are not sure, the pattern of Jesus in what is commonly called “the Lord’s prayer” will surely give us direction.
8. **The exhortation** is not primarily a Bible exposition; it need not be particularly technical. Neither is it the best place to teach, or to teach again, the first principles. Instead, it is primarily an introduction to the emblems of bread and wine, and therefore an aid to remembrance and self-examination. An exhortation should emphasize God’s holiness and purity and love, and the awesome responsibility of our calling to serve Him. It should not discourage, but rather encourage and comfort (which is the primary meaning of the Greek word translated “exhort”). It should, above all else, show us Christ. Wherever our thoughts and words take us as we contemplate God’s message, there we will find Christ: the central character in the Bible. If the exhortation has done its work, we will leave the Memorial Meeting feeling and acting as though we have been changed for the better:

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

9. **The spirit of the occasion:** The memorials themselves have been sufficiently discussed above, as to their significance. In “proclaiming the Lord’s death until he comes” (1Cor 11:26), our Memorial Meeting is like a funeral. In attending a funeral we are showing respect for the dead, and for the occasion. We are also recognizing, for ourselves as well, the solemnity of both life and death, and how, in our daily lives, we come in contact with eternal things. “Ask not for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.” Surely, if we grasp this fact, we need not worry that we will forget to examine ourselves.

This is, of course, an extraordinary funeral, for the one who was dead is now alive, gloriously and eternally so! The natural seriousness of the occasion should be tempered by the joy of this realization. What a promise for us there is in our Lord’s words:

“I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt 26:29).

The serving brothers at the Memorial Meeting are thus — at the same time — pallbearers at a funeral, and forerunners of an immortal king, who will come in his glory to reign from his throne. Observe pallbearers at a state funeral, as well as those who attend monarchs on state occasions, for some sense of the dignity required in such a job.

10. **Conclusion:** After a final hymn and prayer, a brief musical interlude closes the meeting. This is not a convenient background to cover the noise of shuffling feet and whispers about lunch plans. Rather, it is a final quiet moment to gather together the threads of thoughts from the worship, and to prepare to face the rest of the day and the week to follow — being sure that Christ is going with us as we leave the meeting.

Remember, our service can be beautiful and holy even without the external trappings of an expensive building and a large congregation. Christ on a mountainside, or in a secluded room with a dozen friends, could lead the most holy of services. And so it may still be:

“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matt 18:20).

George Booker

In giving of thanks for the bread and wine:

- (a) The unwise way is to make no reference to the bread and wine at all but pray and preach about everything that happens to come to mind; but*
- (b) The wise way is to limit the prayer to actual thanks for the bread and wine as briefly and appropriately as possible, to the exclusion of other matters.*

Robert Roberts

Exhortation

The Workers in the Vineyard

Since we began studying the Bible with our Christadelphian brothers and sisters, I have enjoyed the parables of Christ. They can teach us so much, and they deserve special attention. Jesus used them to teach his disciples. I freely admit that some of them can be confusing. I am much happier with the parables that our Master clearly explains.

Let us consider the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1-16).

Unusual happenings

There are some unusual events in this story. I imagine they were also unusual 2,000 years ago.

Probably, it was *not* unusual to hire ‘day laborers’ to work in your vineyard. Very early in the morning, the owner would go into town and find people willing to work for the day. He agreed with them to pay the wages for the day — a denarius, or what the KJV (rather misleadingly for us) calls a “penny”. This sounds peculiar to us today, because today’s “penny” is worth practically nothing. But we know from other references that the denarius was a common payment for a day’s work. It would have been a long day, about twelve hours, from dawn to sunset.

The unusual thing comes with the second group hired by the landlord at the third hour, about 9 o’clock in the morning:

“And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them, ‘Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you.’ And they went their way” (Matt 20:3,4).

When he says, “I will pay you whatsoever is right,” I suggest this would be unusual, for any time or place. How many plumbers would come to your home to unstop the drain if you said when you called, ‘I will pay you whatever I decide is right’?

This same unusual behavior continues at noon, at 3 o’clock and 5 o’clock. So now we have five groups of workers in the vineyard, but only the first group knows what their wages will be.

Also, there is an unusual aspect from the workers’ point of view. The workers hired later should have negotiated their wages. They should not have expected to receive the full day’s wages, but there was no bartering, no negotiation.

Finally, there was the order of payment when the day was over. The Law of Moses tells us the basis for payment:

“Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning” (Lev 19:13).

Workers were paid at the end of the day, but you would expect that those hired first would be paid first. Instead the landowner first pays the last ones hired.

There appears to be only one reason to do this, and that is to highlight what the last group is being paid. They are paid a full day's wage. In fact, all five groups are paid exactly the same.

How would we react?

My initial reaction when I read this story comes, I think, from my business school education. 'That's not fair!' 'The union won't allow that!' And finally, since I am a product of the sixties, 'That sounds like communism!' You know, 'From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.'

Our culture, especially in the United States, is obsessed with fairness and equity. "Fair," according to the dictionary, means free from bias, dishonesty or injustice; proper under the rules. Let's remember that second part. "Equitable" means characterized by fairness, just and right.

My initial reaction is that paying a person who works one hour the same amount as the person who works twelve hours could not be fair and equitable. I know that if this happened at my place of employment there would be big trouble and lawsuits. It also reminds me of Paul's comment when writing to the Corinthians:

"For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope" (1Cor 9:9,10).

It is certainly natural in our part of the modern world for workers to expect fair compensation. But when we examine 'fair' and 'equitable' more completely in society today, we find that often when people use these words they mean either 'what I want' or 'what I think I deserve.' And this leads us to the next section.

The essentials and meaning of the parable

Like others, this parable is designed to demonstrate and describe things of importance to us. These parables tell us about God's character.

First, the payment method. The workers are paid last to first. As I mentioned before, the only reason to do this is that people will notice and ask questions. Does this tell us something about God's character? Yes, I think it does. It shows us that God can accept our questions. He gives us answers in His word.

Job questioned God and was still judged to be a righteous man. Moses, Abraham and Jesus likewise questioned God. There are times when the answer is not as clear or as obvious as we would like it to be. Sometimes the answer may not be what we want to hear, but He still answers.

Second is the spirit of the master. It is by no means ordinary. He returns to find more workers throughout the day. He does not ask just once, but over and over again, for people to work for him.

This characteristic of persistence is very beneficial for us. God and His Son keep asking us to join them, to come and work in their vineyard.

Thirdly, generosity and fairness. The Lord is generous to some while being just to all. He is merciful to all of the workers, regardless of when they start or how long they work. They all provided faithful service. Thus the landowner displays a characteristic of God:

“And [Moses] said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy” (Exod 33:18,19).

God’s character, I think we can all agree, is a higher standard, something to which we should all aspire.

Finally, a principle is put forth that is mentioned in the New Testament several times: ***The first will be last and the last will be first.*** The scribes and the Pharisees didn’t like these parables because they knew Jesus spoke to them, and they feared that being last would mean they would be excluded. Also, they didn’t want to give up their exalted positions, and especially not to the son of a carpenter. Jesus had discussed this a bit earlier when he spoke to the rich young man:

“Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me” (Matt 19:21).

He told him to give up his wealth, and his position of preeminence. Then he tells us that this is a difficult lesson. He also gives us hope:

“But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible” (vv:22-26).

So the first hired in the vineyard still received their reward:

“Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first” (vv 28-30).

Conclusion

As we continue in our walk toward the Kingdom, awaiting our Lord’s return, we should remember with gratitude the fact that we have already been called to work in His vineyard. Some of us have been called earlier than others, but that is not important. What is important is our faith and our work for him. We have our assigned tasks: working in the vineyard, and recruiting more workers to help us. Let us go into the world this week and do our best, as we await his return.

Kim Carrell (Simi Hills, CA)

Bible Study

Little Words that Mean a Lot (16) Crown

“Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2Tim 4:8, NKJV).

The Greek Olympics were the most popular sporting event of ancient times and without a doubt the fame and notoriety of the games were known far and wide in the Roman Empire. The apostle Paul must have been well aware of the popularity and public familiarity with such sporting spectacles, because on a number of occasions he incorporated analogies and metaphors to sports in his various epistles. To gain some appreciation of the role of Olympic type sports in the psyche of first century brethren and sisters a brief historical survey of the origin and importance of such games is necessary.

The early history of the Olympics

There are several different stories on how the Olympics started, but the most interesting ones, though probably not the most accurate, tell the tale of the guardians of the infant Greek god Zeus holding the first footrace, or alternatively that Zeus himself started the Games to celebrate his victory over his father Cronus for control of the world.

A more plausible scenario is that the games evolved at the site of the city Olympia, which was one of the oldest religious centers in Greece. Since athletic contests were one way that the ancient Greeks honored their gods, it was logical to hold a recurring athletic competition at the site of a major temple city, which was located at the foot of the holy mountain of Olympus at whose summit the pagan Greek gods supposedly communed.

The first recorded Olympic victor was Koroibos of Elis, traditionally dated to 776 BC. Historical records and documents have preserved a long list of subsequent Olympic victors. Greek historians later used the number of the Olympiad, the four-year period between contests, as a means of dating events. If an event were said to have occurred in the first Olympiad, for example, it would be dated to the period of 776 to 772 BC. Thus, by the time the apostle wrote his letters to the first century ecclesias the Olympics had been in existence for about eight centuries in contrast to the modern version, which revived the games in Athens, Greece only in 1896.

The modern games have not been bereft of scandals related, for example, to steroids and other performance enhancing drug use. The ancient games had their share of scandals too. It is recorded that Sotades at the 99th Olympiad was the winner of the long race and acknowledged as a Cretan, which he was. However, at the very next festival he posed as an Ephesian, being bribed by the Ephesian

people to do so, resulting in banishment henceforth by his native Cretans. Cheating in the Olympics is just another example, as Solomon put it (Eccl 1:9), of there being “*nothing new under the sun*”.

There were other prominent athletic contest sites in operation at the time of the apostle Paul. Perhaps the second most famous was the Isthmean Games, started some 200 years after the Olympics. These games took place at Corinth which is presumably why the apostle uses a number of sports oriented similes in his letters to that ecclesia.¹

The Romans, with the expansion of their Empire and conquest of Greece in the 2nd century BC., essentially took over the games and expanded the eligible athletic competitors to males throughout the Empire.

The required training

To understand the specific allusions the apostle makes to the games we need to examine closely the nature of the competition. First of all, like modern Olympic athletes, training was very organized and vigorous. Professional trainers were employed to coach athletes, and a strict regimen of workout and dietary routines were followed. Aristotle gave his advice that overtraining was to be avoided; he wrote that a young man should devote three years on other studies before turning to athletic exertions, believing that physical and mental development could not occur simultaneously (judging from the discourses sometimes heard from modern athletes he was right!).

Paul makes reference to the rigors of athletic training when he wrote the Corinthians:

“And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things...” (1Cor 9:20, NKJV) And, “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection...” (1Cor 9:27, NKJV)

The successful athlete is one who strives to win it all. It has been said that *no one ever remembers who won the silver or bronze medals only the gold!* To achieve this involves sacrifices and discipline at many levels. It has been more than 50 years since I participated in organized scholastic sports, but I still remember having to carefully watch what, and how much, I ate to keep within strict weight limits. I recall the 2-hour daily practices, the weight training and the thing I hated most — the running drills to increase speed and stamina. Obviously, someone training for the Olympics, or high level college or professional sports, has to endure far more rigorous and consistent training than I ever faced for high school athletics. But the one thing that sports taught me was that rigor and discipline could apply to other areas of life including academics and work in the Truth. The analogies to sports that the apostle Paul draws for the Corinthians was, in effect, exhorting them to apply the same total dedication to their spiritual life that would be used by an athlete in training to be a champion. It is the same for us. If we are to compete in the race to the kingdom of God we must discipline both mind and body to be successful. If we abuse the body through excessive use of alcohol, by taking drugs, or through neglect of healthful and wholesome habits, in general, we will

pay the price. The same applies to the mind; if we ingest the filth that passes for entertainment in many quarters we pollute our brains and they cannot possibly function in a spiritual manner. If we are to stay in training for the spiritual race we need the same mindset as a triumphant athlete, namely, we need daily healthy spiritual nourishment of mind and body. Going to meeting regularly is good, but better is participating and doing our best to contribute within the limits of our abilities (Heb 10:25). Attending Bible classes regularly is good, but better is thinking and reading in advance what is to be studied and being prepared to give helpful input of our own (Acts 17:10,11). Feeding on the daily readings is good, but better is the intent not to merely breeze through them as if it were a ritual chore. Instead it is helpful to set aside a little extra time to meditate on what we have read and how we can apply same to our lives (Psa 1:2). All these efforts, and more that time and space do not permit, are what a good spiritual athlete should strive to achieve.

The acquisition of skills

The apostle draws other analogies to sports besides training parallels. To appreciate this it is helpful to learn a bit more about the nature of the Olympic events that were performed in the 1st century. The range of competitions was naturally far more limited than today, but boxing and track events then as now were principle competitions and Paul's readers would have been thoroughly familiar with such events. Ancient boxing had few rules when compared to today. There were no fixed time rounds, nor breaks in the action of any kind. Boxers simply fought until one man was knocked out, or the opponent quit. Also quite to our astonishment there was no rule against hitting an opponent when he was down and protagonists within the men's and boys' divisions were simply chosen at random irrespective of weight classes. Thus, what we would regard as a heavy-weight could frequently be matched with a middleweight, and so on. The lighter smaller individual would simply have to make up the difference in strength by his speed and stealth. Therefore, when Paul says: "...Thus I fight: not as *one who* beats the air." (1 Cor. 9:26 NKJV) we get the picture of a boxer having to conserve every bit of his energy, and make his blows effectively, or he would lose the fight at hand. To waste oneself with idle misfired blows would surely lead to defeat in a match with no time periods and no breaks to sit for recuperation. We need to carefully muster our spiritual resources and not waste our abilities so that we win the spiritual boxing match. To flit away our time with useless endeavors that are unprofitable to the Lord's service will surely cause us to be defeated. It is tragic indeed to see someone who is successful in the world devote all their time and energies to the pursuit of worldly gains, but when it comes to the Lord's work they cannot find the time or energy. Such a person has been spending all their energy in the wrong direction and will surely not have enough left over to win the spiritual boxing encounter (cp Col 4:5).

The main event at the ancient Olympics, and also at the Isthmean Games in Corinth, as today, was the track and field competitions. There were four types of races at Olympia, which differed only in their length varying from one stade (that was the length of the stadium) to long distance events ranging up to 24 stade.

In modern terms that would be a variation amounting approximately from a 60 yard dash to a three mile long race. There were also several special races where the competitors ran with \approx 60 lbs. of full hoplite armor (shield, helmet, sword, breastplate, etc.). The apostle alludes to these track events when he says:

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it” (1Cor 9:24, NKJV)

And,

“Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty...” (1Cor 9:26, NKJV)

Running track requires discipline and planning, it cannot be done with “uncertainty”. In training the disciplined runner competes against the clock not another opponent. Practice is organized to push for greater speed and also to induce the athlete to go a little further to build stamina for longer races. In the actual race a focused performer will then plan to run in accordance with their training, thus pacing themselves according to the distance of the race. Looking over their shoulder to see who may be catching up with them could be disastrous; because that simple action could lose them the very half step and concentration needed to win. The apostle uses this exact sporting analogy of not looking back when he told the Philippians:

“But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13,14, NKJV)

We need to continually practice to improve our own performance in the things of God. If we compare ourselves with others we can always find someone slower than ourselves and get complacent, or we may be surprised to see someone breezing past us while our attention was turned backward. In the end we have only one standard that we must strive for in the race for eternal life and that is the mark set by our Lord Jesus Christ. Comparison with anyone else is pointless and satisfaction with our own feeble efforts without the realization that we need to continually examine ourselves to seek improvement would be equally imprudent (See 1Cor 2:13, 2Cor 10:12 and 1Cor 11:28).

The victor's crown

The conclusion of Paul's metaphorical sports exhortation to the Corinthians (1Cor 9:25) is his reference to the “crown” given to the victor of an Olympic event. The reference to “crown(s)” in the New Testament is invariably based on the encircling “wreath”, generally taken from branches of the olive tree, placed on the head of the winners of various sporting events in the Olympics, and also at games that took place at other venues.² In the Old Testament the word translated as “crown” has several possible meanings depending on the context, but none of these relate to a symbol of “victory”.³ The Roman emperors eventually saw themselves as the ultimate winners and had more permanent gold crowns fashioned to imitate the woven branches and leaves of the olive tree head crown given to Olympians. The crown that we are most familiar with today is epitomized in the *Burger King* crown of serrated points, which comes from a medieval exaggeration of the leaves in the original Olympic crown of victory.

The Olympic crown was an immense honor and winners were greatly exalted in their time, so much so that it is recorded on occasion cities built special private training facilities, provided luxurious housing, and provided lifelong pensions to star athletes. Nevertheless, the olive branched crown would eventually decay and wither away. Hence, Paul calls it a perishable (NKJV), or corruptible (AV), crown. The Olympic crown was only temporary; its natural substance would fade with the decay of the olive branches and more importantly even the honor it bestowed would last the athlete only as long as the winner lived. For the grave terminates all honors:

“...for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die; But the dead know nothing, And they have no more reward, For the memory of them is forgotten. (Eccl 9:4,5, NKJV)

Instead of striving for worldly honors the apostle wishes the Corinthians to reach for an incorruptible imperishable crown, which he styles elsewhere as a “crown of righteousness” (2Tim 4:8).

As we contemplate the apostle’s words,

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. (1Cor 9:24, NKJV)

we could easily get discouraged if we focus only on the words *one receives the prize*. Who then can possibly win? We might get the impression that we can never be the star athlete in the spiritual race and get discouraged by our failings and feel we are simply not worthy to be on the team. However, that is **not** the point of the apostle Paul’s message — it is not coming in first that is significant, what is important is the effort. In other words when Paul says *run in such a way* he is making it clear that we need to train ourselves spiritually to run as hard we can, because by the grace of God He has provided the Lord Jesus Christ to carry us the rest of the way if we strive to do the very best within the capabilities that the Lord God has given us. The apostles James and John pick up on the sport metaphor of the crown of victory and make it clear that perseverance and faithfulness in our spiritual training is what is required to obtain the crown of life (James 1:12, 1John 5:4 and Rev 2:10, 3:11). By staying in training and running the spiritual race, by giving our very best in this life, our efforts will not be in vain for the ultimate victory is assured:

“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Cor 15:57, NKJV).

And our Lord Jesus Christ will assuredly award us with the victor’s crown symbolic of the ultimate victory in the race to defeat sin and death:

“And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.” (1Pet 5:4).

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. The other important gaming sites were the Pythian at Delphi, and the Nemean Games at Nemea. These took place on two or four-year cycles and the sites were permanent, the games were not rotated around the ancient world to bidding cities as they are today.
2. Strong’s number 4735. Greek = stephanos, *stef’-an-os*; from an apparently primary *ste+fw*

stepho (to twine or wreath); a chaplet (as a badge of royalty, a prize in the public games or a symbol of honor generally).

3. In the Old Testament “crown” is used in several possible contexts, citing a few examples: 1) As an encircling molding in a room, e.g., Exod 25:25 Strong’s number 2213; 2) As a head covering to set someone apart as Moses commanded be done for the High Priest, see e.g., Lev 8:9, Strong’s number 5145, and 3) As a chaplet head covering for a monarch, see e.g., 1Chr 20:2, Strong’s number 5850 (see also similar references in Esther). The latter reference to the crown of the King of Rabbah that weighed a talent of gold is interesting — here the weight of the headgear would have been 75 lbs. and surely some say would have crushed his head. However, the various Popes’ beehive crowns in ages past are so heavy that they have a socket in back that fits a pole that is supported by his attendants so that the weight did not crush his skull. The King of Rabbah’s crown may have had a similar fitting.

Bible Study

“The Head of...”

In Christadelphia, we often use the expression “the head of...”, but do we correctly and fully understand its implications? We tend often to look at the hierarchical connotations, rather than the emphasis Paul gives to “the two will become one flesh” (Eph 5:31) (all quotes from NIV). The Head and the Body *are* one flesh, and this is the model: unity of mind and purpose; mutual love and service.

The Bride

Let us first consider how Paul uses “the head” in Ephesians 5:23:

“For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.”

Here he talks about Christ being the “*head of the church, his body*”; we understand that he is depicting the church as Jesus’ bride, or wife.

The New Testament demonstrates that the Body/Bride of Christ is mandated to *reach out* in preaching, teaching, and leading.¹ The Bride is an *active mouthpiece* of the bridegroom, Christ, in preaching, teaching, and leadership, whether *now* during his ‘physical’ absence (although he *is* present²), or in the future kingdom, when he is ‘physically’ present). She works *just the same* as he has worked and continues to work; he has given her authority to do this (Matt 28:18-20).³ The only difference is that he is Savior, the firstborn from among the dead⁴ — he died that she might live.

“For the husband is the head of the wife...”

As the *female* partner in this relationship, the Bride of Christ models the role which Paul expects of wives in the marriage relationship:

“Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything” (Eph 5:24).

So we see, from the model provided, that a wife’s submission is *an attitude* that does not preclude her working alongside her husband. He also has an *attitude* that is patterned on Christ’s — one of service in love.

“And the head of Christ is God...”

We may struggle to grasp what this relationship of Christ with the Ecclesia — as the head with the Body, and the husband with the wife — really means in practice. Are we given another pattern in Scripture that we can follow? Yes, we are: the relationship between the Father and Jesus: “the head of Christ is God” (1Cor 11:3).

So how did/does this relationship work?

We know that, when Paul makes the statement in 1 Corinthians 11, Christ has been immortalized and seated at God’s right hand. Jesus himself says:

“All authority on heaven and earth has been given to me” (Matt 28:18).

Paul also says:

“God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9-11).

And again:

“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things...” (Col 1:19,20).

So God, as Christ’s head, delegates all His own authority to him, and Jesus speaks as the Father’s voice.

Even *before* his exaltation, we see the role Jesus has in relation to God:

- *“The Father loves the Son and shows him all he does... the Father... has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him... For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge... I have come in my Father’s name...” (John 5:20-47).*
- *“I and my father are one” (John 10:30).*
- *“Not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42).*

God and Jesus work together as *one*, with one purpose and focus, with *one mind*. Jesus speaks with the authority of God, and teaches and preaches God’s good news to the world. Their love for each other is an example to us. Their emphasis is not on precedence, but on unity. The work of Jesus glorifies God, and in turn God glorifies His Son Jesus.⁵

“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things...” (Col 1:19).

What a wonderful example they present to us, as we try to understand the relationships Paul is talking about in Ephesians 5. The Body/Bride of Christ preaches and teaches in the authority of her head, and he loves and cherishes her, as she does him. They are one in their focus and mindset, and work together for the salvation of the world.

“For in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ...” (Col 2:9,10).

So too, the husband and wife actively work together, both having the same focus and love, but also understanding that they both are part of the Bride, whose head is Christ.

Wendy Johnsen (Nanaimo, BC)

Notes:

1. This, according to *Christ's model* of leadership, means service (Luke 22:24-27).
2. Matthew 18:20; 28:20.
3. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you" (Matt 28:18-20). Thus some are apostles, prophets, teachers, etc., as Paul sets out in 1 Corinthians 12:28.
4. Colossians 1:18.
5. See also Philippians 2:9-11.

Bible Study

What is Glory?

The following question is one that has come up repeatedly on the website [*i.e.*, www.thisisyourbible.com]:

I'm risking sounding stupid, but can you explain exactly what glory means? God states the Earth will be filled with His glory... what does that mean? That everyone will believe in Him? All He wants is for us to believe in Him? Why does that seem so simple?

The Hebrew word for glory is "kabod" and it literally means "weight." For example, when we give somebody's argument "weight" it means we are taking it seriously. To glorify God means, literally, to take Him seriously and to acknowledge His rightful place as the Creator of the universe and the loving eternal Father of all mankind. In the New Testament, the word for glory is "doxa"; it carries a similar meaning as the Hebrew but also has a larger connotation of brightness and light. This is our usual idea of glory — a brilliant light. However, we need to see beyond that.

Open your Bible to Exodus 33:18-23 and 34:5-7, and you will get a wonderful insight into the meaning of the glory of God. Note that Moses asks of God (really the angel of God: see Exod 23:20,21) to reveal His glory to him. When the angel did this for Moses, the mountain where Moses was, Sinai, was filled with brilliant light and thundering noise. That was an outward manifestation of God's glory, not the reality of it. The people were terrified and they were at a good distance. Moses was right in the middle of it.

It reminds me of Elijah's experience while he was hiding in a cave and God (again through His angel) revealed Himself to Elijah (1Kgs 19:11-13). All around Elijah there was a fantastic hurricane which "rent the mountains"; there were rocks exploding, a terrifying sight — but, we are told, God was not in this mighty wind.

This was followed by an equally powerful earthquake but, we are told, God was not in the earthquake. This was followed by a huge conflagration, but, again, God was not to be found in the glorious all-consuming fire. These manifestations of “glory” left Elijah shaken and terrified.

Then came the final and real manifestation of God’s glory, “a still, small, voice.” That’s where God was to be found then and now, in His Word. All outward show is useless if it is not based on God’s Word. Okay, back to Moses; look what happens. All the people could see was light and smoke, and all they could hear was noise. Moses, right in the middle of this display, was promised that God would reveal His Glory (through the angel: this is important and we will come back to this point soon). Reading the record in Exodus 33:19 closely, we understand that to reveal God’s glory is to proclaim His name. That’s the real meaning of God’s glory, and it is expanded in Exodus 34:5-7. This revelation to Moses is the equivalent of Elijah’s “still small voice.”

In the Exodus account, the angel says to Moses that, as God’s glory passed by, Moses would be hidden in a cleft of a rock and shielded from the physical manifestations of the Glory to be revealed to him. He would be shown God’s “back” because no mortal is able to see God face to face and live. What constitutes God’s back? All of the qualities declared in Exodus 34:5-7, which can be summed up in two words: Grace and Truth. (Note that the idea of judgment is the flip side of the coin of grace; grace rejected leads to judgment.) All these wonderful qualities are necessary because of sin. In a world where there is no falsehood, Truth need not be emphasized; in a world where there is no sin, forgiveness, mercy and judgment (or grace) are not required. One day the world will be like that. There will come a time when God will be all in all (1Cor 15:28), and then we shall see His face. See the Hebrew blessing in Numbers 6:24-26: “...make His face shine upon thee” is asking that the one receiving the blessing be granted immortality in God’s kingdom. Only then will a person be able to see God’s face!

The summary of the revelation of God’s glory is “grace and truth.” In the Gospel of John, the apostle writes: “We beheld his *glory* as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). If we want to understand the glory of God, we need to understand the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the expression of God’s glory in action:

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Cor 4:6).

Remember how the angel was given God’s name to act on behalf of God? Who is the name-bearer now? It is Jesus (Phil 2:9). He represents God to us, and he represents us to God (1Tim 2:5). He is not literally God, as the doctrine of the Trinity states, no more than the angel who bore God’s name in the Old Testament was literally God. He spoke for God and acted on God’s behalf. Jesus does that now. He is *the* name-bearer. He has fulfilled the promise of being made in the image of God, which Adam marred. Indeed, in the New Testament, Jesus is called the “last Adam”. He is the firstborn of a new creation. To participate in that new creation, in “spirit and in truth”, is to enter into the Glory of God. It is more than

just belief; it is heartfelt, deep-down conviction. This conviction is demonstrated by a determined obedience to God's Word and a humble, thankful heart which accepts His grace when we fail to live up to our high calling.

What is the glory of God? Is it unbearable light? Awesome majesty? Phenomenal power? Yes, it is all these things. But more importantly it is the "still small voice" of His Word. It is the character of His Son. Our heavenly Father wants more than simple belief from us. That's not enough. He wants obedience (cf 1Sam 15:22,23; James 2:20). He wants us to be filled with His glory — the way the earth will be filled one day soon. He wants us, in short, to be like His Son, who is called "The word made flesh".

That is our hope, to be like Jesus, true sons and daughters of God, understanding His truth and accepting His grace and gradually being conformed into Jesus' image.

"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (1Jn 3:2).

That is when the promise of the angels' expression of God's word in Genesis — "Let us make man in our image after our likeness" — will find its glorious fulfillment. May God grant that we will be there to share in the glory of that consummation of our Father's purpose for the earth and for us.

"As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD!" (Num 14:21).

Mike LeDuke (Kitchener/Waterloo, ON)

Special Invitation

For some years, unity discussions have been taking place with Churches of God of the Abrahamic Faith. In the interest of promoting friendship and mutual understanding between our respective communities, we print the following invitation:

*You, your family and friends are invited to the
34th annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 20-26, 2009.*

Main Speakers:

Bro. John Downer — "Knowing the Father and the Son"

Bro. Steve Ross — "Gleaning from the Servants of God"

*Bro. John Bilello — "The Church of the Living God:
the Pillar and Ground of the Truth"*

Contact Bro. Brad Rek 330-609-6957 or lisarek8@cs.com

History

John and Elizabeth Reith



John Reith as he looked in 1877, a few years before his baptism into Christ

Few tragedies are as hard to understand as the death of a vibrant young person. But the hand of God can move in our lives in ways we might not expect or even desire, and it has the power to bring salvation through circumstances like sickness and death that to us might seem senseless. Such was the case in the baptisms of John and Elizabeth Reith, early Ventura County Christadelphians who were brought to see God's truth by the death of an enthusiastic 27-year-old brother named John M. Armstrong.

The story actually begins in Scotland where, at age 18, John Armstrong was baptized in Glasgow on October 3, 1875.¹ Eight years later, Bro. Armstrong emigrated to Santa Barbara because, like many before him, he was hoping the warm Southern California climate would have a positive effect on his failing health.² As he left Edinburgh and steamed to America, Bro. Armstrong would already have been well acquainted with several brothers and sisters living in the Santa Barbara area, particularly Robert Strathearn and Helen Shiells. In fact, Sis. Shiells was John Armstrong's aunt.³

The exact details of what happened after John Armstrong reached Santa Barbara have been lost, but his arrival would result in the baptisms of John and Elizabeth Reith in 1884. Apparently young John Armstrong was quite sick when he arrived in America, for he died the following year. Before his death, Sis. Shiells lovingly cared for her ill nephew, as reported by Sis. E.B. Cornwall over 20 years later in the 1908 *Christadelphian* as she spoke of Sis. Shiells' "large-heartedness to all, especially brethren and sisters, and those of her home country, who came here in search of health, she tenderly nursed, among whom was her nephew, our dearly-loved brother John Armstrong..."

Helen Shiells apparently recruited the help of Elizabeth Reith, a resident of nearby Ojai, California, to help her take care of Bro. Armstrong. Why Elizabeth came to be his nurse is a mystery, but as his own life was ending, Bro. Armstrong brought life to her and her husband John. Robert Strathearn had the following to say about this on the occasion of John and Elizabeth Reith's baptisms: "Sis. Reith was one of those who ministered to the comfort of our beloved brother Armstrong during his illness. He, in return, helped them to the possession of the pearl of great price. He greatly desired their salvation, so you see his labour in coming to this far-off land has not been in vain."⁴

Bro. Strathearn stated in the same entry to the *Christadelphian* magazine that his new brother and sister were “just and devout persons. We hope their influence will do much for the truth.” That they were very religious even before becoming Christadelphians seems to be borne out by the fact that they were members of the very first Christian church in Ojai, in 1877.⁵

John Reith, who was 47 at the time he belonged to the Ojai church, was born in Scotland around 1830. He came to America in 1873,⁶ and two years later, having settled near what is Ojai today, became a member of the first Ojai Valley Grange.⁷ (A grange is a social organization for farmers and, like all the other early Ventura County Christadelphians, John Reith was a farmer.)

Prior to his baptism, John Reith was active in his community in other ways besides being a member of the grange. He had been a juror in the Thomas More murder trial in 1877.⁸ This trial was one of the most famous in early Ventura County history. In fact, it was said that this trial caused a stir throughout the entire state of California. The trial was so famous that a picture was taken of the jury, and the photo can be found today in the archives of the Ventura County Museum of History. The picture of John Reith at the beginning of this article was taken from that photo. The jury convicted the main perpetrator of the crime, Frederick Sprague, of first-degree murder, and he was sentenced to hang. His punishment, however, was later changed to life in prison and he was pardoned many years later.⁸

At the time of the trial, John Reith was farming 62 acres in the Ojai Valley. *The Ventura Free Press* of May 11, 1878, reported that 35 of those acres were planted with wheat, seven with barley, and seven with alfalfa. He also had a one-acre orchard and a garden. He later grew potatoes, pumpkins, and other vegetables. This was apparently quite a nice farm as the following was written about it in *The Ventura Signal* on February 8, 1879:

“The San Antonio creek flows along the southern boundary, and then come the choice bottom lands which can be and are irrigated; the slight elevation to a bench and the wheat land sloping higher, northward. No finer land can be found than this bottom and as Mr. Reith can so easily bring water through it from the creek, he is entirely independent from the drought... it cannot be beaten in Southern California for raising vegetables. A good well, finished adobe house, and an excellent barn. Water is conducted from a fine spring near the house through a well-built and cool milk-house.”

There is little recorded about the Reiths for ten years after their baptism in 1884. In 1886, Elizabeth Reith reported the death of a Sis. McMillan to the *Christadelphian* magazine, and in 1892 she traveled (most likely by train) to the Pomona Ecclesia, along with fellow Ventura County sisters Helen Shiells and Jessie Rutherford, to hear a series of public lectures by Bro. Thomas Williams from Chicago.⁹ Thomas Williams was the editor of the *Christadelphian Advocate* magazine, which at that time was the main Christadelphian magazine for North America, just as *The Christadelphian Tidings* is today. The Ventura County Christadelphians tried to persuade Bro. Williams to spend some time preaching in their area but he declined.

He wrote in his magazine, “While at Pomona we received an invitation to go to Ventura County and give three or four lectures, but the way did not seem clear, the prospects of good results not being very inviting for a short visit; and not having time for one sufficiently extended we thought best to ask to be excused.”¹⁹

The Reiths had left Ventura County by 1894, moving to Summerland, California (near Santa Barbara). That same year they baptized a new sister, Jane Randall. Sis. Randall was interviewed for baptism by Bre. Henry Moore of Pomona and Henry Brinkerhoff of Saticoy. The Reiths began an ecclesia in Summerland, breaking bread each week with their new sister.¹¹



John Reith is buried near Bro. and Sis. Cornwall. Their headstone reads: “Christadelphians who died in hope of resurrection to life eternal.”

Two years later, on July 16, 1896, John Reith died “after a long illness which he bore with great patience” according to the November, 1896, *Advocate* magazine. He was buried in the Santa Barbara cemetery. His grave is unmarked today (except for a number), but he is buried very near the well-marked grave of Sis. Cornwall, who had mentioned Bro. John Armstrong’s death in the *Christadelphian* magazine.

Following her husband’s death, Elizabeth Reith moved to Santa Barbara,

and later to Saticoy.¹² Sis. Reith sent the following correspondence concerning Helen Shiells from Fillmore to the *Christadelphian* magazine in 1897:

“I do not know that you have ever received any intelligence from this place, for the reason that we are so widely separated. However, last Sunday ten of us met here at the house of Sis. Shiells, and broke bread in honour of the Master, some of the brethren coming from Santa Barbara, 60 miles away. One brother would have to walk ten miles to get back to the steam thrasher where he was working. It was a day of great joy to us all, especially to our dear sister Shiells, who takes pleasure only in things pertaining to the truth. She has been the means of bringing many to the knowledge of the truth, as taught by Dr. Thomas. Surely this is a great honour. Our sister lives here quite isolated from any of like faith, except when one like myself has spare time to visit her.”

Elizabeth Reith corresponded with the *Christadelphian Magazine* for the last time in 1898 when she submitted the following:

“Again we have been permitted to hold our annual gathering at the mountain home of dear sister Shiells, at Fillmore, Cal. It is a great joy to our

sister to have us gather there, and to us to go. We desire keeping them up till the Lord calls us to the greater and final gathering. Eight of us met to break bread in memory of the Master..."

Though we do not hear from the Reiths again, we believe through God's mercy that they will rise again to newness of life. We can imagine the joy at that time when, by God's grace, John Armstrong sees the fruits of his labors during his illness at the end of his life. As the magazine entry stated at Bro. Reith's death, "God grant that we may meet them where death shall never part us."¹³

Gordon Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

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Black History Month

The month of February has been designated "Black History Month". A time to look back on slavery, and on the accomplishments of black people over the centuries.

When I was a young man, helping a neighbor build a fence, the subject of slavery came up (I probably had been complaining about slaving away at the work). Our neighbor said, "Boy (I was about 14 years old at the time), did you know that the blacks were meant to be slaves? Why, the Bible says so. It says the Lord put a mark on Cain, and his children would be bearers of burdens. That mark was the curse of a black skin, and it set them apart to serve the white people!"

Being young and not knowing much about the Bible at the time, I took his word for it. Later I looked up Genesis 4:15 and read about the mark of Cain, which didn't say anything about pigmentation. Nor did the quote say anything about bearers or burdens. That particular phrase occurs only three times in the Bible, and always in relation to the Jewish nation.

It was much later that I learned the Bible never says the black race is singled out to be 'cursed' or to be slaves. In fact, there is little specific mention of race or color as such throughout the Bible.

There is this passage in the prophecy of Jeremiah:

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" (Jer 13:23).

Moses' wife may have been black:

"Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman" (Num 12:1).

The queen of Sheba also came from an area where black races were found.

Jeremiah's enemies lowered Jeremiah into a cistern full of mud, leaving him there to die. But a eunuch named Ebed-Melech, an Ethiopian, went to the king and saved Jeremiah's life by lifting him out with ropes under his arms (Jer 38:7-13).

Then there is the unnamed man of Acts 8:26-38:

"Behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship... was sitting in his chariot reading in Isaiah."

With media attention focused on black history during this month, there is a natural desire for many African-Americans in the United States to learn more of their roots, and the contributions of their people to society in general.

Many people of all races and creeds seem to have a natural curiosity about their ancestry. The Jewish people are intensely interested in their forefathers, and the purity of their lineage. The Mormon church puts great stock in meticulous genealogical records. However, Paul when writing to Timothy leaves no doubt as to the value of genealogies:

"Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith" (1Tim 1:4).

Looking into family histories and learning of our past may be interesting to many of us. Nevertheless, looking into the Word of God and planning for the future is much more rewarding of our time and efforts.

Although nothing in Scripture said the black race was to be the bearer of burdens, there is one, quite likely black in color, who shouldered a particular burden:

"A man of Cyrene, Simon by name... they compelled to bear his cross" (Matt 27:32).

Where was Cyrene? "In the parts of Libya about Cyrene" (Acts 2:10). According to Zondervan, Cyrene is a Libyan city of north Africa. It was probably located in the highlands of Libya, near the Mediterranean coast.

This is at best only circumstantial evidence that Simon may have been black; however, there is perhaps additional substantiation:

"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon (Simon?) that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul" (Acts 13:1).

Niger, of course, means "black" (Strong's #3526); was this the same Simon who was pressed into carrying the cross for Jesus? This is quite possible.

Although crucifixion may have been somewhat common as a means of capital

punishment, this particular event was unique and may well have had a traumatic and lasting effect, certainly enough to acquaint an individual with the Gospel, even to the point of acceptance.

Ignominious as crucifixion was designed to be, this was the method our heavenly Father chose for mankind's redemption:

"Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee" (Matt 16:22; Mark 8:32).

Later on that particular night of infamy,

"[Peter] spoke the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all!" (Mark 14:31).

Jesus' ultimate response, in Gethsemane, was:

"Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine be done!" (Luke 22:42).

At a time when all others had abandoned Jesus, for a man to be put in position to share his burden in a time of need, by shouldering the beam of the sacrificial cross, would be a tribute to any person, no matter what race or color. A bearer of burdens indeed! What an honor for Simon and his descendants.

Despite the fact that a citizen of Rome may have had some civil protections and benefit (e.g., Paul in Acts 22:25), most any able-bodied person within the boundaries of the Roman Empire could be pressed into compulsory service for a limited time (cp Matt 5:41). This may have been the rationale for the Romans bringing Simon the Cyrenian into their service.

Slavery had been practiced in Bible times, since before the Egyptian empire. Although bondage and trafficking in slaves is now unlawful, there is a worse kind of slavery than being subservient to another human. It is slavery to sin that will ultimately prove fatal:

"These men [cf v 17] promise freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity — for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end" (2Pet 2:19,20).

However,

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Verne Long (Caldwell, ID)

Editor's Note: These thoughts were written about a year ago, but we held them over to include in the next February issue. In the interim, the United States has witnessed the first election of a President of African ancestry — an event that would have been considered very unlikely even one year ago. (For one thing, centuries of American history suggests the improbability of such a result. And for another, the portion of blacks in the USA is estimated at a mere 14 to 15 percent.) It would be imprudent to go out on a limb and assert that this election **must** mean something extraordinary in the development of God's purpose in the earth. But perhaps it would not be a great stretch to suggest that it **might** have real significance.

Editorial Note: Further Comment on “Critical Mass”

The editorial note in the previous issue led to a question:

“Your three cases were quite interesting and instructive. However, they all had one feature in common: those who remained outside the reunited brotherhood represented a very small percentage of the whole (5% combined). They already fell short of a critical mass. What might have happened if those who remained behind had had the larger numbers, and those who joined the reunion with the larger body of believers had been relatively very small?”

As a matter of fact, the editor is quite familiar with just such a case. I didn’t include it in the original survey because I hadn’t yet confirmed the numbers. In response to the question, I did some further research:

Case Four: Ecclesias in the state of T

More than 50 years ago, there were about 92 members of the B Fellowship in the state of T, who were somewhat separated geographically from others in their fellowship. These 92 belonged to three regular ecclesias and several family groups.

During the couple of years after the reunion, only about 18 of these 92 believers joined C Fellowship (which did not have a single C-group representative in the state of T before that time). Seventy-four (80% of the whole) remained in the B Fellowship.

What has happened since then? In contrast to Cases 1-3, the remaining 74 — having remained separate from what they considered the ‘errors,’ ‘loose fellowship,’ and ‘worldliness’ of the C Fellowship — have actually increased. But the increase, after more than 50 years, has been very slight, to about 90 members — a 22% increase.

What of the 18 who left the B group to join the C group? They have increased, as well, through (a) other believers moving into the state, (b) new converts, and (c) children and grandchildren growing up and being baptized. They now number approximately 240 in eight ecclesias — an increase of 1,233%.

Can we draw any conclusions from these widely disparate figures? One point seems obvious: the B-Fellowship ecclesias that remained in the state of T were much closer to a critical mass, on their own, than were the few who joined C Fellowship. But the B Fellowship *outside the state* provided them no critical mass to draw upon. On the other hand, the few who joined C Fellowship did have a considerable critical mass of believers elsewhere, i.e., outside the state, to draw upon in many ways. They also enjoyed a sense of being part of a community that was alive and growing, rather than one that was retrenching and simply hoping to survive.

Incidentally, today the 90 members of the B Fellowship in the state of T account for about 50% of the whole B Fellowship, *worldwide*.

Summary

This table incorporates the results of Cases 1-3 (from last month) with that of Case 4:

Original B-group ecclesias	Cases 1-3	Case 4	Totals (approximate)
Original numbers	454 (100%)	92 (100%)	546 (100%)
How many joined C group?	433 (95%)	18 (20%)	451 (83%)
C numbers after 50+ years	1,273	240	1,513
C group growth or decline	194% growth	1,233% growth	235% growth
How many stayed in B group?	21 (5%)	74 (80%)	95 (17%)
B numbers after 50+ years	3	90	93
B group growth or decline	86% decline	22% growth	2% decline

Notice how, comparing Cases 1-3 with Case 4, the percentages of each group who joined and who remained separate are almost mirror images of one another:

- (a) In Cases 1-3, nearly all (95%) joined while only 5% stayed separate, whereas
- (b) In Case 4, relatively few (20%) joined while 80% stayed separate.

Conclusion

In last month's editorial note, I looked at the 21 believers who stood aside from the united brotherhood, compared their decline with the growth rate of those who joined, and asked the question: *'Where are the missing 59 believers?'* ('Missing believers' means the ones who might have been expected to result from similar growth of the 21, if they had gone with their brothers and sisters into the fellowship with a critical mass.)

This month, we added to the equation a fourth case, where a much larger proportion of believers chose continuing separation rather than unity. While they did grow slightly, it might be appropriate to do the following:

- (a) add the numbers from Case 4 to those of Cases 1-3 (e.g., the "Totals" column above),
- (b) apply the same multiplier (the C group overall growth, 235%) to the new total of all those in the survey who stayed in B group (95), and
- (c) make one further calculation.

Thus, if the 95 who remained behind in a dying B group had joined with their brothers and sisters in the C Fellowship 50 years ago, they might have expected to grow at the same rate as those who did join. A growth rate of 235% applied to the

95 might be expected to yield a total of 318. Instead, we have 93. The difference between the 93 (who exist now) and the 318 (who might have existed) is 225.

So the next question, based on the numbers of our expanded survey: *Where are the missing 225 believers?*

It is difficult to resist the obvious conclusion. The ‘missing believers’ could number in the hundreds, and they are the result of Christadelphian division and disunity. If this sort of study could be expanded, from a few cases to all such cases, the ‘missing believers’ might well number in the thousands.

Let us, then, go one step further. From what we have seen so far, we may conclude that those who isolate themselves from the main body of believers worldwide may expect little or no growth. We extrapolate, from the 95 or so (in Cases 1-4 above) who remained separate from C Fellowship, to the total believers (or Christadelphians) who are, today, still separate from C Fellowship. Last month, I said that it has been reasonably estimated that between 95 and 97% of those who call themselves Christadelphians are currently members of the worldwide Central Fellowship. Let us assume that the three to five percent who are still divided from the main body of believers total 2,500 worldwide — a reasonable guess. Now let us apply the same 235% growth rate to the whole 2,500. This simple calculation suggests well over **5,000** ‘missing believers’ worldwide, today!

It is also true that, as stated last month, there is a greater degree of *unity* in the Christadelphian brotherhood today than ever before in our 150-year history. Plainly, however, the ongoing tragedy is this: wherever disunity remains, or wherever a small ‘remnant’ thinks they alone hold the Truth in its purity, that is where the so-called ‘missing believers’ might have been found. Sadly, they simply do not exist.

The Land and the Book Belong Together

The land where the Word-made-flesh dwelt with men is, and must ever be, an integral part of the Divine Revelation. Her testimony is essential to the chain of evidences, her aid invaluable in exposition. Mournful deserts and moldering ruins rebuke the pride of man and vindicate the truth of God; and yawning gulfs, from Tophet to the Sea of Death, in its sepulcher of bitumen and brimstone, warn the wicked, and prophesy of coming wrath. Even the trees of her forests speak parables, and rough brambles bear allegories; while little sparrows sing hymns to the happy, and lilies give lessons to comfort the poor. The very hills and mountains, rocks, rivers, and fountains are symbols and pledges of things far better than themselves. In a word, Palestine is one vast tablet whereupon God's messages to men have been drawn, and graven deep in living characters by the Great Publisher of glad tidings, to be seen and read of all to the end of time. The Land and the Book — with reverence be it said — constitute the entire and all-perfect text and should be studied together.

(W.H. Thomson, *The Land and the Book*)

Reflections

A Threat to Unity

One of the most serious threats to the unity of the nation... was the affair of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. It arose directly because a purely fleshly reasoning caused the men concerned to press their personal importance to the detriment of the good of the nation as a whole. They fell into the error of “not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God” (Col 2:19). Their action was based upon premises that seemed sound enough:

“All the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them” (Num 16:3).

These were the words on the lips of the “250 princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown”, men whom, according to the record, Korah, Dathan and Abiram “took”. Much lies concealed behind those words! One can imagine the secret meetings, the passing on of information from mouth to mouth, the fomenting of trouble, the sowing of discord, and all because Korah, being a son of Levi, desired to play the part assigned to others of his tribe, and Dathan and Abiram thought their tribe, the tribe of Reuben, deserving of greater pre-eminence than that to which God had called them!

What is the relation of all this to ourselves as a community?... Our heritage is no less [than that of Israel], for the same God is working towards unity in Christ in the Ecclesia, which is both a body and a commonwealth... The people of Israel had a history of fragmentation and division which began in the wilderness and for which there are two principal reasons: Firstly, they had no sense of devotion to the LORD, whose Name was revealed in His mighty acts of power and compassion on their behalf... Their loss of the vision of the Divine glory caused them to yearn for Egypt, and ultimately to refuse to believe that they were the people whom God would bring into the land of His promise. They fragmented because they had no faith in the purpose of their calling.

The other reason for their disunity was their failure to keep in mind, much less to comprehend, the concept of the unity of their people, or to realize that the purpose of God was not with individuals or with tribes as such, but with “all Israel”, to whose wellbeing individuals and tribes contributed by playing each their several and necessary parts. Any fellowship other than that which acknowledges that one is our Head and all we are brethren is still, as it has always proved to be, a fellowship of opposition which leads to further fragmentation within the dissident group itself. As far as we can tell from a survey of our own history and that of Israel, there is no exception to this principle.

*Alfred Nicholls
(The Christadelphian, February 1978)*

The Almond and the Coin

Sometimes I can listen to a brother speak, and his talk is so filled with figures of speech that I wonder if he even knows the literal application of them. I know I don't always. I'm not a farmer, and yet I know, for example, that the Word is filled with words and ideas that draw upon the life and work of a farmer in a bygone age.

Speech is developed out of — and dependent upon — cultures, languages, locations, and genders, among other circumstances. To appreciate this, we need go no further than our own brotherhood of Christadelphians. It can be a maze of confusion, bewilderment, sometimes agitation, and even amusement. Speech is the warp and woof of our communal life, and I love it.

The Bible has cultural idioms too. I was reading recently about a certain passage in the New Testament where, supposedly, there is a wonderful double entendre in the Greek. When the early Church Fathers tried to translate this, they recognized it could not be done and so they didn't try, but left it as it appeared in Greek. Consequently the full impact of what the apostle said was lost, for it cannot be approximated in English either. What was written in Greek, between the lines so to speak, had to be translated and explained to me several times, and in sequence and context — before I could finally understand it. Only then could I laugh!

We don't need to be an astronomer to “survey the heavens” (Psa 19:1). Nor do we need to be a biologist to understand God's promise to Abraham, that his seed would be as the stars of the heavens. William Tyndale, to whom we owe so much for the translation of the Bible into English, prayed that even a simple plowman would one day be able to fathom the depths of the divine majesty. And so it came to pass. Me, I'm not even a plowman!

We don't need to be an agronomist to understand how a seed must die to bring new life. It is enough to know that it must. It can be the little things of life that can be most profound if we let them.

An example of this occurred in our kitchen the other day, and my wife shared it with me. She was shelling almonds for her morning cereal (that's about as mundane as you can get), when she dropped one. Alas, our kitchen has almond-colored flooring with a busy pattern. From a standing position, she could never see the almond. But when she knelt down, there it was.

She came to me in the other room and wanted me to “rejoice” with her, for she had found the almond that was lost. Supportive husband that I am, I said, “Huh?” She then told me about dropping the almond and how she found it, and how that reminded her of the woman in Jesus' parable who had lost her coin:

“Suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin’ ” (Luke 15:8,9, NIV).

For a few moments we refreshed ourselves in the teachings of the Master, thanks to a dropped almond. Then we thought, this could only have happened because

we were both familiar with Jesus' little story, and we thanked our heavenly Father for providing it.

The mundane, whether coins or almonds, are of little consequence without the vital spiritual application, which in this case is in the next verse:

"In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (v 10).

If we are open to the possibility, then we will contemplate the wondrous gift bestowed on us who, though "like sheep gone astray", have been found by our Creator, who reached down and recovered us from the mire of this world — so that another verse could be written to the lovely hymn:

*"Behold the amazing gift of love
The Father hath bestowed
On us, the sinful sons of men,
To call us sons of God."*

Uncle Raymus

Making Connections

We Christadelphians have a unique characteristic: we love to discover our connections. Think of the last time you were at a Bible school. You met Sis. 'Smith.' 'Ah, you say, 'You're one of the Smiths from Vermont.' 'Yes,' she says, 'I'm also related to the Smiths from Detroit.' 'Oh, I think you must know my cousin, Jack Brown, from Florida,' you exclaim. Sis. Smith is married, it turns out, to your cousin Jack's grandson's nephew. And so it goes.

We smile and attempt to follow the branches of the family tree as our sister relates them to us. We are fascinated that, amazingly, we are connected to our new acquaintance. 'Small world,' we remark. But this is typical in Christadelphia, isn't it? In so many ways we are connected.

Why do we like to establish our connections? I think this reinforces our sense of oneness in Christ. We remember how Jesus prayed for us in John 17, looking forward through history, asking his Father to make us one with him and his Father.

True story. A few years ago at a Bible school, I met a brother in Christ who attended an ecclesia I often visited as a child. We remembered the beloved and elderly 'Uncle Roy, the candy boy,' who between Sunday school and memorial service lovingly dispensed candies to eager little children with outstretched hands.

Connections! Our brother and I remembered this dear man fondly. We reminisced about how Uncle Roy took such pleasure in giving candy to the kids in the ecclesia. Uncle Roy connected easily to the sweet-toothed youngsters, and here I was reconnecting with a brother of many, many years ago.

I think of the recorded genealogies of our Lord Jesus Christ. He certainly was connected to a huge number of characters through history. Think of these individuals in Jesus' family tree, some of whom we may not want to admit being

related to. Why are these individuals named in the gospels? It goes without saying that it is necessary for us to know Jesus' pedigree and his humanity. We need to understand our connectedness to our Master too. His lineage includes a mixed assortment of saints and sinners, kings and commoners. To be considered a brother or sister in Christ is an honor, but with strings attached. We have to bear each other's burdens.

There are many ways we demonstrate our connectedness to our Lord and Master. So many of the Brotherhood have said to me that they have been praying for me in my health crisis. What a wonderful connection! The connection we have with our heavenly Father through the privilege of prayer is an extraordinary responsibility. It behooves us to cherish our connections in Christ, and thus follow the admonition to love one another.

We are all fish caught in the same gospel net, but we have different characteristics. Let's remember that Scripture teaches us to consider one another as family. How encouraging it is to know, as we do the Bible readings, that we are receiving the same encouragement through the Word of God, on a daily basis, all over the world. We are indeed wonderfully connected in this family in Christ to which we belong. Let's remember how precious is this special relationship we share, and cherish each others' connection in Christ.

Janet Ribaldo (Finger Lakes, NY)

***Editor's Note:** Not so long ago, Barbara and I were visiting a brother and sister in the Toronto area — where Barbara grew up. I asked one question about a family relationship, which was quickly answered. Then I listened for at least an hour, while my opening question led the other three to play what I call the game of 'Who's Related?' I actually remained totally silent, and listened until I could absorb no more. The lines of family connections were woven together, and overlaid and interwoven into a vast tapestry that seemingly included every ecclesia in the whole province. (There were some large families involved, for starters.)*

It is a privilege indeed, to be part of a spiritual family. Bro. Len Richardson wrote a series of reminiscences, which he called "Sixty Years a Christadelphian — A Worm's Eye View of our Community." In one chapter, entitled "Dear Octopus", he quotes from a play, where a character proposes a toast to "The Family — that dear Octopus from whose tentacles we never quite escape, nor ever really want to." To this Bro. Len adds, "It has occurred to me that this could almost be true of the spiritual family to which we all belong. The Christadelphian family, spread worldwide, is very like an ordinary family in this respect. It has its disagreements and its undercurrents too, yet still most of us would never really want to 'escape' from its embrace. 'Blood is thicker than water' is a saying about the ties of human families, and in the case of the Christadelphian family, the blood which binds us is of even greater power."

As the mother and the child in her womb are bound together by an umbilical cord, so we are all bound together by a Biblical cord, a cord of hope and love in a spiritual family. Of the nation of Israel, the LORD God said, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son... I led them with cords of human

kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them” (Hos 11:1,4). How gratified must He be when we reciprocate that love, both toward Him and toward His other children, our brothers and sisters in the faith. How disappointed must He be when we turn our back on that love which connects us together.

Millstones and Gnats

The newly healed and converted Naaman the Aramean (or Syrian) approached the prophet Elisha with a very practical request:

“May the LORD forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I bow there also — when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant for this.”

And to this the prophet answered simply,

“Go in peace” (2Kgs 5:18,19).

Whether Naaman’s “idol” problem corresponds exactly with anything in the world today or not, it still shows a remarkable degree of latitude given by Elijah, and presumably by God. The same can be said with Cornelius keeping his job as a colonial occupier (a far worse job for a Christadelphian than a modern police captain). Or Hezekiah holding the Passover in the wrong month. Or David eating the shewbread. Or any of the seemingly tricky deals made by Jacob. The fact is that God, basically, isn’t always as fussy as we might be.

We all live in the temple of Rimmon daily (certainly Monday through Friday), making compromises and failing to live up to the letter, let alone the Spirit, of the Word of life. Therefore we have to be so careful not to put burdens on the shoulders of others when we will not, or cannot, lift a finger to help them.

“If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin [‘skandalizo’: to entrap, or cause to stumble], it would be better for him to have a large millstone [‘mylos onikos’: see note below] hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin [‘skandalon’: trap, snare, or cause of stumbling]! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!” (Matt 18:6,7).

It is possible to become confused here. No one readily stumbles or falls over a millstone; they are so large that they can be easily seen and avoided. People stumble over small stones, or stumble into small traps or snares. But it is the people — perhaps like me — who put the little snares in the paths of other believers when we take it upon ourselves to decide for them the terms by which they must approach Christ. Those of us who add unnecessary ‘tests’ to the burdens of other believers, by which they might fall, may also be tying tremendously heavy “millstones” to our own necks, and preparing ourselves for execution by drowning!

The narrow path to the Kingdom of God is littered with the bodies of those who have stumbled and fallen because of “little things”. And the side of the road is dotted with pits for lost sheep to fall into. We can put faces and names to these people — and some of the faces and names we know today are going to be the casualties of the next 10, 20, or 30 years if the Lord remains away.

Some of the things which cause people to fall by the wayside are indeed little gnats and not huge camels (to mix parables), and yes we could say, ‘It’s their own fault — they allowed little things like gnats, or _____, to cause them to stumble and fall away!’ (You can do this part yourself. Fill in the blank here with any ecclesial ‘requirement’ — whether of conduct, dress, or belief — that is truly an unnecessary burden upon others.)

Difficulties and burdens may be laid upon, or threaten to trip, any and every believer. We all must be on our guard and pray for strength when this happens. But woe especially to the person who imperiously serves up that final straw, or miniscule gnat, that at last breaks the back of the poor over-burdened disciple. Be warned: the one who does that has a huge millstone waiting for his or her neck.

Steven Cox (Beijing, China)

Editor’s Note: *What were/are millstones? Large stones for grinding grain into meal or flour, usually made of very hard stone, such as basalt or limestone. In Bible times, such grinding was done both in private households and commercial enterprises.*

Private millstones, or hand mills, would be fairly small, consisting of a large flat base stone with a depression in the middle, and a lighter rounded, or perhaps oval or loaf-shaped stone with which to do the grinding. At least some of these smaller stones, called “upper millstones”, were of a size that could be lifted and thrown by a woman, such as the woman in the tower of Thebez, who threw an upper millstone upon the head of the invader Abimelech and cracked his skull (Jdg 9:53; 2Sam 11:21). The smaller upper millstones worked by hand might weigh as little as five pounds, but the larger such upper millstones might weigh as much as 10 or 15 pounds. The base for such a grinding stone, called the “lower millstone”, would need to be flat and weigh two or three times more at least.

Commercial millstones would be many times larger, with the lower millstone again being larger than the upper millstone in the same two-to-one or three-to-one ratio at least. The commercial upper millstones had some sort of indentation for a wooden bar, by which it could be turned by a beast of burden such as an ox, horse, or donkey walking in a circular path around the even larger base. This was called in rabbinical writings the “rehayim sel hamor”, or “donkey mill”, as opposed to the “rehayim sel adam”, or “man mill”. When the blinded Samson was set to work grinding in the Philistine prison (Jdg 16:21), it may have been with a regular small hand mill; prisoners might be forced into such labor during their servitude. However, because of his strength, he was possibly used as a beast of burden, turning a very large commercial millstone. The commercial version of the upper millstone could easily weigh a hundred pounds, and its corresponding lower base up to several hundred pounds.

New Testament passages speak of drowning a man by fastening a “mylos onikos” (literally, “donkey-driven” millstone, from “onos”, donkey) round his neck and throwing him into the depth of the sea (Matt 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2 has “lithos mylikos”, literally “mill stone”; cf Rev 18:21). These passages refer to the heavy upper stone from a commercial mill, or perhaps the even heavier lower commercial millstone, weighing from 100 to several hundred pounds.

“An old man, and full”

“Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years” (Gen 25:8).

In addition to Abraham, four other men in the Bible were said to be ‘old and full of years’ [literally, ‘full of days’, as KJV]. They were Isaac (Gen 35:29); David (1Chr 23:1); the priest Jehoiada (2Chr 24:15); and Job (Job 42:17).

The other four passages read “sabea yomim”. “Sabea” signifies fullness and satisfaction. “Yom” means “day”, and “yomim” days. Thus the phrase is, literally, “full of days”. However, despite the translations that suggest otherwise, Genesis 25:8 does not have “of days” or “of years”; it reads simply “sabea” — full.

On this verse G. Campbell Morgan comments: “[Full] is a great word, especially if we leave it as it is in the Hebrew Bible, without the addition of the words ‘of years’. Abraham died full, not of years only, or principally, but of life, of experience, of all the great things. By faith he had abandoned much, but he had gained far more. He had come to know God; to walk with Him, to talk with Him; to enter into a true fellowship with Him in all the great processes of His heart. ‘He was called the friend of God’ (James 2:23). Such life is full whatever it seems to lack. The man whose vision is bounded by the things of time and sense might well say that Abraham died singularly empty. As the writer of the letter to the Hebrews said, he ‘died in faith, not having received the promises’ [Heb 11:13]. For 100 years he had sojourned in a land given to him in a covenant, but he had not possessed it according to the standards of human possession. Surely he had little of earthly gain in which to boast, and he had given up very much when he left Ur of the Chaldees. Nevertheless, he died full, for in his fellowship with God he had learned to measure time by eternity, to value the things of sense by those of spirit. To such a man death is but passing on to wait the accomplishment of the Divine purposes, and the fulfillment of the promises of God...”

Further on this word “full”, Morgan writes: “The fullness of Abraham was that of a wealth which death could not touch. The fullness which men gain who live by sight and not by faith, is a fullness of which they are emptied in death. They leave their possessions behind them. The men of faith carry their fullness with them. It is a great thing thus to die — full.”

G. Campbell Morgan



Bible Mission News

The Bahamas

Greetings in our Lord and Master's name. My name is Megan Milne, and this is the account of my very first missionary journey.

I am eighteen years old and attend Sunday school at the Brampton, ON, Ecclesia. I just graduated high school this past spring and am taking the year off before attending university next fall. During this year off I hope to earn some money, research more about what I want to do with my future career, and increase my knowledge in the one and true hope.

When Uncle Ted Hodge gave the CBMC presentation at Manitoulin Main Camp last year, I was a bundle of emotions: intrigued, moved, inspired, and particularly, dare I say, envious. Traveling to a Caribbean country to spread God's Word sounded amazing, and I desperately wanted to go, as I am sure half of the teens did. Little did I know that later that month my very own father would decide to speak on this occasion. He has taught seminars for 14 years now and so resolved to apply his experience in another area. As his only daughter, who no longer had to complete hours of homework everyday, I was asked if I would like to join. With big eyes, a giddy heart, and shining smile, I eagerly agreed!

Soon my Grandma, a very spontaneous and energetic 78 year old, felt the enthusiasm. So she called up Uncle Ted and booked herself a flight. Within a month Bro. Paul and Sis. Bonnie Robinson had also joined the team, along with their daughter Lacey, who just happened to be one of my closest friends. What an amazing opportunity we had all been given to preach, to further solidify our own knowledge of the truth, and to experience living our faith in another country! However, I must admit, as the time to leave drew nearer, I began to get nervous. Would it be safe? As seen in the Bible, many people have suffered persecution over the years. I really had no idea what to expect in this new adventure that lay before me. I decided only time would tell.

After much anticipation, the departure day finally arrived. We made it through customs smoothly and boarded the plane. As it took off, we peered through the windows at the earth below until everything grew so tiny that it looked like an art sculpture, or an intricate painting. It reminded me of our own awesome Creator that we have as a Father. I felt so insignificant and humbled by the fact that we of all people are called by God; we have been given this chance by God to inform others of the gospel as did Christ his entire life! Another great moment arose as we started our descent to The Bahamas. The beautiful turquoise water stretching

for miles was broken only by tiny islands, mere dots surrounded by very white sand. This is how God must view His earth. And what a wonderful earth it is!

When by God's grace we safely arrived in Nassau, we noticed at once the temperature change. We had left behind cold, dry Canadian air, and we were now faced with thick, hot Bahamian air. We welcomed it gladly, at first. Immediately we observed how welcoming and friendly the locals were. A live band played tropical music in one corner of the airport, which I thought was pretty cool. It added comfort as we arrived in a new country, and it demonstrated the new culture we were entering! Once we were settled into our hotel, we headed out to the town, informational flyers in hand to begin preaching and inviting others to attend the seminars that began that night.



Seminar in Nassau, Bahamas

We got our first taste of driving on the wrong, I mean, *left* side of the road. It was truly a test of concentration and brainpower trying to remember which side to drive on, especially when we got our rental car. Thankfully we made it through the entire trip with no big mishap, though we had a few close calls, for instance when turning at an intersection.

We got to town via a town bus, which to my surprise, was plastered in Bible quotes and posters that covered much of the inside walls. Most other buses we traveled on were similar to this as well. The radios that played quietly on those buses were turned to a religious channel, and if not, played American music that had interludes of spiritual encouragement. It seemed that most people had a very real knowledge of God already. We got off that first bus, and made our way to a large market situated in a huge tent. Each of us began walking down the aisles with an armful of our blue flyers, stopping to talk to anyone who would listen. I was scared to do this at first, but everyone was so receptive and open and respectful that I quickly adjusted and got better at delivering my information. It was such a change from home where being ignored or brushed off is common. People were actually crowding around asking for the flyers and taking extras home for their neighbors and friends. After about an hour and a half we had successfully delivered 400 flyers for the upcoming seminars. The flyers also advertised a website that could be accessed, with further information on God's Word. If this was any indication of what the next two weeks held for us, it was sure to be a rewarding trip!

That night we held the first seminar, with 32 people in attendance. I also made my first acquaintance with Sisters Penny, Valda and Venessa, who are the only Christadelphians in Nassau. I remember the feeling of admiration to know they

live in isolation and maintain their faith in the face of constant worldly adversity. In itself, this was a huge exhortation for me. I also had a memorable introduction to Tammy (Penny's daughter). In the short time we spent on that island, I really got to know her, finding her a kindred spirit, and great company. We were able to share many of our joys and trials in trying to keep a proper focus in life, forming a warm friendship that won't be easily forgotten.

After three consecutive seminars and some genuine Bahamian fellowship, our visit to Nassau came to a close. We then had to pack up and head over to Grand Bahamas Island, where a new set of seminars was scheduled to begin. Perhaps I will talk about that later.

*Love in the Lord,
Megan Milne*

El Salvador Bible School — December 2008

I think it went fabulously. There were about 125 people there, and even at that there was a good number of faithful attenders who were unable to come for one reason or another.

There was a lovely young man from Usulután, 24 years old and one of the eight studying for baptism with Bro. Jaime. He is an excellent prospect for the meeting there; he had given up on the churches because none of them studied the Bible. He has never missed since he first came to a lecture by Jaime six months ago.

There were 14 from Costa Rica. The older young people who came from there last year didn't return and we were afraid they weren't interested, but it turned out they would have loved to come but resources didn't permit it, and it was thought that the younger CYC members deserved a chance this year.

Everyone seemed to get along famously. There were 66 young people and children in all. The older teen class was huge — 26 kids, and there were 19 more in the 12 to 14-year-old bracket. The regular CYC and senior Sunday school group in San Salvador now has more than 20 kids who practically never miss. They say that even on a regular Sunday the hall is getting crowded, and much more so when everyone comes in from Sonsonate and Usulután a few times a year.

The place they used this year is a sort of working-class ecotourism resort — very lovely. It barely fit us all, partly because the main assembly room is really only designed for about 100 people. Most of the young people had to sit in a patio at the back of the room where they had some difficulty hearing what was going on, but it would have been nicer to have them in the main area (not that they minded!). The classrooms were very decent — though being near Sonsonate the place was pretty warm most of the time. Everything was lovely and green; there were lots of trees, flowers and grass. There was a large swimming pool which certainly added to the whole experience; the kids (and lots of adults) thought it was wonderful.

*Much love to everybody in the Hope of Israel,
Jean Hunter*



The 2008 El Salvador Bible School



San Diego to Guadalajara, México

Eight members of the San Diego County Ecclesia traveled to the Guadalajara Ecclesia in December 2008 as part of the ongoing partnership program between the two ecclesias.

First-time visitors Sis. Sylvia Duke, Sis. Rhonda Vaughan, and Sis. Christine Perry-Knuckles were accompanied by previous visitors Bro. Martin and Sis. Kathy Owen, Bro. Howard and Sis. Pam Schlottman, and Bro. Norm Duke.

This was the fourth visit by San Diego brethren to Guadalajara since the program began in the fall of 2007. The program provides personal interaction between

the ecclesias, through an exchange of correspondence and news, and especially through brief personal visits, typically over extended weekends. On this trip, Bro. and Sis. Duke generously extended their stay an additional six days, and were able to help with various preaching-related tasks.

The visits aim to assist with preaching, provide guest speakers for classes and exhortations, and offer this isolated ecclesia encouragement and connection through fellowship and social interaction.

Friday evening, members of both ecclesias met at the hall for a class led by Bro. Howard on the topic of “Conscience”, with translation ably handled by Bro. Gabriel Lopez.

On Saturday, members returned to the hall for a lunch hosted by the ecclesia. This was followed by an uplifting bilingual exchange, with those around the table each taking turns explaining about how he/she discovered the truth. The sharing of stories was translated by Bro. Gabriel (English to Spanish) and Sis. Cindy Paiva (Spanish to English).

One impressive feature in the various stories was the lack of a Christadelphian “connection” for nearly all the Guadalajara brothers and sisters in their search for the faith. For the San Diego brethren, there was a family member or work associate or neighbor who was a starting point for exploring the faith and ultimately making contact with an ecclesia. But in Guadalajara this has been absent. Each new brother or sister coming into the Truth saw a flyer or newspaper ad and made an inquiry.

Sunday worship service included an exhortation in Spanish by Bro. Martin. His topic was “Count it All Joy”, focusing on overcoming temptations and God’s use of trial in our spiritual growth. Following the breaking of bread, Bro. Filemon gave an uplifting bilingual closing prayer, thanking our God who does not regard skin color, languages, nationalities, or political borders when He looks down on His children.

Following a short break, Bro. Norm led a class in Spanish on “The Lord Will Give Thee Peace”. Several Guadalajara brethren asked questions and shared helpful observations. The day ended with a delightful meal, based on a popular local recipe, prepared by Maria De Luz Lopez (wife of Bro. Gabriel).

For the San Diego brethren, this fourth visit ended with a sense of how much this ecclesia partnership is being blessed. The Guadalajara members repeatedly shared how beneficial our visits are as they walk with Christ in an environment of family and cultural resistance, economic challenges and isolation from other Christadelphians. We collectively felt this visit, at this particular time, was a much needed boost for them.

The San Diego visitors were likewise uplifted. For instance, Sis. Rhonda reports: “As I came to know the individual struggles of the members, I saw a deep love for the Truth, and the peace that lives in those who accept Christ. Lord willing, I will return.”

Meanwhile, Sis. Christine shares: “It humbled me to see the individual challenges each had just to travel to the hall, whether by train, bus, bicycle or taxi. Their desire to learn the Truth was clear, as was their steadfastness. I really enjoyed the friendly and sincere warmth of the Guadalajara members.”

*Bro. Howard Schlottman and Sis. Rhonda Vaughan
(San Diego County)*



**Bro. Gabriel Lopez
Munoz and his family.**

**From left to right—
Jorge (son-in-law),
Lupe (daughter), Naomi
(granddaughter),
Bro. Gabriel, Maria
(his wife) and Carolina
(daughter)**

What Do Mexico, Australia, St. Lucia, Panama, Russia and the USA Have in Common?

(Brian to place 3 small baptismal photos across here (from annual report or TIYB monthly articles).

CBMA/CBMC is pleased to report that in 2008 there were **31** baptisms in **15** countries around the world. There were baptisms in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, El Salvador, México, Guyana, Halifax (Nova Scotia), Jamaica, Los Angeles Hispanic (California), Perú, Panamá, Ecuador, Russia, St. Lucia, and Trinidad & Tobago. How is this possible — such a large number in one year?

The Annual Activity Report, which all households in North America received in January 2009, details what happened in each of the areas that CBMA/CBMC has responsibility for, whether it be through missionary support, preaching initiatives, pastoral advice or welfare assistance. Just in case you missed it:

BRIAN TO INSERT CHART HERE

When you look at this chart the numbers are amazing. There are 41 ecclesias in our areas of responsibility, with over 1,277 brothers and sisters, Sunday school and CYC members. A few are fortunate enough to have on-site missionaries, and some are visited during the year by fieldworkers, but many are handled by off-site correspondence courses, phone calls and the This Is Your Bible website (TIYB.com). In fact, after completing their studies on the website, six brothers and sisters were baptized in places literally spread around the globe.

Would that we could afford more on-site missionaries and more frequent visits, but that depends on the generosity of our already generous supporters. We have areas that desperately need on-site missionaries and we even have some volunteers to go, but in these difficult economic times we are forced to delay. Our treasurers (CBMA & CBMC) estimate that if each Christadelphian family in North America gave \$200 a year, we could easily meet the 2009 budget and not depend on our dwindling reserve funds.

Please take some time to really look at the Annual Report and you will be able to see the exciting activities and results we are seeing in the CBMA/CBMC missionary areas. We need your help to continue the important work in these areas.

Donations can be made as follows:

CBMA for Latin America, Truth Corps, TIYB

Visit www.cbma.net for on-line donations, or by check sent to:

Charles Brinkerhoff, 15925 La Ronda Circle, Hacienda Heights, CA 91745-4244

CBMC for the Caribbean

Visit www.cbma.net for on-line donations, or by check sent to:

Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada V3R 0J7

*Sincerely,
Jan Berneau (CBMA Publicity)*

ThisisyourBible.com

As the year drew to a close, and CBMA/CBMC held their annual meeting we heard some exciting news. As you will read in another article we saw a combined number of 31 baptisms worldwide; six of those were related to TIYB activity. They were examples of those who found the Truth through the website and our tutors, and then were “handled” and baptized by ecclesias or CBM organizations.

The year 2008 also brought some organizational changes. We now are a united group with members representing not only CBMA/CMBC but also the CBM in England and ACBM in Australia. It is exciting to be able to present a united front for preaching! It will also be very important in the years to come as we add additional materials and lessons to the website and new languages and Sunday school lessons.

Once again, if you haven't looked at the redesigned www.thisisyourbible.com website yet, please take a few minutes to have a look. It has a different look than the last one and has additional features both in front and behind the scenes. Don't forget that your ecclesia can use the website to manage your own contacts. Again, please take a look at what great things can be done using the website.

The Survey Question for December was "Terror in Mumbai, India, sign of Christ's return?" The 155 people who answered the survey chose:

- 50% Yes, this is similar to the time of Noah, when violence was widespread on the earth.
- 32% No, it will get a lot worse than this before Jesus returns!
- 7% No, these are temporary flare-ups and will be controlled in the near future.
- 7% Bible prophecy is irrelevant to current events.
- 3% No opinion.

In addition to the survey, the booklet "The End of the World?" was read 83 times.

We now have 423 tutors available for our 9,000+ students, of whom around 3,000 are active. This number is an increase of 27 tutors since November; obviously the word is getting out and more want to be a part of this exciting preaching effort.

Want to help?

- Visit the website to find out what it's all about (www.thisisyourbible.com).
- Become an on-line tutor — you can see from the statistics above that we need your help!
- Hand out the business cards available in your ecclesia — let us know if you need more.
- Encourage your ecclesia to advertise the website in your local newspaper or as a link on your ecclesia's website — since the contacts in your area will come back to you and can be managed by your ecclesia.
- Continue your CBMA/CMBC financial support either individually or as an ecclesia. If you are not a CBMA/CMBC sponsoring ecclesia, please consider becoming one to support the important work on the website and in the mission fields.
- Contact Bro. Mike LeDuke (mduke@gto.net) or Bro. Dave Jennings (djennings@cox.net) if you have questions about the website, being a tutor, or the "Ecclesial Manager" and "Ecclesial Web Page" features on the site.

Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/CMBC Publicity

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

(For tax ID numbers please contact the Editor)

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

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

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 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
christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

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

Christadelphian Heritage College

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

Christadelphian Save the Children Fund

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

Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH)

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

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

Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation

provides assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada

Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF)

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

Christadelphian Care Line

provides a service for those who need fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. We now have Canadian Charitable status. 866-823-1039

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

News & Notices

AUSTIN SOUTH, TX

We were blessed this year to share fellowship with the following visiting brothers and sisters: Sis. Wallesha Wallace (Kingston, Jamaica); Bro. Rob and Sis. Jodee Webb (Hamilton Greenaway, ON); Bro. Tony Isaacs (Atlanta, GA); and various brothers and sisters from the Austin Leander Ecclesia. We thank the brothers who provided words of exhortation.

In January, February and March of 2008, we hosted a Learn to Read the Bible Effectively seminar at the South Austin Senior Activity Center. We are also very pleased to announce the return to fellowship of our brother Mark Gottschall.

The Austin South Ecclesia is trying to buy a building for our meeting. Currently we have collected enough money for a down payment on property in the South Austin area, but are looking at options for financing an office condo. For the time being we are meeting at Gott Music, a music store owned by Bro. Geno and Sis. Beth Gottschall. The physical address is 2047 W. Stassney Lane, Austin, TX 78745.

Geno Gottschall

BRANTFORD, ON

We thank our heavenly Father that we have been blessed with three more baptisms over the last month. MARK READ on December 13, 2008, AMY HILL on December 20, 2008, both of Christadelphian families, and JENNIFER DAY on January 3, 2009. Sis. Jennifer, a friend of the Reads, has been attending our seminars, lectures and other meetings for two years and is very grateful for what she has found in the truth. Our mid-week seminar held in the basement of the ecclesial hall is successfully helping our attendees integrate with the ecclesia, and seems to work well as follow-up to our seminars and special lectures held outside of the hall.

By way of transfer, we commend Bro Paul and Sis Roxana Chalifoux to the love and fellowship of the Brampton, ON, Ecclesia effective December 21, 2008.

Daniel Billington

LONDON, ON

We rejoice in the baptisms of T.J. RINESS and RACHEL HOARE on July 20, and RYAN VENUS on September 28. We pray that God will bless our two new brothers and our new sister in their walk toward the kingdom, and that we shall be mutually strengthened by our fellowship together. On October 11 T.J. and Rachel were united in marriage with the blessing of our ecclesia on their new life together in Christ. On September 16 we held our annual fraternal gathering and thank Bre. Don Styles and Nathanael Abel for their ministrations.

Colin Meaker

NAPLES, FL

We meet each Sunday morning at 10:30 AM. We warmly offer hospitality and fellowship to those who may be vacationing or visiting in our area during the months of October through May. Please call Bro. David Whitaker, 239-732-8086, or Bro. Bob

Davis, 239-455-2284 for location.

David Whitaker

ORLANDO, FL

The Orlando, FL, Ecclesia enjoyed the fellowship of the following brothers and sisters during the past year: Sis. Jenny Nicholson, Bro. Alan and Sis. Chris Mills, Bro. Trevor and Sis. Ruth Deedman, and Bro. Ron MacMullins (UK); Bro. Allan and Sis. Sandra Walker, Sis. Alice Patrong, Bro. Tom and Sis. Vivian Thorp, Bro. Norm and Sis. Jan Luff, and Bro. Ed and Sis. Theresa Rivet (ON); Bro. Josh and Sis. Amy Lagasee and their son, Dominick (Norfolk, VA); Sis. Kat King (Rogue River, OR); Bro. Dafydd and Sis. Lynne Jenkins (Cardiff Museum Place, UK); Bro. Peter and Sis. Susan Dulis (Toronto, ON); Sis. Flo DeSilvestro, Sis. Nancy Adams, and Sis. Margaret Cummins (Moorestown, NJ); and Bro. Tom and Sis. Tricia Bekker (Milford Road, MI).

Sis. Emily Tingle of Antigua and Sis. Aubrey Walker of Beloit, OH, spent several weeks in the Orlando area last summer. We enjoyed their fellowship as well.

We would like to extend a thank you to all those brothers who graciously exhorted.

Randy Davenport

PARIS AVENUE, OH

The second half of 2008 has witnessed several events at our ecclesia. We rejoice in the marriage of our Sis. Pauli Prater and Bro. Jordan Canady in July. We enjoyed visitors from the Pittsburgh Ecclesia and several Canadian ecclesias at our annual picnic in August. We thank Bro. Roger Long from the UK for leading us in a study of Ephesians during our September study weekend. Visitors attended from throughout the Midwest and Ontario.

In October Bro. Bob Pommer from the Pittsburgh Ecclesia shared an exhortation with us. In November we witnessed the baptism of our new sister, MADISON McNUTT, daughter of Bro. Larry and Sis. Lisa McNutt. And recently we have received into our ecclesia by transfer from the Orlando, FL, Ecclesia Bro. Don and Sis. Jean Wilson, who have moved to the Columbus, OH area. They are the parents of our Sis. Melinda Flatley.

This fall we launched our first Vote for the Kingdom seminar. It was a one-night presentation on the coming kingdom of God. It was timed to coincide with the USA presidential election. We focused our advertising and presentation on a coming administration that will bring true change we can believe in through the promises of God. We held it at our hall and had a number of visitors. We followed this up with an eight-week Fundamentals of Bible Prophecy seminar. A handful of participants from those seminars are now scheduled to continue after the first of the year in our seminar series called, "The Gospel of the Bible".

Jack Vogelgesang

WASHINGTON, DC

The Washington, DC, Ecclesia has been blessed with many visitors in 2008. We would like to offer our thanks to those brothers who, while visiting, gave words of exhortation.

Our visitors were as follows: Jan. 6, Bro. Steven Mansfield (Golden Grove, Adelaide, S. Aust.); March 2, and August 24, Bro. Bill Perry (Milford Road, MI); April 13, Bro.

Graham Grieve (Ringwood, Aust.); May 11, Bro. Josiah Hewitson (Baltimore, MD); June 22, Bro. David King (Petersburg, VA); August 17, Bro. Jack Green (Ocala, FL); November 9, Bro. John Handy (Baltimore, MD); and November 16, Bro. Glenn Abel (Petersburg, VA).

We would like to thank Bro. Phil Hazzard (Atlanta North, GA) for his classes, “God Manifestation in the Gospel of John”, given April 19,20, 2008, at our Baltimore/ Washington Gathering. We also would like to thank Bro. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA) for his classes, “Only Forgiveness”, given November 29,30, 2008, at the Camp Hashawha family study weekend.

We were blessed this year with two future Sunday school students. Caleb James Adams was born to Bro. Brian and Sis. Sharon Adams on April 24, 2008. Also, Sophia Eve Kling was born to Bro. Eric and Sis. Dawn Kling on July 28, 2008.

On October 11, 2008, we had a preaching effort at a fair in Germantown, MD. We rented a booth to hand out a variety of Christadelphian literature. We also used giveaway items advertising the ThisisyourBible.com website. On Jan. 28, 2009, we plan to launch our next Learn to Read the Bible Effectively seminar, to be held once again in our ecclesia.

Last December, we welcomed back into fellowship Bro. Paul Harris who had been absent from the ecclesia for many years.

Cory Crabill

CHC Teacher Appeal

The Christadelphian Heritage College (CHC) is a Christadelphian school that has been in operation since 2002. Located in Brantford, ON, it serves as a godly environment where children can learn and exercise Biblical principles in the course of their daily studies. God has blessed the school largely through the hard work of its volunteers.

We are anticipating an urgent need for teachers and support staff for the coming year. There are paid positions available and assistance with living expenses for those who need it. Any full or part-time work would be greatly appreciated.

The core of our school depends on teachers. This may be for a couple of mornings or afternoons a week or more. The school uses a pre-prepared curriculum to provide a quality education while easing workloads. The CHC provides a wonderful opportunity for a young person looking for experience as in high school co-op, or for a retired person looking to serve the community.

There is a need for monitors during lunch and recesses to look after the children. Being there to do this, even if it is just once a week, provides some needed time for our teachers. We need people as support staff for grading homework and tests, copying, typing, and being there to help with whatever comes along.

For further information, please contact Sis. Judy Macfarlane by phone at 905-648-1266 or by email at imac6@sympatico.ca.

Tim Young

Bro. Tony Giordano

On January 8, 2009, Bro. Tony Giordano fell asleep in Christ.

Bro. Tony, a member of the Norfolk, VA, Ecclesia, spent his life in the service of the brotherhood without partiality. He was active in teaching and preaching the gospel

for many, many years. He traveled and taught at many Bible schools, study weekends, and fraternal gatherings across the United States and Canada. He was also a tireless worker for unity in the brotherhood in North America.

Bro. Tony was one of the pioneers of the Bible seminars that have enjoyed widespread success in recent years. His own seminars, such as “Family Life in the Lord”, offered constructive help to many.

Bro. Tony was a kindly, generous and gracious brother in Christ. His words of exhortation and exposition were always intended to instruct, upbuild and encourage — never to attack, tear down or dishearten. His is a legacy worth remembering.

His son Bro. Mark writes: “My father was getting a little weary from human frailty, but was never weary of well doing. Now he is asleep in Christ, awaiting the resurrection. There are no more fears, pains or sorrows for him. God has given him rest from his labors, and he will live again when our Lord returns. Whatever sorrow we feel in the helplessness of our mortality is obscured by the light of the Truth, as it promises the future we will share with our Lord. My father was full of life, love, mercy, patience and hope. They came together in unwavering faithfulness to everyone. We were blessed to share the fullness of his faith. We are much more thankful than empty for all that he gave us. Our mother [Sis. Esther] is strong and faithful. Their marriage together was a true expression of one spirit.”

Minute Meditation

“Nothing shall offend them”

*“We should be too big to take offense and too noble to give it”
(Abraham Lincoln).*

What a wise saying! If only we all would follow it. We don’t want to wear our feelings on our sleeves so that if someone just looks at us cross-eyed, we become offended. We also need to be conscious of the feelings of others and try not to give offence. There are times when we may have to say some hard things. It is important to say hard things in a kind and loving way. The words we choose, the tone of our voice, and even our body language speak volumes that others pick up and react to. We should be particularly careful with whatever we write because the words won’t be softened by our tone of voice. What we write should pass the same test as if we were speaking face to face — would we like to hear what we are saying? Some folks have written very harsh things in emails and the like, things that they would never say to anyone in person.

We need to remember that by our words we will be judged. The Lord was saying something hard when he said, “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the

day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

So do our words, spoken or written, offend others? Solomon tells us, “An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel.” Jesus said, “It is impossible but that offenses will come”; then he continues by warning, “Woe unto him, through whom they come!” We need to take care that we speak at all times in a Christ-like manner so that even those who may be overhearing us, who may be young in faith or age, are not turned away. Jesus continues, “It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.” Our words can stir up strife as well as offend others. Solomon tells us what God thinks of those who stir up strife. He says that God hates those who “sow discord among brethren”, and “It is to a man’s honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.”

If we are on the receiving end of someone else’s harsh words, we need to learn to be too big to take offense. The Psalmist tells us, “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.” Part of loving our neighbor as ourselves involves being longsuffering and not easily provoked. Paul explains, “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil.”

So how do we live up to Abraham Lincoln’s remark? How can we be so noble that we will not offend, and so big that we will not take offense? Controlling our tongue is one way because, as James tells us, it can be full of deadly poison. “With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness.” Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. If we are full of love for our brethren and truly love them as ourselves, then we would not want to speak or write anything hurtful to them. Also, we would not stop loving them if they behaved badly toward us. Since we love them, we realize they are not perfect, and as fellow travelers on the road to the kingdom we know we all make mistakes at times.

Let us then strive to be too big to take offense and too noble to give it by loving our brethren so much that we think carefully before we speak. May our words be full of grace and truth, and may we be merciful to those who fail, giving thanks “To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.”

Robert J. Lloyd

The wisdom of Abraham Lincoln

*Character is like a tree and reputation like its shadow.
The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.*

*Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s
character, give him power.*

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

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

7,8 Paris Avenue, OH. Study Weekend

- 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 davidrlloyd@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

10-12 Wichita, Falls. Spring gathering at the T4C camp, Freestone, TX. Bro. Paul Billington

(Brantford, ON) "Israel in the Bible & in the news". Contact Bro. Larry Beutel 940-592-9418 or Bro. John Clubb at jclubb4081@aol.com

25,26 Baltimore/Washington Gathering and Study Day Washington ecclesial hall, 9240 Riggs Road, Adelphi, MD, 20783, 1pm on Sat, 10:30am on Sun. Bro. Mike Robinson (Echo Lake, NJ): "Ezra, Nehemiah — Studies in Ecclesial Dynamics and Problem Solving". Contact: Bro. Bob Kling, 301-498-5245, rkling@computer.org

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.

1-3 Vancouver Island Sister's Weekend. Beach Acres Resort. Sis. Maritta Terrell (Austin Leander, TX): "Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World." Contact: Sis. Eileen Henthorn, 19-1950 Cultra Ave., Saanichton, BC V8M 1E3, or Sis. Yvonne Rosenau at yvonne2001@shaw.ca. Cost \$180; \$90 non-refundable reservation

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

16 Moorestown NJ Study Day, Moorestown, NJ Ecclesial hall, 1:00pm. Bro. Matt Link (Washington, DC): "Galatians". Contact: Bro. David Cheetham, 856-273-3654, Dnacheetham@aol.com

17 Mid-Atlantic Fraternal Gathering Clarion Hotel, Cherry Hill, NJ, 10:30am. Bro. Matt Link (Washington, DC). Contact: Bro. David Cheetham, Dnacheetham@aol.com, 856-273-3654

29-31 New York Metropolitan Sisters' Retreat Weekend. Pocono Manor, Pocono, PA. Sis. Cynthia (Cindy) Paiva (Guadalajara, Mexico): "Tough Love" — Loving when the loving gets tough. Space is limited register early. For complete information and registration contact: Sis. Averil Ferguson, 718-881-8705, averilpsm23@juno.com

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.terrannotabibleschool.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).

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
P.O. Box 530696 • Livonia, MI 48153-0696
Periodicals Postage Paid at San Dimas, California

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

SEPTEMBER 2009

19,20 Paris Avenue, OH. Study Weekend

The following page does not belong in this issue,
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It's not surprising Marian connected the preaching effort with bearing fruit because the Stocks were living on a large ranch north of Moorpark at the time, where they grew and sold apricots. Even today, over 100 years later, the beautiful canyon they lived in is still entirely agricultural and filled with orange, lemon, and avocado trees.



Apricot pitters on the Stocks ranch about 1903. Note the early Ventura County Christadelphians in the photo. Future Christadelphians, David and Ruth Stocks (Robert and Marian's children) have been circled.

Marian wrote to the Christadelphian magazine in 1905, mentioning a new preaching effort in Ventura County. "We were able to get a hall, rent free, in Somis, a small village, six miles from our ranch, and Brother Irwin gave three lectures there... As we expected, the attendance of strangers was very meager; but those of us who could attend were much edified. Brother Irwin did not bring the Pomona ecclesia tent outfit this time — it is laid up for the winter — but brought his 'black-board' cloth, which he fastened up outside the one store in Somis, printing dates, subjects, and places in white chalk, and very beautifully he can do it." She also mentioned that their daughter, Ruth, was baptized at age 13. That same year her husband, Bro. Robert Stocks, "gave... a very acceptable and edifying address at the Lord's table" ¹⁴ in Los Angeles.



The store where Bro. J.T. Irwin led a Ventura County Christadelphian preaching effort in Somis, CA, in 1905.