

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN 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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Rules for Bible Study

First: In any doctrine taught by types or shadows, the antitype must always correspond with the type, and the shadow with the substance.

Second: In studying the Scriptures, consider that the New Testament is a commentary on the Old.

Third: Never be afraid of results to which you may be driven by your investigations, as this will inevitably bias your mind and disqualify you to arrive at ultimate truth.

Fourth: Investigate everything you believe — if it is the truth it cannot be injured thereby; if error, the sooner it is corrected the better.

Fifth: Pursue this course with as much independence as if you were the only one concerned.

Sixth: Rely on no authority less than divine in so momentous an undertaking.

Prove all things: hold fast to that which is good.

John Thomas

Editorial

Which View is Right?

It happens all the time. Two Bible-believing people have opposing views on a certain passage of Scripture. Both claim to have solid supporting evidence in terms of context, cross-references and consistency. Both make what they think are reasonable arguments for their interpretations. So how can we determine which view is right? And does it matter?

Which view?

Using elementary logic, there are four possibilities regarding accuracy. Either

- (1) View A is 100% right and View B is all wrong, or
- (2) View B is 100% right and View A is all wrong, or
- (3) Both A and B are partly right and partly wrong, or
- (4) Both are 100% wrong.

But again, how can it be determined which possibility is the right one? And does it matter?

Based on probability, it is most likely that both views are partly right and partly wrong. With the exception of clear-cut fundamental Bible teaching — sometimes called “first principles” — no one should expect to find the full, complete, all-aspects-covered answer.

For example, a Bible student can be precise and meticulous in interpreting the known evidence, but what about the unknown? Scripture is so richly significant and interwoven that discovery of another aspect or realization of another line of inquiry is just a matter of time. Several times in the 20th century alone, discoveries of ancient texts — in fact, whole libraries of ancient texts — have thrown new light on Bible passages. Ongoing archaeological investigations continue to help us understand God’s inspired Record better.

There are many reasons why an avid Bible student will never stop learning:

- There is always more to learn.
- Even the most diligent and knowledgeable student doesn’t understand everything.
- Even some theory or prophetic interpretation that is 99% correct is still 1% wrong, or 1% incomplete.
- No one should be unalterably dogmatic on a matter (with the possible exception of first principles).
- To stop learning, or to stop being open to the prospect of learning something, is to give way to pride and presumption.

Why do we add: ‘with the *possible* exception of first principles’? Can’t we be 100% certain of first principles? Not necessarily.

- (a) For one thing, *our* first principles are expressed in man's imperfect wording; there is always the possibility of simple misunderstanding of what, precisely, those words *mean*.
- (b) For another thing, some of the first principles, at least, are only *temporarily* true. For example, we believe it is fundamental that the dead are in their graves and know nothing. But when Christ returns, many of the dead will be raised, and — for some at least — that first principle will be a thing of the past.
- (c) Likewise, we believe it is fundamental that the Holy Spirit gifts and powers are unavailable to us today, but when the Kingdom of God is about to be established, then the glorified saints will surely have such powers. One day the 'first principle' is true, and the next day it isn't!

If we are spiritually growing as disciples of Christ, we are continually seeking to increase in knowledge and understanding. God's Truth invites... indeed, it welcomes... investigation. So when encountering a different view, we should seize the opportunity at least to understand the evidence provided. We can always learn something, and if we're wise, we may need to adjust our own views accordingly.

So what has all this to do with Bible study? Simple. There are many differing interpretations of Scripture. Which view is right? The measuring stick for soundness and rightness must be God's Word. It's that simple.

Of course, many other views (with which we may disagree) cite Bible verses as evidence. Thus it becomes a matter of determining:

- the relevance of the cited passage: Does it contain the same or similar words and ideas?
- its validity: Does it really support the point being argued?
- Its clarity: Is the reference self-explanatory, or does it, too, need interpretation?
- Its consistency: Is the interpretation in harmony with undisputed fundamentals of Bible teaching?

For example, if an opinion is inconsistent with or contradicts well-known Bible facts and doctrine, then it must be modified accordingly, or abandoned. So just because a view is argued by citing dozens of verses does not, in itself, make it Biblically sound. What counts is clear, relevant evidence, logically arrived at.

But who is to decide what is relevant, valid, clear and consistent? In the opening paragraph, the scenario was about two people claiming solid Bible evidence and sound reasoning. How are solidness and soundness evaluated? And how is one view determined to be more right than another? Well, there are rules of logic and argumentation and applicability that can serve as a measuring stick, but the issue goes beyond academic accuracy. It's still necessary to remind ourselves of the other question: 'Does it matter?'

Does it matter?

When two Bible-believing people have opposing views on a Bible passage, does it matter if one is more right than the other?

Yes and no. It does matter if a person's misunderstanding of a Bible passage, or several passages, will take him or her out of the way that leads to salvation. It doesn't matter if the view is simply differing details such as timing and location and protagonists.

For example, if one's view is that all believers will be "raptured" to be with Christ, and so they will totally avoid the last days tribulation, that person might be shaken in faith upon finding that he has to endure the tribulation, as Scripture plainly teaches will be the experience of some believers at least (cp 1Pet 4:12,13; Luke 21:34-36; Rev 2:10; 6:9-11; 7:14; 11:3-8).

On the other hand, if one's view is that the Judgment of Christ will be held at Mount Sinai, while another's view is that the Judgment will take place in Jerusalem, then the actual location seems to have little relevance to larger issues. Thus holding one view or the other can scarcely jeopardize one's salvation. Historically, we Christadelphians have always understood that there is a distinct difference between (what Bro. Roberts famously called) "true principles" and "uncertain details".

How we deal with our differences

Finally, there is *how* we deal with our inevitable differences.

Suppose a person with a particular view is 100% right on an issue that could easily affect the salvation of a person with a different view. The matter doesn't stop here. If the first person (the one who is *perfectly* right) is not patient, gentle and meek in trying to persuade the second person (2Tim 2:24,25), but rather impatient, harsh and accusatory (manifested by strong words, condescension, indignation, arrogance, or threats), then his correctness counts for little:

"The Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth" (2Tim 2:24,25).

Wrong behavior more than cancels out right knowledge. If anyone has been blessed to have the right understanding of Scripture, then he or she has the responsibility to be forthright but caring toward those who do not yet share that understanding. Such patient, gentle teaching imitates the prophets, the apostles, and Jesus himself.

Questions we should never cease asking ourselves, and about which we should never cease examining ourselves:

- Which view is right?
- Have you examined all the evidence?
- Are you absolutely sure?
- Does the difference really matter?
- How should you deal with the difference?

George Booker

How Far to Go, and Where to Stop

How far we ought to go and where to stop is at one time or other a perplexing problem to most earnest minds. They are afraid on the one hand of compromising the Truth in fellowship, and on the other, of sinning against the weaker members of the body of Christ. The only end there can be to this embarrassment is found in the discrimination between true principles and uncertain details that do not overthrow them.

There are general principles as to which there can be no compromise: but there are also unrevealed applications of these principles in detail which cannot be determined with certainty, and which every man must be allowed to judge for himself without any challenge of his right to fellowship. To insist on uniformity of opinion on those uncertain details is an excess of zeal which may be forgiven, but which meanwhile inflicts harm and distress without just cause.

An exception would, of course, be naturally made in the case of the construction of a detail that would destroy the general principle involved, such as where a man professing to believe in Christ might also believe in Mahomet or Confucius — of which there are examples. This supplementary belief destroys the first belief, for a true belief in Christ is a belief in his exclusive claims.

Robert Roberts,
True Principles and Uncertain Details, 1898

Balancing the Book

*Truth, like love, is “a many-splendored thing”; and presents many aspects. Too often we may find ourselves so obsessed with one of these facets that we give insufficient consideration to those others which, though presenting a different face, are yet part of the same truth. There is always what I have called the “Yes, but” syndrome. In other words, a thing may be true, yet still not be **the** Truth. We have to learn to balance the Book.*

Len Richardson

The Spirit of Meekness

We must overcome the flesh and all its works; we must bring forth the fruit of the Spirit; but we must at the same time remember that we are all sinners who can only be saved through grace. Those who are spiritually minded must thus be ready to restore offenders in the spirit of meekness; considering themselves lest they also be tempted; bearing one another’s burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ (Gal 6:1,2).

Islip Collyer

Exhortation

The True “Pilgrim’s Progress”

I vaguely recall reading “The Pilgrim’s Progress” in high school. Nevertheless, that very story came to mind as I was preparing for an exhortation on Psalm 84.

John Bunyan’s “The Pilgrim’s Progress” is an allegory about the Christian religion. It allegorizes the journey of a Christian into “the Celestial City”, which represents heaven.

How thankful we are that, having been delivered from past superstitions (as expressed in Bunyan’s work), and having embraced the true gospel, we can understand the “journey” described in Psalm 84. Brief as Psalm 84 is, it beautifully captures the innermost feelings of the follower of Christ. Each of us passes through his or her own “valley of Baca (i.e., tears)”, but all the while we see the blessedness (“oh, the happiness”) in store for us, if we will only stay the course.

(Alternate renderings are from the RSV or Young’s Literal Translation.)

From the beginning of the psalm, we notice how the psalmist maintains his focus:

- “How amiable are thy Tabernacles [‘How lovely is thy dwelling place’], O LORD of Hosts!” (v 1).
- “My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out [‘sing for joy’] for the living God” (v 2).
- “Yea [‘Even’] the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even [‘at’] thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God” (v 3).
- “Blessed are [‘Oh, the happiness of’] they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee [‘ever singing thy praise’]. Selah” (v 4).
- “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand [thousand elsewhere’]. I had rather be a doorkeeper [‘I have chosen rather to be at the threshold’] in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (v 10).

The focus of the psalmist is the House of God and the peace, joy and acceptance that can only be realized therein.

“Oh, the happiness of they that dwell in thy house; they will be ever singing they praise.”

This prophetic statement of a truly “final” contentment echoed the work of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun (a.k.a. Ethan), “whom David set over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after the ark had rest” (1Chron 6:31).

Compare what is said of these three men in 2 Chronicles 5:12-14, and see if the “picture” set forth doesn’t convey to you what is envisioned by the psalmist:

“Also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen,

having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets: It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God."

We recall the incident when God struck down Nadab and Abihu at His tabernacle, because their worship was unacceptable to Him. They approached Him in the ways that suited them, but not as He had directed.

Against that backdrop, we consider the names of the three men, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun (or Ethan). Using the alternate name of Ethan, their names convey this message: "An assembly of the faithful singing praise to Yahweh forever"! Could there have possibly been a clearer foreshadowing (in our Father's divine design) the hope that awaits the faithful, "arrayed in white... making one sound to be heard in praising and thanking" our heavenly Father?

"Even" the sparrow hath found a house (v 3). The usage of that word can convey the thought of something "insignificant" (or rather, seemingly "of less significance"). The picture is that of one of the smallest of Yahweh's creation finding rest, and nesting her young at the altar of God. The altar was His place of acceptance. Doesn't this picture perfectly blend in with the overall aspect of the Psalm? A picture of final rest, and acceptance in the eternal household of God.

The psalmist brings to our minds the joy of dwelling in the house (household) of our heavenly Father (vv 1-4). Then, in verses 5-9, he takes us through the developmental stages of our lives. Finally, he brings us forward once again to that final realization of our heart's desire!

"Oh, the happiness of the man whose strength is in thee... They shall go from strength to strength... Who passing through the valley of weeping make it a place of springs..." (vv 5,6). How often do we find ourselves in that "valley of weeping"? The varied trials that we each face, the underlying burden of this mortality. Do we find ourselves resorting to our only source of comforting "water"; or do we resign ourselves to other sources? Our thirst can only be quenched, and final contentment can only be found, from one source.

Spiritual development and progress are brought to the mind's eye, in complete harmony with Paul's guidance to the brethren at Ephesus:

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him, in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph 4:15).

"Behold, our shield, oh God, and look upon the face of thine anointed" (v 9). As if to ask, 'Who is our shield? You, O Yahweh, are the defense, the refuge that we have chosen! Look upon our countenance, for it must surely tell you of these thoughts, our struggles and our desire!'

“For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I have chosen rather to be at thy threshold in the house of my God” (v 10). Yes, we each determine our course in this life. As followers of our Savior we have each determined what we want more than anything, to experience true happiness, true contentment; and that can only be found in the “house of our God” (both now, and in eternity).

The “threshold” was directly associated with “worship” (Ezek 46:2), the “glory of God” (Ezek 9:3; 10:4, 18) and the place of “healing waters” (Ezek 47:1). The “doorkeeper” was positioned at the “threshold”, as a guardian! Haven’t we, as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, been entrusted with our heavenly Father’s word? Aren’t we “guardians” of such, in the house (household) of our Father even now? We are preparing, now, for what we will be doing for our Father as immortals. Oh, to be unburdened of this mortality!

“O LORD, of hosts, O the happiness of the man that trusteth in thee” (v 12). As “pilgrims” in our journey through life and toward “Life”, let us hold fast. Let us endure, and we will most certainly experience those things that we recognize will truly cause us to be among that blessed “assembly of the faithful singing praise to Yahweh forever”!

Shannon Strickland (Houston North, TX)

The Valley of Weeping

*I have been through the valley of weeping,
The valley of sorrow and pain;
But the God of all comfort was with me,
At hand to uphold and sustain.*

*As the earth needs the clouds and sunshine,
Our souls need both sorrow and joy;
So He places us oft in the furnace,
The dross from the gold to destroy.*

*When He leads through some valley of trouble,
His omnipotent hand we trace;
For the trials and sorrows He sends us,
Are part of His lessons in grace.*

*Oft we shrink from the purging and pruning,
Forgetting the Husbandman knows
That the deeper the cutting and paring,
The richer the cluster that grows.*

*Well He knows the affliction is needed;
He has a wise purpose in view,
And in the dark valley He whispers,
‘Hereafter you’ll know what I do.’*

*As we travel through life's shadow'd valley,
Fresh springs of His love ever rise;
And we learn that our sorrows and losses
Are blessings just sent in disguise.
So we'll follow wherever He leadeth,
Let the path be dreary or bright;
For we've proved that our God can give comfort —
Our God can give songs in the night!*

(Author unknown)

Bible Study

To Speak Well of God: (6) Satan and the Righteous Man

Enter the debaters. We observe the three friends: 'Les Conforteurs Miserables' (Job 16:2), whom we have already identified as occupying the office of the Satan, i.e., hosting human pride, and the Righteous Man, Job.

6.1 Eliphaz the Temanite, a Child of Abraham

Expositors generally assume Eliphaz the Temanite is the eldest of the three friends;^{1, 2, 3} supported by the observation that he speaks first in a culture where the youngest evidently speaks last (Job 32:4).

Eliphaz the Temanite is a child of faithful Abraham and should therefore be a source of blessing to all nations of the Earth (Gen 12:3). But Eliphaz is a descendant of Esau (Edom); whose nation the Scriptures reveal as ill-disposed towards God's children. Their legacy is recorded when Israel had escaped Egypt — i.e., the time of Job — and asked to pass through Edom's country unmolested. This hospitality Edom harshly rejected, replaced instead with a threat of attack (Num 20:14-18). I don't want to attribute the sins of the fathers to the children (cf Deut 24:16), but maybe the Bible has left this exchange as prophetic for Eliphaz the Temanite, who tragically fulfills the measure of his forefathers. Far from comforting Job and easing his passage through his personal wilderness, Eliphaz, son of Edom, ends up attacking him.

Initially he is kindly, reassuring Job of his (Job's) specific good works and his confidence that God's observation of them will lead to Job's restoration (Job 4:3-6). Yet as the debate continues, his tone reverses and, in his final speech, he flatly contradicts his earlier comments (Job 22:5-11). As his Edomite forefathers, Eliphaz the Temanite ultimately displays no pity for the struggles of God's disciple, adrift in a wilderness of pain and suffering.

6.2 Bildad the Shuhite, a child of Abraham

Bildad the Shuhite is also a child of Abraham, another invested as a blessing to all nations. Yet Bildad the Shuhite is arguably even less equipped to deliver that blessing to Job than Eliphaz.

We must take care how we describe these men, because ultimately they are brought to salvation and will take their places in the Kingdom of God. That said, can we say Bildad's arguments are tinted with viciousness? His attack on Job is implied, but the implications are unmistakably clear. Instead of criticizing Job directly, Bildad creates a hypothetical evil character and describes what would befall this character; taking pains to detail the specific calamities Job is suffering.

The conclusion of Bildad the Shuhite:

*"Surely such [Job's condition] is the dwelling of an evil man;
such is the place of one who knows not God" (Job 18:21).*

Yet Job, who had to endure the above calamities, and not merely witness them, concludes:

"Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" (Job 2:10).

How fascinating that, long before the revelations of the Lord Jesus or the apostle Paul, there is so powerful a Biblical lesson showing what it is to be a man of faith, and what it is to be merely a child of Abraham.

6.3 Zophar the Naamathite, a child of Abraham, an Israelite, a Jew

Zophar traces his ancestry through the tribe of Benjamin. He is not only an Israelite, but also a Jew; by bloodline the closest to 'God's people.' Yet his commentary shows him as far from salvation as any of the friends. In fact where Eliphaz and Bildad begin with kind words that later sour, Zophar attacks Job from the moment he opens his mouth. He does not display the suavely eloquent, yet ultimately duplicitous, constructions of Eliphaz, nor (mercifully) the vicious streak of Bildad, but he does seem disappointingly pompous. He usurps the position of God to declare:

"Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin" (Job 11:6).

Any rational analysis of this statement must conclude Zophar has made various unsustainable assertions here, and hence our concern of pomposity. All three friends are firm advocates of the false doctrine of exact retribution, but Zophar the Naamathite gives the clearest expression of it: Job 11:11-20.

6.4 The righteous man, Job

Finally the protagonist: the man Job. Perhaps the most important description of Job is that he is God's servant (Job 1:8; 2:3). This portrayal should strike us as unusual, for other Scriptures intimate God has no servants (Acts 17:24,25). I suspect the description of Job is more glowing than we might imagine. Paul's speech from the Areopagus says God has no servants because He Himself is the servant, providing everything for His children, even each breath by which we are sustained. So when God terms Job "my servant," I believe He is saying that *Job is in the image of God* (as we are supposed to be — Gen 1:26). Job appears as a

servant of his fellow man, because God first was a servant and Job is a very godly man. Hence Job can be useful to serve his fellow man in God's Will — which is precisely how God employs him.

Job has no stated genealogy. The other characters have their genealogy appended: Eliphaz *the Temanite*; Bildad *the Shuhite*; Zophar *the Naamathite*. But for Job, no history is listed. In fact, the contrast is absolute: the three friends are *never* referenced *without* their genealogy, and equally Job is *never* listed *with* a genealogy. In a later article I will attempt to suggest there is a spiritually important reason why this is.

6.4.1 The suffering of Job

We certainly cannot appropriately consider Job's character without mentioning the extent of his suffering. The piercing cries Job emits reveal that the full five arenas of the human experience: physical, emotional, social, intimate and spiritual; have all been devastated.

- Physical suffering (Job 7:4-5)
- Emotional suffering (Job 6:2-4)
- Social suffering, from being ostracized, hated and ridiculed (Job 30:1,9,10)
- Intimate suffering: the loneliness of being distanced from spouse and family (Job 19:17)
- Spiritual suffering: the most keenly felt of all by righteous Job, the spiritual loneliness of apparent abandonment by God Himself (Job 23:8-13; 30:19-22)

Perhaps what highlights the desperation of Job's condition is his contradictory comments about desiring God's presence. At some points, his most fervent desire is to be hidden from God, where he can be protected from the pain that he knows the Lord is bringing (Job 7:16-19). Yet at other times, with equal but opposite intensity, he desires nothing more than to be reunited with the Father from whom he feels distanced (Job 29:2-6). Without doubt both contradictory desires are completely true. His pain thrusts him away from God, yet his faith propels him towards Him. This is how we find Job, roughly tugged in opposite directions; rent between his theology and his experience.

We are in no position to regard any shortcomings of Job that his ensuing struggle with Satan may reveal until we have taken good time to reflect on the magnitude and range of the assaults which the Satan has caused to be brought against him. These dire scenarios produced Job's early wail of utter regret over his very existence and curses of the day he came into being.

*"May the day of my birth perish,
and the night it was said, 'A boy is born!'
That day — may it turn to darkness;
may God above not care about it;
may no light shine upon it.
May darkness and deep shadow claim it once more;*

*may a cloud settle over it;
may blackness overwhelm its light.
That night — may thick darkness seize it;
may it not be included among the days of the year
nor be entered in any of the months.
May that night be barren;
may no shout of joy be heard in it.
May those who curse days curse that day,
those who are ready to rouse Leviathan” (Job 3:3-8).*

The last phrase is interesting. I don't know what beast Job conceptualized as Leviathan, but it's likely he referenced a mythical sea beast similar to Western culture's land-based legendary dragon. Other Scriptures support this: Leviathan is recorded as a sea-beast (Psa 104:25-30) and is used as a symbol of Egypt (Psa 74:10-15) and Babylon (Isa 27:1). A signature feature of these two nations is that they enslaved God's people and mistreated them. Leviathan is therefore an *opponent* of God and, as the fascinating tale of Job unfolds, God will speak particularly about him. Combating Leviathan will form a central feature of the Joban tale, even if, like the Satan, his name only surfaces infrequently. In fact, Job's fateful call to rouse Leviathan will come back to haunt him because, as we shall see, his unwise wish is going to be granted.

6.5 Reflection

One essential thing to conclude from the debate is that we should not desire to castigate the three friends. One of the most important outcomes of the book is that the suffering of Job results in their salvation. This forms just one of a few good answers to the eternal, often outraged, question: “What was God doing with poor Job?!” Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite will take their places in the Kingdom of God at the return of Christ, *precisely because* of the work God performed through the suffering of His faithful servant Job. We would be very foolish, and equally very uncharitable, to pour scorn upon these three men. We don't see these men in the finest hour of their discipleships, for sure, but in that God creates a plan to sculpt their salvation, through the office of His blameless servant Job, we must be acutely mindful of what we are seeing. We're witnessing our stumbling brothers guided by the eternally gentle hand of the Father toward the very salvation they nearly, in their proud folly, abandoned. In short: we see ourselves! Maybe that allows us to humanize these three accusers somewhat.

Eliphaz the Temanite seems the kindest of the three speakers. I also see Eliphaz as the wisest of the three speakers, and the one who is acknowledged as wisest amongst them. But, from reading the declining progression of his manner, I speculate Eliphaz has grown *accustomed* to his reputation for sagacity and wisdom. He is, I theorize, familiar with praise and honor as a recognized elder. He is used to his advice being followed and his commentary being applauded; and this forms a danger for him. When he is not lauded by Job, as customarily occurs, but instead his reasoning is contradicted and criticized, his genteel manner disintegrates.

I sense that Bildad the Shuhite is not as well-educated as Eliphaz. With less acumen to fall back on in debate, therefore, Bildad may feel a little intellectually insecure and so, when he sees that his compatriots' arguments are not convincing Job, or perhaps fears that Job's rebuttals make good sense, he seems to lash out a little. Again, Bildad is not irrevocably wicked. But the relatively minor flaws of insisting on being seen as correct, combined with having insufficient mental resources to achieve that lofty goal, can have devastating consequences on both Bildad's own discipleship and his ability to be a strength and comfort to his fellows.

Zophar the Naamathite seems to be the youngest of the three friends. I postulate this from his style of speech, from the fact he speaks last and from the rather more obvious flaws in his reasoning. Of the three friends, Zophar is the one who doesn't show Job any apparent kindness — notwithstanding his commendable participation in the seven-day silent vigil. Zophar's arguments, the least well constructed, begin immediately on the offensive. It's even possible Zophar is sensing an opportunity for social advancement because of the presence of the renowned elder Eliphaz the Temanite; perhaps in his presence Zophar is keen to speak in a way he envisages as forthright and powerful.

All this makes Zophar a particularly easy target for our criticism. But again, it would prove a grave error for us to lambast this man. Zophar the Naamathite is not unrepentantly dedicated to wickedness, as Cain, or Jezebel. Nor is he a man whose failings are known to have led to oblivion, as Judas Iscariot. Zophar is a man for whom God has a plan of salvation — indeed we are reading about it in this very book! So, while Zophar may be one of the least impressive disciples we see in the scriptures, we should take care not to scorn and reject him. Ironically, to do so, to show a lack of sympathy with a brother we believe to have morally erred, would be to repeat the very error we will see him make with Job! Jesus reminds us of the great love the Father has for even those parts of His creation which seem insignificant:

“Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows” (Luke 12:6-7).

Even the sparrows, whom Jesus states are worth much less than a human life, are all remembered and provided for by the loving care of our Father. This is especially striking when we realize the Hebrew for “sparrow” is “zophar.”⁴

In contrast to the above three stands the man Job. Faith is the evidence of things not seen (Heb 11:1), and could this principle be portrayed any clearer than in God's faithful servant Job? Everything appearing before Job's eyes, every event that has recently impacted his life, provides all the evidence he needs to conclude that God is either non-existent, indifferent, or cruel; the very conclusion reached by a host of expositors. Yet Job perseveres. He believes.

What is so compelling about the character of Job, what is such an inspiration for any disciple, is the nature of redemption Job earnestly desires from his critical condition. His condition is obviously dire; his desire for restoration keen indeed. But what is striking is the *nature* of the restoration he seeks.

*"I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God;
I myself will see him
with my own eyes — I, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25-27)*

He yearns to be reunited with his God! That's what he misses most.

I had the privilege to be in South Africa at the beginning of 2008, as the brethren launched efforts to redress the loss of members sustained from emigration in 1995, when the country's economy and security was destabilized by the (otherwise much welcomed) dissolution of the apartheid regime. Brethren began reaching out into the formerly segregated townships, and at one point I found myself happily engaged with a prayer group with about 20 children aged between eight and fifteen, in the massive Umlazi township in south Durban. Though these Zulu children were not suffering as badly as Job, they certainly did not enjoy the life of relative luxury experienced by Western children — or even children (of necessarily different ethnicity) living just outside the township's boundary. I saw nothing in the way of toys or possessions; even the church was only a slab of concrete under a canvas tent, with a ramshackle trailer alongside. I asked each child to choose one thing for which he or she would pray. One child said: "no more death," one said: "that my friend can walk with his legs." Several said: "a large family." This was culturally strange to me; my instincts would have prompted me to conserve my number of dependents in their circumstances; but I learned dependents in that environment are potential sources of status and income, even defense. Some children said: "a home": a chilling reminder of the lack of even basic stability many of these young ones coped with daily. One boy wanted "lots of money," causing me to smile at his honesty. The very next child, perhaps thus prompted, said: "lots of fast cars," another: "to be able to fly," another: "to be the best soccer player." The last child to speak said, in a startling facsimile of Job's own desire: "Every man should be with his God." I was caught completely unprepared for this response ("gobsmacked," the irreplaceable British idiom), only recovering enough poise to commend the spiritual excellence of his comment. He was just ten years old.

So it is with Job. His disastrous physical condition is not his primary concern. He wants his God.

John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

Notes:

1. D. Atkinson, "The Message of Job," 1991, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, UK, 41
2. R. Gordis, "The Temptation of Job- Tradition versus Experience in Religion," 1955, in N. N. Glazer, *Ibid*, 77
3. L. G. Sargent, "Ecclesiastes and Other Studies," 1965, The Christadelphian, Birmingham, UK, 107
4. To be precise, the words "zophar" and "sparrow" are cousins. The primary Hebrew root "zaphar," (J. Strong, "A Concise Dictionary of the words in the Hebrew Bible," in "Strong's Exhaustive Concordance," 1997, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, USA, 101) means "hopping about, departing early" and leads to the derivations: "zophar," translated "departing early" (*Ibid*, 99) and "zippor," translated "sparrow" (*Ibid*, 101).

Bible Study

What the Qur'an Says About... (2) Jesus

According to the Qur'an the Lord Jesus was born of the virgin Mary by the action of Allah upon her. The Qur'an says Jesus was given the power of the Holy Spirit from infancy and used it to perform a variety of miracles, including healing leprosy and raising the dead.

The Lord is not spoken of as the king of the Jews, but he is said to have had a special mission to Jewry and was one of the greatest prophets of Allah. While the Qur'an says the Jews rejected Jesus, it claims his crucifixion was faked and that he was taken to heaven to be with Allah.

There is nothing said about Jesus being the savior from sin, his return to earth, or his being the king of the world. Despite the assertion of a virgin birth, there is vigorous denial of Jesus being the Son of God, along with attacks on Trinitarians.

This is a brief summary of what the Qur'an says about Jesus. We now look at the details.

The virgin birth

Similar accounts of the annunciation to Mary and of the birth of Jesus are found in Suras (the Qur'an consists of 114 chapters called "Suras") 3 and 19 of the Qur'an. After some preliminary comments about Mary, Sura 3 records:

"Behold! The angels said: 'O Mary! Allah gives you glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah...' She said: 'O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man has touched me?' He said: 'Even so: Allah creates what he wills: when He has decreed a Plan, He but says to it, 'Be', and it is! And Allah will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel, and (appoint him) a Messenger to the Children of Israel...' " (3:45-49).

Note the phrase, "son of Mary". In the Qur'an, this is the consistent description of the lineage of Christ, as opposed to the titles "Son of Man", or "Son of God". We may wonder that, if Jesus was the son of a woman, who does the Qur'an present as his father? The Qur'an's solution is that Jesus was a special creation like Adam:

"The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: 'Be' and he was" (3:59).

This explanation is hardly consistent with Mary miraculously conceiving a child in her womb; but as we will observe on several topics, consistency is not a strong feature of the Qur'an.

Sura 19:21-34 has the following about the birth of Jesus:

"So she conceived him, and retired with him to a remote place. And the

pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree...”

At the palm-tree, an angel provides for Mary and admonishes her to temporary silence about her situation. Eventually she returns home with the baby Jesus, much to the amazement of her neighbors. They knew Mary was not married and had respected her as a chaste virgin.

“At length she brought the (babe) to her people, carrying him (in her arms). They said: ‘O Mary! Truly an amazing thing you have brought! O sister of Aaron! [the Qur’an has Mary as a Levite] your father was not a man of evil, nor your mother an unchaste woman!’”

They are accusing her of fornication. Her response is to point to the baby Jesus who is said to perform his first miracle by speaking to the accusers:

“But she pointed to the babe. They said: ‘How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?’ He [Jesus] said: ‘I am indeed a servant of Allah: He has given me Revelation and made me a prophet... So Peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)!’ ” (19:29-34).

While the details are not at all Biblical, we can see how some of the general ideas were picked up from common Christian teaching of Muhammad’s day. The supposed miracle of Jesus’ early pronouncement may be a confusion of John the Baptist acknowledging Jesus from the womb of Elizabeth, and Jesus’s profound comments at the age of 12 (Luke 1:41; 2:46,47).

Denial that Jesus is the Son of God

Following this description of the conception and birth of Jesus, the Qur’an immediately disclaims Jesus as the Son of God:

“It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him!” (19:35).

The Qur’an is insistent that:

“Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He [Allah] bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him [Allah]: so believe in Allah and His Messengers. Do not say ‘Trinity’ ” (4:171).

The Qur’an recognizes only two options: (1) the Trinity, or (2) that Jesus was no more than any other human in spite of the unique circumstances of his conception. We read:

“They do blaspheme who say: ‘God is Christ the son of Mary.’ But Christ said: ‘O children of Israel! Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.’ Whoever joins other gods with Allah — Allah will forbid him the Garden [reward of the righteous], and the Fire [hell fire] will be his abode... They do blaspheme who say: ‘God is one of three in a Trinity’: for there is no god except one god (Allah)... Christ the son of Mary was no more than a messenger; many were the Messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their (daily) food” (5:72-75).

In the Qur’an, claiming Christ as the Son of God is linked with the church struc-

ture of priests and saints:

“The Christians call Christ the Son of Allah... Allah’s curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth! They take their priests and their anchorites [religious recluses] to be their lords in derogation of Allah, and (they take as their Lord) Christ the son of Mary; yet they were commanded to worship but One God (Allah): there is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him: (far is He) from having the partners they as-sociate (with Him)” (9:30,31).

Reading these passages we understand why Muslims aggressively attack the teaching regarding Jesus as the Son of God. They may even claim Jesus never calls himself the Son of God in the Bible. To rightly explain Scripture, we should be ready with:

- the circumstances when God declares Jesus as His Son (Matt 3:17; 17:5);
- those times when Jesus confirms his followers are right to declare him the Son of God (Matt 16:16, 17; John 1:49; 6:69, etc.);
- the accusations by the Jews that Jesus used this phrase of himself (Matt 27:43; John 10:35-37; 19:7); and
- those instances when he clearly alludes to himself as the Son of God (Matt 22:45; John 5:25; 17:1, etc.).

The ministry of Christ

The Qur’an depicts Jesus as one of the succession of prophets Allah sent to Israel:

“We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of Messengers; We gave Jesus the son of Mary clear (Signs) and strengthened him with the holy spirit” (2:87).

From the time of his conception it is said:

“Allah will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel, and (appoint him) a Messenger to the Children of Israel” (3:48,49).

Of course the Qur’an considers Muhammad in this same prophetic line:

“And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: ‘O Children of Israel! I am the Messenger of Allah (sent) to you, confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving Glad Tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad’ ” (61:6).

Moreover the Qur’an claims that, during his ministry, Jesus was to adjust Israel’s dietary laws (3:50), settle their disputes, and be an example to Israel of right behavior:

“He [Jesus] was no more than a servant: We granted Our favor to him, and we made him an example to the Children of Israel... When Jesus came with Clear Signs, he said: ‘Now I have come to you with Wisdom, and in order to make clear to you some of the (points) on which you dispute: therefore fear Allah and obey me’ ” (43:59, 63).

To prove his words as true, the Qur’an says Jesus was empowered with the holy spirit by Allah:

“You healed those born blind, and the lepers, by My leave. And behold! You brought forth the dead by My leave” (5:110).

Two non-Biblical miracles are also referred to. First,

“And behold! you made out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My leave, and you breathed into it, and it became a bird by My leave” (5:110).

This apparently comes from the non-canonical Gospel of Thomas.

Secondly, the disciples are said to ask for:

“...a table set (with viands) from heaven... we only wish to eat thereof and satisfy our hearts, and to know that you have indeed told us the truth; and that we ourselves may be witnesses to the miracle” (5:112,113).

The discussion on bread from heaven in John 6 or the participation in the last supper could be what suggested this narrative to Muhammad.

The ministry of Christ is depicted as failing to convert Israel, so he pronounced a curse on them:

“Curses were pronounced on those among the Children of Israel who rejected Faith, by the tongue of David and of Jesus the son of Mary: because they disobeyed and persisted in Excesses” (5:78).

In the day of judgment, Jesus is said to be a special witness against the Jews: “And there is none of the People of the Book [the Jews], but must believe in Him before his death; and on the Day of Judgment He will be a witness against them” (4:159).

While the Lord is presented as having a special relation to the children of Israel, he is not spoken of as king of the Jews nor as the promised seed of Abraham and David.

Death and resurrection

There are mixed comments in the Qur'an regarding the death of the Lord Jesus. In a section already cited, the infant Jesus is reputed to say:

“So Peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again!)” (19:33).

This indicates Jesus will die and at some point be resurrected.

In the item just cited from Sura 4, his death is also referred to, as the Jews must believe in Jesus “before his death” (4:159). However, two verses ahead of this comment a different picture is presented:

“They [the Jews] said (in boast), ‘We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah’ — but they did not kill him nor crucify him, but so it was made to appear to them... they did not kill him — Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself” (4:157,158).

The Qur'an does not comment further on what happened at Calvary, nor does it comment as to if and when Jesus died.

At the present time, the evident teaching is that Jesus is in heaven, being one of those nearest to Allah, as we have noted:

“Allah raised him up unto Himself” (4:158).

“Behold! Allah said: ‘O Jesus! I will take you and raise you to Myself’ ” (3:55).

And, as we earlier saw, the angel says to Mary,

“His name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah” (3:45).

As we noted last month, mixed statements on a given subject are rather common in the Qur’an, as the book says of itself that later revelation supplants earlier ones. Yet with the book giving little clue of its chronology, we are left in the dark as to the statements which are supposed to carry the greater weight.

True Christians are Muslims

Since Christ and Muhammad are said to be in the same line of prophets, it is not surprising that the Qur’an teaches all true Christians should also be Muslims:

“When Jesus found unbelief on their [the Jews’] part, he said: ‘Who will be my helpers to (the work of) Allah?’ Said the Disciples: ‘We are Allah’s helpers: we believe in Allah, and you bear witness that we are Muslims’ ” (3:52).

Those Christians who are not followers of Allah are said to have fallen from the true gospel preached by Jesus:

“We sent after them [the prophets] Jesus the son of Mary, and bestowed on him the Gospel... But the Monasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribe for them: (We commanded) only the seeking for the Good Pleasure of Allah; but that they did not foster as they should have done... many of them are rebellious transgressors” (57:27).

While respecting Jesus as a great prophet and righteous man, the Qur’an never views him as providing God’s basis for the forgiveness of sins. In the Qur’an, the basis for forgiveness is Allah’s mercy upon our repenting of wrong and our doing of right. We thus find that what the Qur’an says about Jesus is a rather interesting mixture of truth and error.

Don Styles (Ann Arbor, MI)

(Next month, Lord willing, what the Qur’an says about jihad)

A “meaningful personal relationship”

A person who looks for a ‘meaningful personal relationship’ with Jesus in this modern pop culture sense might find satisfaction, but won’t find the Jesus Christ of the Bible... In the New Testament it is noteworthy that, after Jesus was resurrected and ascended to heaven, even his closest friends John and Peter do not write about an ongoing ‘meaningful personal relationship’ with him, or teach that Christians should hope to establish and cultivate one — rather, they emphasize remembering his words and hoping for his literal return, looking forward to salvation in the future.

Review

A Misguided Treasure Hunt *The Gold of Exodus*, by Howard Blum

In reaching the conclusion that Mount Sinai is in present-day Saudi Arabia, the author of this book (Howard Blum), and the two explorers about which he writes (Larry Williams and Bob Cornuke), make three major assumptions that are not accurate:

- (1) That because Paul the apostle states in Galatians 4:25, “Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia”, that means Saudi Arabia.
- (2) That Moses was in Midian when the angel spoke to him at the burning bush.
- (3) That the three Egyptian cities mentioned in Exodus 14:2 are at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula.

The first of these three assumptions I will deal with here, and the last two as they occur in the book.

All three of my Bible dictionaries (*Holman’s*, *Unger’s*, and *Smith’s*) state very much the same Biblical definition of Arabia. I will quote from *Holman’s*: “The Arabian Peninsula, together with the adjoining lands which were home to Biblical Arabs, includes all of present-day Saudi Arabia, the two Yemens, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Kuwait, as well as parts of Iraq, Jordan, and the Sinai Peninsula.”

Webster’s New World Dictionary defines the Arabian Desert as “the desert in Eastern Egypt, between the Nile Valley and the Red Sea.” That definition covers everything from the Nile Valley to the eastern edge of the Sinai Peninsula. So to assume that, if Mount Sinai is in Arabia, it must be in present-day Saudi Arabia is just not correct.

* * * * *

From this point, I will give a page number, along with the appropriate part of the page, and comment on what the author says.

Page 51 (middle of page): “Mount Sinai is in ancient Midian.”

Let me first state that Midian, the home of Reuel, the priest of Midian and Moses’ father-in-law (Exod 2:16, 18, 21), was certainly in the northwestern area of what is now called Saudi Arabia. However, one needs to examine Exodus 3:1 and 4:18 very carefully. Also, Jethro is not Moses’ father-in-law, even though Scriptures seems to say that. I will explain this in detail a bit later. In Exodus 3:1 Moses was caring for his relative’s flock on “the backside of the desert.” Where was that? The NIV says that is was on “the far side of the desert”. The RSV says, “the west side of the wilderness”. The Septuagint, “below the wilderness”. All of these are expressions which define the Sinai Peninsula, not Saudi Arabia.

Now to Exodus 4:18. After Moses talked with the angel at Mount Horeb, he returned to his home in Midian. God now talks to Moses again, this time while he is in Midian rather than at Mount Horeb, the mountain of God.

Page 99 (top third of page)

That the markers mentioned here are huge stones is never stated in Scripture. The limits set by God were verbally stated. Since Moses was the only one permitted on the mountain, how could he have ringed the whole mountain with such huge stones, all by himself?

Page 100 (top)

That Jabal al Lawz in Mount Sinai is one big guess on the part of Larry Williams and Bob Cornuke.

Page 109 (bottom)

Those involved in providing these two men with information about Mount Sinai did not even believe in God. This included a man identified in the book only as a professor from a Southern California campus. Therefore, many of their assumptions are based on the incorrect thinking that these things could not have happened where the Bible says they did.

Page 112 (middle)

The claim is made that Mount Sinai could not be in the Sinai Peninsula because no physical evidence remains there today. First, that depends on what you are looking for. Second, no physical evidence remaining of the type they thought they would find is precisely what should be expected. There is certainly no Biblical evidence that the children of Israel left huge amounts of gold buried in the sand. They were taught by God to leave no tracks behind. Even their human waste had to be buried.

Page 112 (bottom)

That the Sinai Peninsula does not have a location large enough to accommodate the large company of the children of Israel is completely false. I have a picture, taken from the air myself, which is close to Mount Sinai and quite large enough for such encampments. The text of the book adds, “under the conditions specified”. There is a general tone throughout the book, of negating or discounting God. God brought His people out of Egypt — it wasn’t accomplished by a fleeing Moses, as the book claims. God set the conditions; God provided for their needs.

Page 113 (bottom)

That the mountain called Sinai is not in the Sinai Peninsula is a total fabrication of their imaginations.

Page 114 (bottom)

The Bible does not state anywhere that Mount Sinai is in Midian. Moses was not in Midian when the angel talked to him from the burning bush. He was in Mount Horeb at the south of the wilderness known as the Arabian Desert, which is in

Egypt. According to Scripture, after the encounter with the angel at the burning bush, Moses returned to Midian and God spoke to him a second time there. Mount Horeb could not be in Midian if, after he left the mountain, he returned to Midian. Also, Mount Horeb and Mount Sinai are not two names for the same mountain, but rather two mountains leaning against each other. Stated another way, two mountain peaks in the same range with a common base. Jabal al Lawz does not qualify for this description; nor, to my knowledge, has anyone identified Jabal al Lawz as either Mount Sinai or Mount Horeb before this book.

Page 117 (top)

Jethro was not Moses' father-in-law. Even though I mentioned this earlier, more details are given here. Moses' father-in-law was Reuel (Exod 2:16, 18, 21). At the beginning of Exodus 3, forty years had passed, Pharaoh was dead (Exod 2:23), and Reuel was undoubtedly dead — else, why the name change to Jethro (Exod 3:1). Reuel's oldest son would now be the priest of Midian. Therefore, Jethro would be Moses' *brother-in-law*.

In fact, three individuals are recorded in Scripture as Moses' father-in-law: Reuel (Exod 2:16, 18, 21), Jethro (Exod 3:1), and Hobab (Jdgs 4:11). This cannot be. This confusion arises because the Hebrew word “chathan”, which is translated father-in-law, is so general that it is translated into nine different English phrases; for example: “mother-in-law”, “son-in-law”, and “make affinity”. The Hebrew word really means someone who is related to a person through marriage. It can therefore be translated into any English phrase that conforms to that meaning.

Page 117 (top 1/3)

It is again stated that Mount Sinai is in Midian. This is not according to the Bible. A further proof of this is found in Exodus 18. In this chapter, Jethro comes to visit Moses while the children of Israel are encamped at Mount Horeb (Exod 17:6; 18:5). Jethro brings Zipporah and Moses' two sons with him. After giving Moses some advice about sharing the burden of judging these people with some selected rulers, Jethro returns to his own country (Exod 18:27). If Jethro lived in Midian, which he did, he could not depart and return to his own land (“*eretz*” = land or country) if Mount Horeb/Mount Sinai were in Midian.

Page 117 (bottom)

The Bible states, “The LORD said to Moses in Midian, Go back to Egypt; for all the men who were seeking your life are dead” (Exod 4:19). The author uses this verse as proof that Mount Sinai is in Midian; he even writes, “Could the Bible be any clearer?” Yes, the Bible is quite clear. This was a second encounter between God's angel and Moses. The first was at Mount Horeb in the Arabian Desert (“the backside of the desert”: Exod 3:1), which is recognized by Bible scholars as the Sinai Peninsula. This same verse says that this is the location of Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. The second time the angel talked to Moses was in Midian after he returned to his home there.

Page 124 (middle)

The explorers and the writer base much of their assumptions in this part of the book on myths and story-telling. The whole narrative about Bezaleel on these pages is a “story” and not fact. In relating this “story”, they do not even have their facts straight. Hur is Bezaleel’s grandfather, not his father; his father is Uri.

Page 126 (bottom)

What proof is there that the gold and other ornaments taken off the children of Israel fell to the ground and were left there? Again, this particular part of the book is a story being told by “the professor” that is based on myth, not on facts.

Page 176 (bottom)

Larry Williams states here: “He knew: Mount Sinai was in Midian, and the Red Sea crossing had occurred just west of Saudi Arabia at the Gulf of Aqaba.” Both of these statements are contrary to Scripture. I will get to the location of the Red Sea crossing when it is brought up in some detail in the book.

Page 177 (middle)

When Mr. Williams stared at the satellite photos, he saw what he wanted to see, based on the false information he had accumulated.

Page 177 (bottom)

“And Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur” (Exod 15:22). The wilderness of Shur is in northwest Sinai, not in Saudi Arabia. His logic continues to be based on false information.

Page 185 (bottom)

“His final point, Williams admitted, involved a bit of guesswork. ‘If I’ve been correct so far...’ His conclusions so far have been based on stories, myths, and a whole lot of guesswork, not the Bible.

Page 191 (lower middle)

“Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon” (Exod 14:2). All three of these locations are well known to be in northern Egypt in the Nile delta. The men in this book have moved all these places to the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula to suit their own theories. Migdol, in particular, was on the trade route between Alexandria and Assyria. In addition, when some of the children of Israel fled from the kingdom of Judah in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, they fled to Migdol (Jer 44:1). Neither the trade route to Assyria, nor the location where fleeing Israelites would have gone, would be in the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula. Migdol was in the northwest corner of the Sinai Peninsula. To add even more, “Zephon” means “north”. Baalzephon was in the north, and was part of the Sinai Peninsula right next to Migdol. To arbitrarily move these three cities over 225 miles south to the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula just to satisfy these two explorers is unconscionable.

Page 224 (top)

The Wilderness of Sin is a known place, and it is not in Saudi Arabia.

Page 239 (middle)

“Moses, the shepherd reminded his guests, was also a Muslim prophet.” This is pure bunk.

Page 239 (bottom)

When they came across some caves in Saudi Arabia, because of local tradition, they concluded that Moses and his extended family (including Jethro) had lived in these very caves. From this conclusion, they state that Moses led the children of Israel (a group variously estimated as high as two million) back to these caves. This book further states, “According to the Bible, Jethro lived just a hop, skip, and a jump from Mount Sinai.” They are using a different Bible than the one I read; there is no such statement as this in Scripture.

Page 291 (top)

As stated earlier, no physical barriers are ever mentioned in Scripture. For Moses, even if he had someone to help him, to ring the entire mountain with such barriers and for them to still be there, is beyond human comprehension. The stones that Williams and Cornuke came across were most likely put there by the Saudi government, and relatively recently in respect to their visit to Jabal al Lawz. It was made abundantly clear in the book that everything Williams and Cornuke did in Saudi Arabia was illegal, and that the Saudi government was doing everything they thought necessary to keep people away from the site.

Page 294 (middle)

Upon Jabal at Lawz itself (not near it, or at its base, but up on the mountain), they found petroglyphs (drawings done on rock) of “stick figures worshipping a cow”. Since Moses was the only one to ascend Mount Sinai, why would he leave such petroglyphs high on the mountain? This question puzzled even Williams and Cornuke. Still, they use it as evidence that Moses and the children of Israel were there.

Page 297 (upper middle)

Jabal al Lawz has “two snub-nosed peaks”. The Bible does not mention this characteristic. When Moses climbed Mount Sinai, he went to the top of the mount, and God came down to the top of the mount (Exod 19:20).

Page 297 (lower middle)

“The ground they walked on was colored a deep, unnatural black,” as if it had been scorched. Williams and Cornuke attributed this to God descending upon the mountain in fire and smoke. If the burning bush at Mount Horeb was not scorched or consumed, then why should Mount Sinai be? Again, they do not ever consider the supernatural power of God. A more likely reason for the scorched earth would be the testing that the Saudi Arabian government was doing at that

site. By their own admission, Jabal al Lawz was right in the middle of a Saudi Arabian military base where the Saudi's Project Falcon was in progress.

Page 298 (top)

Because Williams and Cornuke found a cleft-like cave just beneath the summit of Jabal al Lawz, this must be the Mount Sinai of the Bible. Many mountains have cleft-like caves near their summit. This is certainly true of Mount Sinai in the Sinai Peninsula. I don't believe these two men ever went to the summit of the mountain known as the Mountain of Moses in the Sinai Peninsula.

Page 300 (bottom)

Mount Sinai and Mount Horeb are not the same mountain, but rather two mountains leaning one against another, each having separate peaks.

Page 306 (middle)

These fellows come across twelve pillars in the Saudi Arabian desert and conclude that these must be the pillars of which the Bible speaks. They have no idea where in the Bible twelve pillars are mentioned, but they are sure it's in there somewhere. Well, it is in Exodus 24:4. I'll quote it, from the NIV: "Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel." The pillars that Williams and Cornuke saw in Saudi Arabia were 18 feet in diameter, spaced five feet apart. How did Moses set up twelve pillars that were 18 feet in diameter? Again, these were probably set up by the Saudi military using cranes.

Page 333 (top)

A Filipino worker sees ghosts on the mountain; therefore, this must be Mount Sinai. The two men have gone from little or no belief in God to believing in stories about ghosts and the spirit of Moses still in the mountain.

Page 333 (middle)

They have reached the point of making wild assumptions. They believe that a dried-up lake bed must be the oasis of Elim, and that some caves they found must be the home of Moses and Jethro.

Page 334 (top)

The nations that overthrew Israel and Judah were Assyria and Babylon respectively, not Saudi Arabia.

Page 335 (middle)

The Saudi government, when presented with the idea that Jabal al Lawz was the Biblical Mount Sinai, stated: "The results of our survey and excavation research work strongly suggest that the site does not have any similarities to the Mount of Moses... Therefore the Mount of Sinai is naturally in the Sinai and not anywhere else." Williams and Cornuke add this comment to the quote: 'Which might be true.' They then go on to say that the Saudi government is lying and just saying

that to keep people away from their military site. These two men's motivation for this adventure was to find gold. The only gold they found was whatever profit they made from selling this book.

Page 339 (bottom)

Everything stated at the bottom of this page is what Bob Cornuke wanted to believe. None of it is proof that they have found the true Mount Sinai in Saudi Arabia. What it does show is that people can take distorted premises, incorrect information, and faulty research, and then turn it into any conclusion they wish.

Page 345 (middle)

"But Williams also came to realize that nearly all he had was theories." Yet upon these theories he still says to Cornuke, "with genuine pride and wonder", as they race back to the fence: "Yes... it really was Mount Sinai." Perhaps the realization that "nearly all he had was theories" suggests that Larry Williams was a little more realistic than Bob Cornuke; nevertheless, he too came to the same false conclusions.

* * * * *

The conclusions of the writer and the two explorers are totally unfounded and fanciful. In general, they remind me of the reasoning of the philosopher Thomas Aquinas. In attempting to "explain" the doctrine of the Trinity, he wrote that there is *one* omnipotent, supreme power in the universe, *one* God who created all things. "Therefore," he concludes, "*we believe in the Trinity.*"

Some people, it seems, have a remarkable capacity for believing anything they want to believe, and for basing such a "belief" on whatever "facts" come to hand.

Paul Wade (West Houston, TX)

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:

*We invite you, your family and friends to a
"Shepherds Retreat"*

a weekend of study and encouragement in the Lord.

This year's theme is "Biblical Mentoring — Study and Application".

Lake Placid Conference Center in Hartford City, Indiana

November 14-15, 2009.

*Contact Bro. Tom Ross at tatross@sbcglobal.net
for additional information.*

Bible Study

The Cloak and the Parchments

In 2 Timothy 4:13, we read the well-known words of the apostle Paul asking Timothy to bring the cloak which he had left at Troas with Carpus, and in verse 21 of the same chapter we read of Paul's request that Timothy come before winter if possible. Putting these two verses together, it may therefore seem as if we can conclude that Paul was asking for this garment so that he could stave off the cold. This seems especially reasonable to any visitor to the cold and damp Mamertine Prison in Rome, where tradition claims Paul was when he wrote Second Timothy, and if one considers a similar request for a cap and coat by William Tyndale when he was imprisoned (see, e.g., *The Christadelphian*, 1967, p. 493). But a quick common-sense check clearly indicates that Paul did not ask for this cloak to keep warm.

Why this cloak?

If Paul was cold and wanted a coat, he could have asked Luke, who was with him (2Tim 4:11), and surely Luke would have given Paul the coat off his own back. If Luke didn't have one himself, he would have obtained one for Paul in a matter of days if not hours. And if Paul was still cold, the brothers and sisters in Rome would gladly have showered him with a roomful of coats, cloaks, quilts, and blankets.

If you were imprisoned in Rome and wanted a cloak because you were cold, you wouldn't send a letter halfway across the Roman Empire to someone who may or may not be able to come before winter, especially if a trusted friend is able to visit you regularly. Even if you did, you would simply ask the person to bring "a" cloak, not one in particular. Is it reasonable to suppose that Paul wanted this particular cloak because it was somehow warmer than any other cloak that Luke could easily acquire?

Paul didn't want just any cloak — he wanted the particular one he had left in Troas with Carpus. So he was asking Timothy to go out of his way to travel to Troas on his way to Rome just to get this cloak. We may confidently conclude that this particular garment was special, but what was so special about it? About this we are left to speculate, but here is one suggestion:

Clothing is useful for more than merely keeping us modest and protected from the elements. Oftentimes a particular garment can have an importance directly or because of its sentimental value. In Scripture, three quick examples demonstrate this:

- First, there is Joseph's coat of many colors, and it was immediately recognized by all as more than simply a garment to keep Joseph warm.
- Second, there is Jonathan's robe which he gave to David (1Sam 18:4). Jonathan did not offer this to David because David had gotten his clothes dirty while fighting Goliath — it was a symbolic act of pledging his allegiance to the one

whom he recognized would be the future king over Israel.

- The third example is Elijah's mantle, which was picked up by Elisha (2Kgs 2). Elisha's possession of this mantle was a visual indication that Elisha had largely succeeded to the work of Elijah.

But what about the cloak that Paul had left with Carpus?

Perhaps Paul wanted Timothy to bring this cloak so that he could ask Timothy what he knew about it. Timothy's response may have been something like: 'Paul, I remember that you were wearing this cloak when I first met you. You came to Lystra, where you were stoned by the people. I had heard your preaching and became a believer in Jesus, but then a short time later I watched as they dragged you out of town. Then, still wearing that cloak, dust and rips and all, you stood up. I have recently reflected upon that incident, just as you asked me to do in your epistle (2Tim 3:10), and as I traveled here with this cloak I have spent time reflecting on how much you and I and this cloak of yours have been through over the years. What do you want the cloak for?'

Paul's response then might have been: 'To give to you, Timothy. I am about to be executed, and I want you to have this cloak because you of all people know how much I have labored. Just as Elisha picked up Elijah's mantle, I want you to have my old cloak as a reminder of the responsibility that you now must take up to shepherd these people. Timothy, give them the Scriptures. Encourage them to live by them and not to be deceived by all of the false and pernicious teaching that is being spoken even now in Christ's name.'

This hypothetical conversation is just a suggestion, but the fact remains that, whatever the exact reason, we can be sure that Paul asked for this particular cloak because it was important to him for some specific reason, and not just to stay warm.

The parchments

Paul also asked Timothy to bring "the books, but especially the parchments". Did these also have a special significance?

It is doubtful that Paul was merely asking for a written copy of the Old Testament Scriptures. As with obtaining a cloak for warmth, a copy of the Old Testament Scriptures in either Hebrew or Greek should not have been terribly difficult for Paul to obtain in Rome. Perhaps Paul was interested in a particular copy of the Scriptures that he had "marked up" with his own notes. While this possibility cannot be ruled out, there is a far more intriguing possibility: Paul wanted the original "autograph" copies of the Scriptures he had written over the previous years.

In 2 Peter 3:15, 16, we read of the apostle Peter making mention of the collection of Paul's epistles as fully comparable to "the rest of the Scriptures". Additionally, there is clear extra-Biblical evidence that Paul's epistles began to circulate as a recognized collection prior to the end of the first century. Let us note for now that this collection did not include the Epistle to the Hebrews.

As Paul wrote his various epistles over the years, they were surely shared among

various ecclesias, although probably not in an organized fashion. Our suggestion here is that as Paul neared the end of his life, he recognized it would be helpful to collect the various epistles so that they could be circulated as a collection in a more organized manner. If indeed this was Paul's motivation, who better than Timothy to gather these epistles, and indeed the original autograph copies if possible? One way or another, Timothy was involved in each and every one of Paul's epistles. Let us examine this by considering Paul's epistles according to the order in which they seem to have been written:

- Galatians appears to have been written between the First and Second Missionary Journeys, at about the time of the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15. Recall that at the beginning of the Second Journey, Paul found Timothy so well spoken-of that he decided to ask for his assistance. Timothy was from Galatia and was thus one of the intended recipients of the Epistle to the Galatians, but he may have been more than just one recipient among equals. Paul entrusted young Timothy with a great deal of responsibility almost immediately, and this suggests that perhaps Timothy had been the literate brother who had read Paul's epistle aloud to the ecclesias in Galatia, and then explained it.
- Shortly after picking up Timothy at the start of the Second Journey, Paul and Silas found it necessary to write two epistles to the young ecclesia in Thessalonica. These two epistles are thus addressed from "Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy."
- During Paul's Third Missionary Journey, he wrote the two Epistles to the Corinthians and the Epistle to the Romans. In 1 Corinthians 4:17 and 16:10, we learn that Paul sent Timothy to Corinth as an ambassador from Paul at about this time. And by the time a couple of months later when he wrote 2 Corinthians, we know that Timothy was with Paul because the letter is addressed from the two of them. In Romans 16:21, we read of Timothy sending his greetings to the saints in Rome, and thus we know he was with Paul at the time of the writing of this epistle, as Acts 19:22 and 20:4 also strongly suggest.
- During Paul's First Imprisonment in Rome, he wrote Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. While none of these specifically mention Timothy, we can have full confidence that Timothy was very aware of these three epistles because of Timothy's later ministry in Ephesus (see 1Tim 1:3) and because these letters were specifically to be shared amongst the ecclesias involved. (Ephesians was probably originally addressed as a circular letter to the seven ecclesias in Asia, beginning with Ephesus and ending with Laodicea, as was Revelation later, and was thus "the epistle from Laodicea" mentioned in Col 4:16.)
- Later during this same two-year period of imprisonment (Acts 28:30), Paul wrote to the Philippians, and also wrote the first "Pastoral Epistles" to Timothy and to Titus. Timothy is listed as a co-author of Philippians, and was clearly the directly intended recipient of First Timothy. The Epistle to Titus was very similar to First Timothy, and it is not hard to imagine that Timothy could have gotten a copy of this epistle from his close fellow-worker Titus.
- That leaves us with just two epistles, Second Timothy and Hebrews. No word

is here needed about Timothy's relationship to Second Timothy!

- Earlier we noted that Hebrews was not universally understood by early Christians as one of Paul's epistles, and did not circulate from an early date with the rest of Paul's epistles. While we will not here take up the question of whether Paul wrote Hebrews, we will note that if he did, Timothy was clearly associated with Paul at this time period (Heb 13:23).

This leaves us with an attractive but ultimately unprovable hypothesis concerning Paul's desire to collect the earliest possible copies of his epistles so they might be circulated among the ecclesias. As he reached the end of his life, Moses spoke and wrote words of exhortation to his young helper Joshua, and exhorted Joshua to be faithful to the words of that written exhortation (Deut 31:23-30; see also Josh 1:1-9). Joshua and the generation with him indeed were faithful (Josh 24:31; Jdgs 2:6-10), but then Israel fell into a long period of idolatry. It would seem that Paul likewise asked Timothy to gather the Scriptures which Paul had authored, so that the early Christians would have a written record of Paul's exhortations to them. It seems reasonable to suppose that this is what Timothy gathered when he collected the "books, but especially the parchments", so that these epistles continue to serve as an inspired witness to us today, as surely as the Books of Moses do.

Dean Brown (Avon, IN)

The Measure of Our Lives

When the Lord God told Adam what the inevitable consequences of sin would be, namely "Thou shalt surely die", or, as the Hebrew has, "Dying thou shalt die", he instituted the greatest fact of life as we know it. We are all born to die – and that certainty, consciously or subconsciously, dominates the whole of our lives. As the apostle Paul says, "All our lifetime," from cradle to grave, "we are subject to bondage, through fear of death."

And so we measure out our lives in periods which conform to the set pattern of mortal span: childhood for growth and training, youth for the beginning of toil and experience; manhood and womanhood to make our mark, for good or ill; and age for decline until the inevitable end. But death, as many of us have sorrowfully known, does not conform to pattern. Threescore years and ten of life are not for all, and only the fool will count upon them. This very night his soul may be required of him. Some are stricken in childhood, some in the flower of their age, and some with that "crown of thorns", old age, resting upon their wrinkled brow. We know not when — but how bitter is the loss for those who are left! Jesus, with that great sensitivity which he had for the sufferings of men and women, was touched by the feeling of their infirmity in this also.

(John Mitchell, People Jesus Knew)

Bible Study

Beyond the Borders of Israel

From time to time we have difficulties relating to people. Children acting out at home; an overbearing employer at work; a well meaning but dictatorial brother at the meeting, all can test our patience. After a hard day's work, the last thing we want at the dinner table is a wrangle with Johnnie as to whether or not he has washed his hands.

When we have problems in life, it is always good to look to Jesus to see how he coped with challenges. The Lord had a confrontation with the Pharisees over the issue of hand washing:

"Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" (Mark 7:5).

This was far from a straightforward matter of hygiene; it had to do with the tradition of the elders and encompassed the wider application of: "...many other such like things ye do" (v 8). The Master identified the root of the problem:

"Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (v 9).

Throughout history, individuals have preferred to do their own thing, rather than follow the ways of God, and we would do well to pay attention to this subtle weakness in our human nature.

Time out

Looking carefully at the record, it appears that Jesus must have been very tired and emotionally drained after the lengthy session with the leaders of the Jews. He entered a house seeking respite from the tension of debate and the constant press of the people. Unfortunately, the disciples did not pick up on his body language and persisted in questioning him:

"And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable."

The Lord's response was one of disappointment:

"Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive...?" (Mark 7:17,18).

Is it any wonder then that Jesus left the area?

"And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it..." (v 24).

He desperately needed solitude, no doubt to find the counter balance to stress, in prayer, meditation and reflection.

Time alone, quiet time, was important to Jesus and so it is with us. Whether we slip away into another room, go for an evening stroll, or just step into the garden and reflect on the beauty of God's creative work, we all need private time in order to reflect, meditate, pray and reassess our spiritual walk.

On the borders of Israel

Sometimes we are able to take a complete break and enjoy a peaceful holiday away from the area in which we live. In the case of Jesus, although he sought peace, he was so well known: “he could not be hid” (Mark 7:24). One is reminded of his own teaching: “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid” (Matt 5:14). Indeed, it was for the furtherance of his Father’s purpose that Jesus Christ, the light of the world, shone forth from that place and was not hidden from a Gentile woman:

“For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter” (Mark 7:25,26).

Matthew’s gospel gives a little more information:

“And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil” Matt 15:22).

A Gentile asking for mercy from one she called the son of David! Presumably, she must have understood all the implications of that Messianic title; leading to the suggestion that she had Jewish connections, or was a proselyte to the faith. Interestingly, Jesus did not immediately respond to her request:

“But he answered her not a word” (Matt 15:23).

Why the silence?

What conclusion can we draw from the Lord’s silence? Sometimes a question can be answered by silence, and a caring look can have a calming effect. On the other hand, he could have been testing her, as his following statements seem to indicate. Another suggestion is that Jesus offered a silent prayer to his heavenly Father. Up until this time, the main thrust of the work of Jesus had been to recover the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Here on the borders of Israel gross darkness lay in the Gentile lands beyond. With the appeal of this Canaanite woman came stirrings of the fulfillment of prophecy:

“I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth” (Isa 49:6).

In silence Jesus reflected on the conversion of the Gentiles and all that was necessary to bring it to fruition.

Prior to his death, Jesus commanded the disciples to limit their preaching to the Jews. The situation changed dramatically, however, once his sacrifice was accomplished. His role shifted from ministering solely to Israel, to being the Savior of the whole world. The death and resurrection of the Lamb of God ratified the promise to Abraham:

“In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 12:3).

Notice the last instructions to the disciples before Jesus the Christ ascended into heaven:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations” (Matt 28:19).

A cry from the heart

The disciples, obviously perturbed by the woman's persistent beseeching, misinterpreted their leader's silence and tried to terminate the incident: "and his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us." Then Jesus answered the woman with words that, to a lesser person, might have been crushing:

"But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 15:24).

Far from being put off, the woman's amazing response was to worship him. In common with Rahab and Ruth, she understood that the God of Israel was the only true God, and she longed to be associated with His purpose. Unlike the stubborn Jewish leaders who focused only on the washing of cups, this Gentile saw evidence of the Messiah in the miracles. "Help me, Lord!" was a cry for the way to be opened up whereby believing Gentiles could become part of Israel. How this plea must have encouraged Jesus to complete his task.

The Lord was very aware of his role as shepherd and knew that there were lost sheep outside the fold of Israel:

"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice: and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:14-16).

There was one more test for the woman:

"But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table" (Matt 15:26,27).

Gratified and sustained by her faith, her Lord and ours replied, with words that echo down the centuries:

"O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (v 28).

The excursion to the area of Tyre and Sidon was a preparation for the extension of the gospel beyond the boundaries of Israel. In their obsession for the traditions of men, the descendants of the Israelites who had eaten manna in the wilderness spurned the antitype, whereas the Syrophenician woman recognized that Jesus was the life-sustaining 'bread of life'. With remarkable humility, she was content with a few crumbs left over from the nourishment initially provided for the Jewish race. Figuratively, this woman represents all those Gentiles who, in faith, come to Jesus seeking healing from the effects of the 'devil' of sin. Mercifully, through God's grace, Jesus condescends to consider us members of this class of people.

On a daily basis, we have to interact with people who are ungodly, often returning home feeling utterly drained and stressed. This in turn puts pressure on the interpersonal relationships with those we love. It could include a recalcitrant child refusing to wash his hands before eating. However, with patience and guidance, upon reaching maturity, that very offspring may well submit to the Lord's com-

mandment: that of total washing in the waters of baptism.

How blessed we are in the knowledge and hope that when Jesus comes again, he will look out from the borders of Israel and say to the faithful beyond:

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt 25:34).

Patricia Bartle (Toronto East, Ontario)

"The Holy Land" in the Time of Christ

Palestine was to the Rabbis simply "the land", all other countries being summed up under the designation of "outside the land". In the Talmud, even the expression "Holy Land", so common among later Jews and Christians, does not once occur. It needed not that addition, which might have suggested a comparison with other countries; for to the Rabbinist Palestine was not only holy, but the only holy ground, to the utter exclusion of all other countries, although they marked within its boundaries an ascending scale of ten degrees of sanctity, rising from the bare soil of Palestine to the most holy place in the Temple.

But "outside the land" everything was darkness and death. The very dust of a heathen country was unclean, and it defiled by contact. It was regarded like a grave, or like the putrescence of death. If a spot of heathen dust had touched an offering, it must at once be burnt. More than that, if by mischance any heathen dust had been brought into Palestine, it did not and could not mingle with that of "the land", but remained to the end what it had been -- unclean, defiled, and defiling everything to which it adhered...

It was to the extreme boundary tracts of "the land", that Jesus had withdrawn from the Pharisees, when they were offended at his opposition to their "blind" traditionalism; and there he healed by the word of his power the daughter of the "woman of Canaan", the intensity of whose faith drew from his lips words of precious commendation (Matt 15:28; Mark 7:29).

It was chiefly a heathen district where the Savior spoke the word of healing, and where the woman would not let the Messiah of Israel go without an answer. She herself was a Gentile. Indeed, not only that district, but all around, and farther on, the territory of Philip, was almost entirely heathen. More than that, strange as it may sound, all around the districts inhabited by the Jews the country was, so to speak, fringed by foreign nationalities and by heathen worship, rites and customs.

(Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life)

Reflection

When the Ecclesia Fails Us

Many brothers and sisters encounter difficult stretches in their walk to the Kingdom. At times, individuals may find themselves in disagreement with ecclesial decisions. In our area, several brethren and sisters have felt so strongly that the ecclesia had failed them, and not adhered to their definition of Biblical behavior, that they have left the ecclesia and our Central fellowship. The loss of any member is harmful to all members of an ecclesia and any nearby ecclesias.

Should members who feel that their ecclesia has failed them withdraw from the ecclesia? By no means. It is a commandment that we meet together to remember our Lord. The ecclesia is a structure designed by God to help shape our characters and assist us in our walk to the Kingdom. We are commanded to knock the dust from our sandals and leave groups of unbelievers, but that does not apply to our brothers and sisters. Partial or total withdrawal from the ecclesia is a natural reaction when we are hurt. This withdrawal can be carried to the extreme of redefining what fellowship means, and to members determining that they are no longer in fellowship with a portion of their ecclesia. This redefinition of the body of Christ is not in line with Ephesians 5:30, Colossians 1:18, or Colossians 2:19.

Individuals need to be aware of what impact their dissatisfaction will have on their brothers and sisters. In Philippians 2:4 we are commanded to consider the effect of our actions on our brothers and sisters. The effect of constant complaining and disagreement in an ecclesia can be disastrous. Murmuring can act like a leaven in the body, spreading until the entire ecclesia is affected (1Cor 5:6). The brothers and sisters involved in the problem need to resolve the problem and not allow it to fester (Matt 5:23-26).

Brothers have an extra burden, not to allow their disappointment with ecclesial decisions to carry over into their platform duties. Complaints against the ecclesia should never be expressed in exhortations or public prayers. When a brother is asked to prepare the ecclesia for the emblems via an exhortation or public prayer, he must overcome the temptation to vent his frustration. All of us need to keep the memorial service above the fray and not view platform duties as an opportunity to air grievances.

How we handle these difficult situations will be observed by our children and new converts to the Truth. We need to keep our young people, Sunday school classes, and youth groups out of the controversy. Our children are to be raised in the Lord, not used as foot soldiers or a battlefield in the struggle. Living in our area, we have a choice of four ecclesias. Whenever someone transfers to another ecclesia, everyone's first question is always: 'What issue upset them?' Explaining why Uncle Bob and Aunt Alice no longer attend our ecclesia makes the already difficult job of raising godly children even more difficult.

The ecclesia has a responsibility to resolve the dissatisfaction felt by members. The ecclesia needs to recognize when its actions or inactions have caused offense in the context of Romans 14 or 1 Corinthians 8. It may be felt that the ecclesia is right, and in accordance with Scriptures, in its decision; but the ecclesia also has an obligation to explain its decision adequately, and to attempt to resolve any resulting problem.

When a member of the ecclesia feels that the ecclesia has failed him or her, then a responsibility is created for both the member and the ecclesia. Everyone involved needs to put aside pride and determine if the issue can be resolved by following 1 Corinthians 6 and 7. Paul's advice is that we should allow ourselves even to be wronged and defrauded, if necessary, to maintain peace in the ecclesia. Whatever the solution, it will not come easily (Prov 18:19). Everyone needs to recognize the need for a unified body and put their brothers and sisters ahead of themselves.

Jeff Livermore (Milford Road, MI)

The Quest

Standing in the backyard, I peer into the sky.
More rain is headed toward us, and I stop and wonder why.
The grass is green, the crops are lush, and somewhere far away
People curse their dry, parched land and pray for rain today.

Walking through a wooded trail, I peer into my head.
Thoughts I cannot reconcile are filling me with dread.
How many paths have I walked along that led me to sin?
How many times must I fail before I change within?

Kneeling down before my bed, I peer into my heart.
Regret, sorrow, worry are pulling me apart.
Seeing all too clearly the mistakes that I have made,
Hoping I can overcome before they lead me to the grave.

Father, behold my weaknesses; You see them every day.
You know about my many flaws, how easily I stray.
Guide me along Your narrow path; please send angels this way
To watch and support me on this Kingdom quest, I pray.

Jodee Webb (Hamilton Greenaway, ON)

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak. Because some day in your life you will have been all of these.

George Washington Carver



Bible Mission News

Southern Brethren in Good Spirits Chile, Brazil and Argentina

I'm very pleased to report that the latest visit to our brethren in the southern part of South America has found them in good spirits with an optimistic outlook as they wait for our Lord's return.

Santiago, Chile

There are just three brethren in Santiago, however this city of eight million is surely home to others who are seeking God's truth. This year has seen three preaching weekends held in the Centro Bíblico Cristadelfiano, the rented premises in the heart of the city. These have provided a consistent forum for the small group of interested students who have been meeting regularly with the Santiago brethren. While the latest series of studies held over the weekend of May 23rd saw just nine attending, some of these friends expressed a desire to continue towards baptism. May God bless this group and future programmed efforts to spread the Gospel in Chile.



Santiago ecclesial members and friends

Porto Alegre, Brazil

A short visit of just two days was made to our brother Emerson Acosta and family in Port Alegre. Despite his isolation Bro. Emerson has a positive outlook for the growth of the Truth in Brazil. In recent weeks he has initiated newspaper advertising offering a Bible correspondence course. He now has several people in and around Porto Alegre receiving these courses and is in personal contact with them. One of the largest challenges for brethren outside Brazil when visiting or helping Bro. Emerson is the Portuguese language. While similar in many ways to Spanish, Portuguese pronunciation does not allow for easy interchange. In much the same way as Dutch gives the impression to the English speaker that he should understand what is being spoken, so Portuguese teases the Spanish speaker without opening the door of understanding very far at all. With this nation of 190,000,000 Portuguese speaking people, we are clearly in need of Portuguese language skills for preaching the Gospel.

A further distinguishing feature of the environment in Brazil is the ubiquitous presence of witchcraft to a level unknown in any of the neighboring Spanish speaking countries. This culture has its roots in a blend of African beliefs (brought to the country at the time of forced labor immigration) and the superstitious excesses of medieval Catholicism. The results today can be found throughout the country ranging from small roadside offerings meant to appease or expel neighborhood spirits, to full scale purgative anointing on the entire body with the blood of freshly offered animals, whose raw flesh is to become the diet of the initiated for the following week. Such practices are common in all levels of society, and certainly have an effect on the spiritual psyche of the nation. However, we can be confident that among the 190 million in Brazil there are more like our Bro. Emerson.



**Bro. Emerson
Acosta
with his wife,
Viviane, and
his son,
Kevim**

Córdoba,

Argentina

A weekend of studies principally for the brothers, sisters and their families in Córdoba, was held over the weekend of May 30. The venue, as it has been for their meetings in recent months, was the salon at the Felipe II hotel. This, however

is due to change, as an opportunity has arisen to rent a centrally located, street-front room, ideal for the meetings of this small ecclesia. Hopefully this joint venture between the CBMA and the brethren in Argentina will be formalized over the next few weeks and the Truth will have another permanent witness in the meeting place of the brethren in Córdoba. The prospect of this development has certainly got the brethren thinking about future possibilities. The group in Córdoba is about as diverse as you can get — brethren of 90 years reflecting on their life's experiences in the light of new-found truth, to interested friends of just 12 years asking for information and clarification on the order of Melchizedek. There is never a dull moment in these meetings. Bro. Hugo Petrilli from Rosario, Argentina, a city about 400 kilometers away, was also present. During the month of May, Bro. Hugo has run a series of advertisements in Rosario, and is very pleased with the response he has had. Several people have asked to study by correspondence, most of whom Bro. Hugo has spoken to personally. Ideally, if this trend continues, a series of studies for this group will be planned in the future in Rosario. Bro. Hugo was able to travel to Santiago in April, and shared with the brethren and friends in that city.

In summary, a continuing sense of momentum prevails among our Southern brethren, as they anticipate the call of God's Word to do its work.

*Robert Alderson
CBMA Representative*



**Readings at Bro. Francisco Gilardoni's (front)
and his wife Sis. Elizabeth's (left) home in Cordoba, Argentina.
with Sis. Julia Reynoso and Bro. Hugo Petrilli**

Guyana Bible School 2009

Over the years we have met a number of Guyanese Christadelphians in North America. This past April we were privileged to visit this beautiful South American country and experience first hand the ecclesial life that has resulted in such ardent believers.

A genuine enthusiasm for the Word of God was truly evident in the Bible classes we attended and at the Bible school. There are three ecclesias in the Georgetown area (called the Demarara region after the major river): these are the Georgetown, Eccles and Mocha Ecclesias. After the Bible class in Mocha we were given a tour by flashlight of the new ecclesial hall that is being built there. There is a serious effort made in Guyana to mentor the young people and to give careful instruction to interested friends. With so many young people and so much love of the Word of God, we came away feeling that the Truth will continue to grow and prosper in this corner of the vineyard!

The Bible School this year was hosted by the New Amsterdam Ecclesia. Nearby are the other ecclesias of the Berbice region: Kilcoy and Plegt Anker. The theme was “Christ is Coming; are you ready?” Bro. Rafeek Soolaman spoke on the subject “The Making of a Saint” and Bro. Bill Link spoke on “Philippians: Let this Mind be in You.” One feature of the schedule that really impressed us was the 45 minutes set aside at the end of each day for questions and answers. The meeting room was full to overflowing and there were scores of children and young people. We really enjoyed the “Social Presentation” Sunday afternoon when young and old took the stage alone or in groups to sing, recite Scripture, or act out a Bible story.



The children in Sis. Rose Soolaman and Sis. Carol Link's class
at the Guyana Bible School



**Bro. Fred Hammond and Bro. Bill Link
in front of the NewAmsterdam Ecclesial Hall**

As often is the case in Christadelphian ecclesias, people who have been drawn from many social, economic and racial backgrounds are working together in the spirit of mutual respect. The Bible School in Guyana was a lovely example of how the love of Christ accomplishes this ideal. From the delicious meals and snack bags that seem to materialize from nowhere to the daily clearing and sweeping of the meeting room; the motto in Guyana is to serve one another. As one sister mildly put it, “I’m in His Majesty’s service.” Being there with our family in Christ rejuvenated us spiritually; we give God thanks on every remembrance of that special family.

Bro. Bill & Sis. Carol Link

**Bro. Jerrold
Joseph,
Sis. Lorraine
Mitchell,
and
Sis. Carol Link
outside
Sis. Lorraine’s
home**



Addresses for Bequests and Donations

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

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

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2.
Phone: 519-837-9095,
Email: agapeinaction@rogers.com
Website: www.agapeinaction.com

Christadelphian Meal a Day Fund of the Americas funds projects to support those in need in North and South America and the Caribbean. www.cmadfa.com

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

Christadelphian Heritage College
c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1

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

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

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

(Please send in text-only News and Notices by the 10th of the preceding month; please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

BARRIE, ON

In March 2008, we received by way of transfer Bro. Bruce and Sis. Barb Abel from the Shelburne, ON Ecclesia. We pray that our fellowship together might be mutually beneficial.

Grant Abel

BRANTFORD, ON

On August 29, 2009, the host of the Lord, both angelic and those called to be saints, rejoiced in the baptisms of three of our Sunday school scholars. After a sound confession of faith by each, BRANDON KEENE, son of Bro. Larry and Sis. Lorna Keene; BEN ROBERTSON, son of Sis. Jen Robertson and Paul Robertson; and CALEB MYERS, son of Bro. Paul and Sis. Melody Myers, were immersed into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The ecclesial family at Brantford is thankful to our heavenly Father for these new, young fellow laborers.

With love, we commend the transfer of Bro. Tom Hunter to the Mississauga West Ecclesia. We thank our brother for the fellowship that we have enjoyed over the past several years and the gentle spirit he shared with all. May our heavenly Father bless him as he shares fellowship with his new light stand.

Please be advised that effective immediately, Bro. Donald Luff is now the Recording Brother for the Brantford, ON Ecclesia. All ecclesial mail for the Brantford Ecclesia should be addressed as follows: The Brantford Christadelphian Ecclesia, c/o Donald Luff, Recording Brother, 442 Dunsdon Street, Brantford, ON, Canada N3P 2B1.

Michael Moore

CALGARY, AB

We are pleased to report the baptism into the saving name of Jesus on August 30, 2009, of AVIVA MINDORFF. Aviva is the youngest daughter of Bro. Claude and Sis. Debbie Mindorff. We pray for our heavenly Father's blessing on Sis. Aviva as we walk together toward the Kingdom.

John Fairhurst

ECHO LAKE, NJ

We sincerely thank our Bro. Dafydd Jenkins for bringing the word of exhortation to us on his recent visit with Sis. Lynn. This month, once again, has seen a number of visiting brothers and sisters and we have welcomed them around the table of the Lord: Tom and Sally Davies, Pomona, CA; Margan Packie, Carolyn Antonaccio, and David and Maryann Jorgensen, Union, NJ; Edith Mochado, Nashua, NH; Dafydd and Lynn Jenkins, Odette Ward and Matthew Ward, Cardiff, Museum Place, UK; Alexis Davis, Shelbourne, ON; Matthew Link, Adelphi, Baltimore, MD.

In the fall, beginning the third Sunday in September, and thereafter on each third Sunday of the month, we have our “Fellowship Luncheon”. All attending are welcome to stay, share a meal and spend some time with us.

Stewart Marsden

LARGO, FL

It has been a while since our last submission but we wish to thank all those who have visited our ecclesia, especially those brethren who provided uplifting words of exhortation. By way of transfer we welcome Bro. Mark and Sis. Sharon Flanagan. We also welcome Bro. Richard Profeta having transferred from the Orlando Ecclesia.

We are sad to report the passing of our Bro. Frank Bryan and Sis. Chris Johnson after long illnesses. They now sleep awaiting resurrection at the Lord's return. Bro. Frank and Sis. Chris were shining examples of “keeping the faith” and always had a smile to give to all. They are missed. We also wish to extend sympathy to our Bro. Roy Chaffin, Bro. Dan Chaffin, and Don Chaffin on the loss of their son and brother.

With joy and gladness and the Lord's grace we celebrated the 100th birthday of our Sis. Viola Valborg Johnson Adams on Sunday, August 23, immediately following memorial service. Sister Viola was born August 19, 1909, in Boston, Massachusetts. She was baptized January 11, 1935, in a metal tank at Bro. and Sis. Dugard's home and became a member of the Worcester Ecclesia. She married Elmer Leroy (Roy) Adams on February 20, 1937, and they were married 44 years. They had one son, David Adams, who married Jane Adams (they have two children). Sis. Viola was taught the truth by Bro. Roy Adams and Bro. William Tunstall, who was Sis. Ruth Wilkinson's father and Bro. Albert Jones' uncle. Viola and Roy moved to Florida in the '70s where they became members of the Largo Ecclesia. She has long been a faithful and willing worker in the Truth. Sis. Viola would like to send along her appreciation for all the happy 100th birthday cards she received from the brotherhood near and far. Thank you all.

The annual Florida Christadelphian Bible School was held the week of April 8. There were 56 registered and many day-trippers from the nearby ecclesias. Many of our regulars were unable to attend due to illness. The Committee wishes to extend heartfelt thanks to Bro. Brad Butts (USA), Bro. Dennis Paggi (USA) and Bro. Andrew E. Walker (UK) for their loving words of instruction, and we look forward to having them again in the future. The Committee also wishes to thank all the volunteers who provided invaluable service to the School. We are looking forward, with the Lord's blessing, to seeing everyone again next year April 10-17, 2010; the teachers will be Bro. Stan Isbell of the North Houston, TX Ecclesia and Bro. Bill Link, Jr. of the Baltimore, MD Ecclesia.

Stephen Lewis

SUSSEX, NB

We sympathize with the Halifax County, NS Ecclesia in the falling asleep of Sis. Hazel Hull at the end of July.

We have been pleased to welcome the following visitors during the summer: Jay Goodwin and family from Ontario; Bro. Ron Hicks, Washington, DC; Bro. Theo and Sis. Joy Redman, North Battleford, SK; and Bro. Dave and Sis. Ruth Snobelen, Saanich Peninsula, BC.

We thank Bre. Theo and Dave for their exhortations.

We are pleased to welcome Bro. Lucas and Sis. Margaret Jones and family from Vernon, BC as members of our ecclesia.

Cliff Baines

WASHINGTON, DC

The Washington, DC Ecclesia is happy to accept the transfer of membership of Bro. Andrew and Sis. Erin Amis from the Livonia, MI Ecclesia.

We are also joyful to announce that on May 31, 2009, DAVID HUFF was baptized into the saving name of Christ. Bro. David has moved to Ohio and we also announce his transfer of membership to the Paris Avenue, OH Ecclesia.

In October 2009, we will begin a “Learn to Read the Bible Effectively” seminar. We plan to follow this seminar with a lecture series that was given in the Moorestown, NJ Ecclesia earlier this year. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless our efforts to preach His Word.

Cory Crabill

WICHITA FALLS, TX

Since last reporting our ecclesial news we have welcomed around the table of our absent Lord and Saviour the following: Bro. Max and Sis. Linda Wickham, Sis. Jane Tunnell, Bro. Owen Tunnell, Bro. Ethan and Sis. Shawna Tunnell, San Diego County, CA.; Sis. Sarah Newton, LA, CA.; Sis. Erin Rakich, Bro. David Clubb, Simi Hills, CA.; Bro. Lyn and Sis. Pat Tunnell, Denver, CO; and numerous visitors from the other Texas ecclesias.

We thank Bre. Max Wickham and David Clubb for their words of exhortation and Bro. Ralph Hollenbeck (North Houston) for his class on Genesis 37.

With sorrow we announce that our Sis. Vivian Cash fell asleep in Christ on August 11, 2009, ending three months of suffering. We will miss her zeal for the Truth and constant efforts to share the things of the Kingdom with others. She put on Christ's saving name 59 years ago and now awaits her Savior's call to judgment. We long for that glorious resurrection morn and the wonderful changes to follow!

We are pleased to welcome back to our ecclesia Bro. Ben Beutel. His support is greatly appreciated as we walk together toward God's Kingdom.

John A. Clubb

Bro. Frank Woodcock

Along with his sister wife of 63 years, Joan, and their loved ones, we mourn the death of Bro. Frank Woodcock on August 11, 2009. Bro. Frank was baptized at Tamworth, UK in 1941. As a religious conscientious objector, he was directed to farm labor in World War II. He was one of the founders of the Nanaimo, BC Ecclesia in 1954. Frank worked tirelessly in mission work, including the Auxiliary Lecturing Society, Canadian Isolation League, and Spanish Isolation League.

His work included corresponding with countless members throughout the brotherhood, mailing out exhortations, Bible studies and lectures to those in isolation. During that time he also traveled extensively across Canada visiting many in isolation.

Bro. Frank was the patriarch of preaching in Central America, beginning postal work there in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although he couldn't speak Spanish well, he made numerous trips to several different countries, communicating with the interested friends he met by writing, since he could read Spanish well. Frank had a special place in the heart of the brothers and sisters in El Salvador, Costa Rica and Panama; they always appreciated his visits.

Later, when he could no longer travel, Frank kept in contact with the brothers and sisters in Latin America by sending Isolation League exhortations, Bible studies and e-mails. Everyone felt his care for his brethren and his love for the truth, and we hope that we will all meet again soon in the Kingdom.

Bro. Frank's passion for preaching was only diminished by his ever present personal frustration that we were never doing enough to "feed the brethren" with materials on the truth. We pause and consider the example of one who has gone before us, give thanks and rejoice that soon we will unite once again in the greater work of the Kingdom age.

Clyde Snobelen

Sis. Gail Anderson

Our dearly beloved sister, Gail Anderson, of the Greenaway Ecclesia, fell asleep on September 5, 2009. She was the daughter of the late Bro. Hugh and Sis. Edna Campbell. Bro. Campbell was Recording Brother of the Greenaway Ecclesia in the past, for a number of years.

Gail will be sorely missed by us all. Even though quiet, she was often sought out by many at the meeting. She was such a lovely sister, so very pleasant, with her radiant smile and ready laughter; so gentle, thoughtful, unassuming, gracious and selfless, eager to assist, often going out of her way for others; truly an example to us all. I can personally attest to the immense relief that Gail in her thoughtfulness and kindness brought to me from time to time, and our heavenly Father is witness to this, as He has heard my heartfelt prayers of thankfulness on these occasions for sending His angel to minister to me. What really touched me at these times was her cheerfulness and that lovely smile of hers, as she moved around to help, sometimes in obvious discomfort from the way she sometimes limped. I know that there are others whom she similarly assisted, because at times I accompanied her on some of these missions, and I would be so impressed with her thoughtfulness toward them and the gentle and patient care she exercised in dealing with them, and often wished I could be like her. She was not a person of means, yet she was able to minister to others and we know that it was from the blessing of the Almighty.

Gail will ever be my dear sister and best friend, and I pray that our heavenly Father will graciously bless us all to meet with each other again in His Kingdom, to gather around Him, and enjoy that fullness of joy and life for which we greatly long, and which He desires to grant us.

Esther Worrell

"When I was young, I admired clever people. Now that I am old, I admire kind people" (Abraham Heschel).

Minute Meditation

Jesus is the Son of God but Not God the Son

Zig Ziglar is a famous inspirational speaker and writer who publishes a weekly newsletter. A regular feature of the newsletter is a note about something of importance that happened on that particular date in history. Recently, the featured event was the Council of Nicaea: "On August 25, 325, the Council of Nicaea concludes. The Council of Nicaea, the first ecumenical debate held by the early Christian church, concludes with the establishment of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Convened by Roman Emperor Constantine I in May, the council also deemed the Arian belief of Christ as inferior to God as heretical, thus resolving an early church crisis."

Zig, who became a Christian late in his life, no doubt thinks that this council is an important event because it established the position that the Christian church would take in the controversy over whether or not Jesus is God.

For us this bit of news is positive proof that the doctrine of the Trinity is not in the Bible, because it was formulated by men and only established after debate at a council hundreds of years after the Bible was written. The emperor Constantine favored the Trinitarian point of view, and his opinion prevailed for political reasons.

As a result, the Arians were persecuted for their belief that Jesus is not coequal with his Father, and all Christians were forced to believe that Jesus is not inferior to God or be considered heretics. Even in our age of tolerance today, those who reject the divinity of Christ are considered to be non-Christians by mainstream Christianity.

How could the church ignore such plain statements as the following? "Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." Also, "My Father is greater than I."

How do Trinitarians respond to such incidents as the following? The rich young man runs up to Jesus and says, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." Jesus is plainly saying that he is not God. Would the Council of Nicaea call Jesus a heretic for this?

It is amazing that, of the many millions of people in the world who call themselves Christian, almost all of them believe that Jesus is the second person of the Godhead and is in fact God the Son. This terminology, this concept, is not found in the Bible. The very opposite, the supremacy of God and the subjection of Christ to God, is very clear in Scripture. Paul plainly says, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." Christ will be subject to God throughout the ages in

the future: “But when everything has been put under him, then the Son himself will also become subject to the one who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.”

Even after Jesus has risen from the dead, he acknowledges that God is his God: “Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”

Peter verifies that God is the God over Jesus when he says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Many Christians today also now teach a doctrine about an evil man they call the Antichrist. They teach that, before Jesus returns, this Antichrist will rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, attempt to rule the world, and do many other things that Scripture teaches will be done by the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

It is ironic that in the first century the Jews were looking for their Messiah, and when he came they denied him and crucified him; and now in the 21st century many Christians are looking for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ but will reject him when he comes. They believe that before Christ returns an Antichrist will arise and do the very things Scripture tells us the Lord will do. History is about to repeat itself. The Jews, looking for their Messiah, rejected him; and now many who call themselves Christian will reject the Lord Jesus at his return. How sad.

Unfortunately, those who hold the doctrine of the Trinity are actually themselves the antichrist, for as John tells us, “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist.” So the belief that Jesus was God and not flesh is that spirit of antichrist. Hebrews tells us plainly that Jesus shared our flesh and blood nature, and certainly God does not: “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil.”

How thankful we are that we have no part in the false doctrines that so many who call themselves Christians hold. We do not worship the same God; their concept of God is not Scriptural. Let us hold fast to our faith, for we believe as Jesus told us, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

Robert J. Lloyd

Victor Strigelius (1524-1569) was a Swiss reformer, a learned and godly man. He wrote that there were two reasons he longed for death:

- (1) that he might leave this world and come at last to the next, where he might “enjoy the sweet sight of the Son of God”, and*
- (2) that he might be delivered from the “cruel and implacable hatred of theologians”.*

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

OCTOBER 2009

- 3-4 Echo Lake, NJ** Study weekend. Ecclesial hall. Bro. John Hellawell: "The Word was made flesh". Beginning at 11 am
- 4 Meriden, CT** New England Fraternal Gathering. Lincoln Middle School, Meriden, CT. Bro. Ryan King (Petersburg, VA)
- 9-11 Vancouver, BC** Fraternal weekend. Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): "Jacob: From Jacob to Israel — The Process of Purification." Classes from 1:00 pm Saturday (including children's) with dinner following. For information and full program contact Bro. Dan Orsetti at (604) 514 4704 or dorsetti@telus.net
- 10 Brantford, ON** Thanksgiving Fraternal Gathering. Copetown Community Center. Bro. Ron Kidd (London West, ON): "Forget Not All His Benefits — Psalm 103". Dinner to be provided
- 10-11 Edmonton, AB** Edmonton-Calgary Fraternal. Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI): "The Bible Vs. Evolution". Children's classes will be offered. Please contact Bro. Jerome or Sis. Coralie Toronchuk at 780-453-1412 or jeromet@telusplanet.net
- 10-11 Sussex, NB** Thanksgiving Gathering. Bro. Ted Hodge, Jr.: "Bible-Based Problem Solving". For further information contact Bro. Brad and Sis. Debbie Goodwin 506-433-8861 or braddeb@nb.sympatico.ca
- 11 San Francisco Peninsula, CA** Fraternal Gathering. Bro. Jerry Hirst (Marinwood, CA) will give the Sunday school lesson and exhortation. We will meet at the Belmont Senior Center, located in the Twin Pines Park in Belmont, CA, beginning at 9:30 am. Lunch will be provided. Contact Sis. Ruth Ann Gover at 650-260-2694 or ragover@aol.com
- 17-18 Lompoc Valley, CA** 35th Annual Study weekend. Lompoc Grande Hall, 435 North "G" Street, Lompoc, CA. Study Leaders: Bre. Ron Kidd (ON) and Paul Billington (ON): "Days Of Creation, Confirming Our Faith In God's Word". Please send a \$25 registration fee to Bro. Ron Stewart, 275 Oakwood Circle, Lompoc, CA 93436 (805) 733-5577. Limited seating. Please register early
- 23-25 Moorestown, NJ** CYC Weekend. Bro. Allen Laben (Norfolk, VA) will be speaking. For registration information contact Sis. Rachel Cheetham 856-231-1612 Moorestowncycweekend@yahoo.com

NOVEMBER 2009

- 6-8 New England Bible Study weekend** Barton Conference Center, North Oxford, MA. Bro. Andrew Bramhill (Bracknell, UK): "Returning From Exile — Leaders And Prophets". Contact Bro. Craig Nevers at craignev@cox.net or Sis. Judith Nevers at jnevers@verizon.net
- 7-8 Kouts, IN** Fall study weekend at Woodland Park Community Center, 2100 Willowcreek Road, Portage, IN, 10:00 am. Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). Theme: "To Speak Well of God: A Study in Job." Please contact Bro. Joe Bennett at 219-762-2704

or jkb8275@comcast.net

7 Moorestown, NJ Fall Study Day. Bro. Paul Billington (Brantford, ON): "World Wars 1 & 2 in the Apocalypse". Contact Bro. Dan Langston for more information: dklangston@gmail.com 856-630-8979

7-8 Sarasota, FL Study weekend. Bro. Ian Macfarlane: "The Mind of the Spirit." Contact Bro. James Wilkinson 239-849-3301 or jameslwilkinson@hotmail.com

7-8 Victoria, BC Fall Study weekend. Bro. Andrew Jackson (North Battleford, SK): "Peter — A Brother Transformed". Contact Bro. Clyde Snobelen andrew@csl.ca

13-15 Austin Leander, TX Annual Fall Gathering at the HEB Camp by Leahey, TX. Bro. Dennis Bevans (Reseda, CA): "Daniel: God Rules in the Kingdom of Men". To register contact Sis. Maritta Terrell mt-ct@swbell.net, or P. O. Box 3729, Cedar Park, TX 78630.

13-15 Kitchener-Waterloo, ON Brothers' Weekend

20-22 Seattle, WA Seattle Youth Conference at Cornet Bay ELC, WA. Bro. Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON). Classes on Ruth. Contact Sis. Abby Cooper seattlecyc@gmail.com

27-29 Washington, DC Family Bible Study Weekend at Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. Bro. Ian Macfarlane (Book Road Hamilton, ON): "The Mind of the Spirit". Contact Bro. Robert Kling, 301-498-5245, rkling@acm.org

29 Ann Arbor, MI 12th Annual Thanksgiving Gathering. 11 am Memorial service. Lecture to follow lunch. Speaker: Bro. John Warner (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). Exhortation: "The Booth of David", and lecture: "The Holy City". Contact Bro. Peter Bilello p.bilello@cimdata.com

DECEMBER 2009

26-31 Ontario Winter Bible School Escape winter and join in warm fellowship around the Word of God with brothers and sisters. The theme for the week is: "Be Watchful and Strengthen the Things that Remain". Speakers: Bro. Brian Luke (Australia), Bro. Roger Long (UK), and Bro. Ron Kidd (London, ON). The School will be held at the Best Western Highland Inn, Midland, Ontario. For details and registration forms see our webpage www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com. Registrations to be sent to Sis. Barbara Kidd rbkidd@rogers.com 519-690-0391

JANUARY 2010

16-17 San Francisco Peninsula, CA Weekend with the Word. Speaker and topic to be announced. Contact Sis. Ruth Ann Gover at 650-260-2694 or ragover@aol.com

30 San Diego County, CA Annual study day, 9:30 am ecclesial hall, Bro. David Styles (Shelburne, ON). Lunch provided. Contact Bro. Kent Ellis ellisk@san.rr.com or 858-674-5645

FEBRUARY 2010

21-26 Palm Springs Bible School. The speakers will be Bro. Peter King (Birmingham, UK) and Bro. Clyde Snobelen (Victoria, BC). The school offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God's Word and enjoy the fellowship of other brothers and sisters. To register, please contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau at Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God (USPS 107-060)
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APRIL 2010

10-17 Florida Christadelphian Bible School. The speakers will be Bro. Stan Isbell of the North Houston, TX Ecclesia and Bro. Bill Link, Jr. of the Baltimore, MD Ecclesia.

JUNE 2010

20-25 Bozeman Bible Camp located at Bro. Paul Bottomley's property. Speakers are Bro. Stuart Pearce (UK): "New every morning"; Bro. Mark Giordano (VA): topic to be announced. Contact information at bozemanbiblecamp.com. For registration and accommodations please contact Bro. Steve Faver (406) 388-3378 or sfaver@unitedagencies.com

The following two pages do not belong in this issue,
but the file is corrupted and they cannot be deleted.

History

John and Elizabeth Reith



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

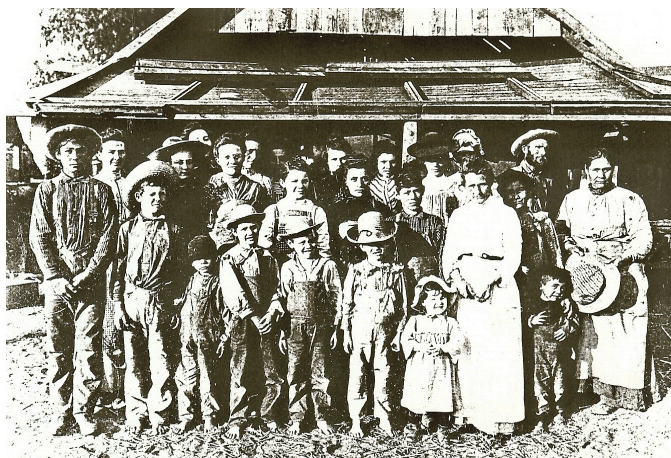
Few tragedies are as hard to understand as the death of a vibrant young person. But the hand of God can move in our lives in ways we might not expect or even desire, and it has the power to bring salvation through circumstances like sickness and death that to us might seem senseless. Such was the case 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

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.