

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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Editorial — Names and Titles	527
Exhortation — The Greatest Sacrifice, <i>Martin Webster</i>	530
Bible Study:	
To Speak Well of God:	
(8) Satan versus the Righteous Man: The Debate, <i>John Pople</i>	534
What the Qur'an Says About...	
(4) Women, <i>Don Styles</i>	541
The Arrangement of Chapters in Jeremiah, <i>George Booker</i>	546
The Dew, or Night Mist, <i>James Neil</i>	548
Ruth's Story, <i>Dean Brown</i>	550
Science — Dealing with Dawkins, <i>John C. Bilello</i>	552
Reflections:	
Well-Known Speakers, <i>Len Richardson</i>	556
Watching for the Sun, <i>A sister</i>	557
Scraps of Bread, and Banquets, <i>George Booker</i>	558
“To obey is better than sacrifice”, <i>Anthony Semple</i>	561
Bible Mission News — Jamaica; Caribbean Christadelphian Youth	
Camp; Bolivia; Guadalajara, Mexico; This is Your Bible	562
News & Notices	571
Minute Meditation — Wise unto Salvation, <i>Robert J. Lloyd</i>	574
Coming Events	575
Index to 2009	577

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

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God Manifested in His Son

In Jesus, then, raised from the dead, incorruptible, and clothed with brightness as when he was transfigured upon the Holy Mount (Matt 17:2), we behold the image and likeness of God. When we contemplate him by faith, as we shall hereafter by sight, we see a mirror from which the glory of Jehovah is reflected in intellectual, moral, and physical grandeur. He that would know God must behold Him in Christ. If he be acquainted with him as he is portrayed in the prophets and apostles, he will understand the character of God, whom no man hath seen, nor can see; who chargeth His angels with folly, and before whom the heavens are not clean. Jesus was the true light shining in the darkness of Judea, whose inhabitants "comprehended it not".

"Through him, God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shone into the hearts of as many as received him, to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; that so they might receive power to become the sons of God, believing on His name" (John 1:5-12; 2Cor 3:18; 4:6).

John Thomas, Elpis Israel

Editorial

Names and Titles

Names and titles are such interesting things. On a purely human level, there was a time — even in this land of freedom and democracy — that everyone addressed their social betters as “Mr.” and “Mrs.” And when younger ones addressed every older person (and that could be a 21-year-old speaking to a 30-year-old) as “Sir” or “Ma’am”. But we have changed, and probably we have lost something that can never be retrieved.

One writer recently mused on the dining-out custom that has taken hold. He and his wife went for dinner to a fine, expensive restaurant, and were greeted by their very young server: “Hi there, my name is Tiffany (or Lance, or whatever!). And what are your names?” To which the fellow responded, “Mr. and Mrs. Curmudgeon, if you please!”

There is a leveling effect in the use of first names. Should it be a requirement that, five minutes after meeting someone, we should all be on a first-name basis? The teenager and the elder brother or sister? ‘We’re all equals here!’ And in some sense that is true. But hasn’t the 70-year-old, or the 50- or 30-year-old for that matter, somehow earned the right to be addressed by younger ones as “Mr. Booker”, or, in ecclesial settings, as “Brother Booker”, or maybe even “Brother George”, or “Uncle George”? (I think “Uncle” and “Aunt” are such wonderful ways for even the youngest, unbaptized children of brothers and sisters to address other Christians, because it reminds everyone that all those who have been baptized into Christ belong to the same family.)

I still cringe (maybe a lot of us do?) when I hear a child refer to his mother by her first name.

I have a client — a young woman of about 30 — who always calls me “Sir”. Once, I said, “Just call me George, please.” “No, sir,” she said, “I can’t do that. I was *trained* by my parents. I have to call you ‘Sir’. I can’t do anything else.”

The point? Even we human beings can have a variety of “names and titles”, all of which are appropriate in certain circumstances, but not so much so in other circumstances. Sometimes we may all disagree as to which “names and titles” are best in which circumstances. Such differences are partly the result of background, disposition, social training, and family example. Partly, too, they are the result of the age in which we live.

“Daddy”?

I remember talking with a Pentecostal minister who — while we talked about the Bible — kept referring to “Dad”, or occasionally “Daddy”. For the longest time I thought he was talking about his real (that is to say, natural, or human) father. Even when he mentioned that “Dad” was “in heaven”, I thought that of course his father had died, and that’s where the gentleman thought that he was!

Finally, with some surprise, I realized that all along he had been talking about the heavenly Father, the LORD God Almighty, Yahweh! But his use of “Dad” and even “Daddy” was so intense and personal that I found it terribly jarring. I could never bring myself to use such a “name” for God, nor do I think he should have done so — and I mean: because of the propriety of the thing, quite apart from the fact that, doctrinally, he was probably miles away from any Scriptural understanding of the Name and character of the God of Israel — the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

On the other hand, maybe somewhere in the quiet recesses of private and personal prayer and meditation, maybe there, if not in public discussion... “Dad” or “Daddy” could be appropriate. Of course, as has been pointed out often, “our Father” or “our Father in heaven” were the terms that Jesus taught to his disciples.

There may also be an unwarranted presumption in our using the other term that Jesus sometimes used: that is, “My Father”. The Eternal God is only Father to us because He was, first of all, Father to Jesus — and that makes him “Our Father” even if I am addressing him individually and personally — because “our” in such cases can mean ‘the Father of Jesus Christ, and then mine as well, but only in and through Christ’.

“Abba, Father”

Still, Paul has that wonderful reference to the LORD God, or Yahweh, in Romans 8:15:

“But ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

From our analysis of the languages, we know here that “Abba” (the transliterated Hebrew, or Aramaic) and “Pater” (the Greek for “Father”) epitomize, respectively, affection and respect. This joint title (the two appear together in Mark 14:36 and Galatians 4:6 as well) expresses a fullness that neither word alone can. There is “Abba”, the love and trust that a little child (i.e., the “teknon” of Romans 8:16,17,21) feels for a father; it is an intimate and tender affection. Then there is the “Pater” of an adult son or daughter (i.e., the “huios” of Romans 8:14,15,19,23,29); this suggests the intelligent apprehension of the status and dignity due to the Head of the family. The combination of Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek words suggests also the mixed character of the Divine family: we are “neither Jew nor Greek... [we] are all one in Christ” (Gal 3:28).

So perhaps it does look like “Abba” may be approximated, today, by “Dad” or “Daddy” — the familiar term of a small child for his father. At least some commentators think so. Would the apostle Paul, if he were speaking in English, have referred to Yahweh as “Daddy”? I don’t know. Probably not in any public setting, at least. But perhaps in the privacy of his own “prayer closet”.

Speaking for myself personally, I can appreciate the use of Yahweh occasionally (or even “Jehovah”, the 19th-century equivalent favored by John Thomas). There is a dignity, and a reverence, in the name — maybe most closely ‘translated’ into English as “The Eternal One”, or the New Testament “The One who was, who is,

and who is to come". However, I do think that dignity and reverence may be lost, or cheapened, if "Yahweh" is used all the time.

On the other hand, He — the Eternal One, the All-powerful, self-existent One, who sustains all creation — allows us, even invites us, to call Him Father, through His Son Jesus Christ. The baby in the manger uttered his first cry, and thereby his Father staked a claim upon our lives. Thereby the Mighty God of all the universe became also "Abba", the tender Father of a little child; and, through that little child, *our* Father as well!

The God whose Son was born in that stable, among the lowly farm animals, ceased being (if He ever was!) a God of remote abstractions and technical theories. He is now, for us, a God who loves *people*, a Father who is not willing that any should perish, who holds back no blessing from His "children", who searches out and loves even the least worthy and most neglected.

Should I call Him Yahweh, or LORD? Yes, of course. But that is not enough, at least to me. I also need the One who is "Father".

But to think of Him as the familiar "Father" only, and risk losing sight of the fact, even for a moment, that He is All-Powerful and All-Knowing, and that there is a sure and certain plan that has existed in that Grand Mind untold ages before I ever drew breath... well, I'm not sure even "Father" is all-sufficient as a name or title.

He is, simply, both Yahweh *and* Father.

Sometimes, in my opinion, it may be more appropriate to refer to Him as the one. Then again, at other times, it may be more appropriate to refer to Him as the other. Sometimes, being human, I may find another person's selection of name or title as grating. But, being human, and trying to remember my own fallibility, I will try — really hard — not to judge him, or look upon him disparagingly, for the 'sin' of being a little 'different' than myself.

Maybe he or she will feel the same toward me.

George Booker

At our baptism we did not enter a household as slaves to serve with fear. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants... but I have called you friends" (John 15:14,15). And how often God says to His children: "Fear not." As the child takes the hand of its father in the dark, and finds courage in the sound of the parent's voice, sometimes not knowing that the parent shares the fear, so with perfect confidence the child of God may trust the Father in heaven; much more so knowing that all circumstances are subject to His control. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2Tim 1:7).

John Carter, Paul's Letter to the Romans

Exhortation

The Greatest Sacrifice

“And he (Stephen) said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Haran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell” (Acts 7:2-4).

In a few words Stephen provides a clear summary of the great act of faith on Abraham's part. His great journey of hope was based on the simple command that God gave him, that he should leave home and go to a land that God would show him. Not until he arrived would he know that he was at the place God promised!

The developing promise

The development of the promise was made over a period of more than 50 years. It began when Abraham (at the time called Abram) was still in Ur, and culminated in the final declaration at the time Isaac was offered. Abraham was 75 when he left Haran, and the LORD had previously told him to leave Ur. So Abram set out in a general direction, while not knowing the specific location that God had in mind. It would be revealed to him when he arrived.

It is most helpful to see how the promise was progressively revealed to Abraham as the years went by. The process was gradual. It started when God told him to leave his homeland and go to another place which God would show him. Associated with the instruction was the promise that he would be a famous man and his name would be blessed. Later, when Abram arrived at the place God wanted to give him, God told him that this was the place, and that he was to walk up and down in the land. All that he could see would be given to his descendants and him. But at this time he had no children!

A few years later God again appeared to Abraham and renewed the promise that he would have many children, as numerous as the stars of heaven. But at this time too he was a childless man, probably more than 80 years old! However, such was the strength of God's promise, that when Abraham asked for some kind of assurance that this would happen, God went through the process of making a “formal” covenant with him. The process to make the covenant was the same routine that two men would have used in that era when they made a covenant or agreement between one another.

About 15 years later, when Abraham was 99 years old, God again appeared to him and told him that the time had come for him and his wife Sarah to become

parents! Sarah was 89 at the time and her natural childbearing years had ended many years before!

Nevertheless, God said that Sarah would be the mother of a baby boy (to be named Isaac) and Abraham would be the boy's father. And so it happened, exactly as God had said. Isaac was the child of promise; he was the boy through whom the promise of many descendants would find its most significant fulfillment.

The astonishing commandment

Some years went by and God appeared to Abraham with an astonishing instruction, one that required a huge amount of faith to keep: he should offer *the son he loved so much* as a burnt offering at a place appointed by God. So for the second time in his life, Abraham set out on a journey to a general area, but not knowing the specific place that God had designated. It would be revealed to him when he arrived.

By this time Isaac was old enough to know what was happening. Isaac had a moral responsibility to obey his father, and he willingly submitted to his father's will! Is it possible that Isaac was about 33 1/2 years old when this event happened?

The record of this supreme sacrifice is given in Genesis 22. When reading the chapter our attention is immediately arrested by the word "tempt". But this was not a temptation in the normal sense of the word. The Hebrew word means "test". But what kind of a test? There are different kinds of tests with which we are familiar. For example, nobody intending to purchase a car would take it for a test drive and drive it into a brick wall to determine how strong the vehicle is. Rather, the idea of the test drive is to demonstrate the quality of the vehicle. On the other hand, a scientist designing an aircraft will test metal to its breaking point in order to establish its suitability for the intended use.

It was the first type of "test" that Abraham was called upon to submit to. The test that Abraham was put through was to demonstrate the quality of his faith. The faith of Abraham had been developing for many years and now was the time for its great quality to be brought to the full light of day. It was in his willingness to offer up Isaac that his faith is seen in the fullness of its strength!

The offering up of Isaac prefigured a greater offering that another Father would make about 2,000 years later. At that time it was God who in a sense was "tested", and the purpose of the "test" was to show beyond all doubt the power and quality of His love! It was in the Father's willingness to offer up His Son that His love is seen in its full strength! It was at this time in Abraham's life that, as Jesus said,

"Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56).

As Isaac willingly obeyed his father and laid himself on the altar, there was an aspect of joy in their vision of a similar obedience and sacrifice that would be made on another day in the distant future!

This is not the first time that Abraham built an altar for worship. And it is probably not the first time that he had offered a burnt offering. But this offering was

different. He was to take ***the thing he loved the most*** and make it his offering. The child who was “the son of his old age” was to be offered as a sacrifice to the God who had declared that it would be through this same son that the great purpose of God would be developed.

But it was without hesitation that Abraham moved to obey the command he had received from God. It is written that by faith he:

“...offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb 11:17-19).

“I have opened my mouth unto the LORD”

The example of giving to God a most treasured possession is not unique to Abraham. Many years later Jephthah faced a formidable foe on the day of battle and as an act of worship he declared to God that, should the victory be won, when he returned home the first thing that came out of his house would be dedicated to the LORD as a burnt offering. This was a voluntary vow, but when his only daughter and only child came out to meet him, Jephthah was devastated. He realized that ***the thing he loved the most*** was to be yielded to God as an offering of total dedication. But like Abraham he submitted to the requirements of God’s word. Her life became a “burnt” offering when she was dedicated to working for the LORD for the remainder of her life.

A little later, when Israel was in a state of great ungodliness, a barren Levite woman, named Hannah, yearned to be the mother of children. In her desperation she prayed for a son. In her prayer she declared that, if blessed with a son, she would dedicate him to the LORD for his entire life. So it was that, when her son Samuel was born, she raised him only until he was weaned and then fulfilled her vow. Thus ***the thing she loved the most*** became a “burnt offering” of total dedication.

The first mention of a “burnt offering” is in Genesis 9 when Noah, after the flood, made an offering. It is said of that offering that “the LORD smelled a sweet savor”. Thus a pattern is set that such offerings made “in righteousness” are a delight to the Almighty.

The prophetic response

But there is more to the story of the offering of Isaac, an offering that in many respects is a type or model of what would be accomplished by the Father and His Son. When the father and son were on their way to the appointed place, Isaac carried the wood on which he was to be laid. So too, when the Father and Son were on their way to the “appointed place” 2,000 years later, it was the Son who carried the wood on which he was laid and then lifted up.

When they were walking along toward the appointed place, Isaac asked his father where the lamb was that would be offered. Abraham simply replied that the LORD would provide the lamb for the burnt offering. In Abraham’s mind at that moment, did he not believe that Isaac was the lamb to be slain? Without doubt

that was his expectation. But Abraham could also see beyond the moment of worship on mount Moriah. However, when the angel told Abraham to spare his son, it was a ram and not a lamb that was taken in the place of Isaac. Thus the prophetic comment of Abraham about the lamb being provided by God was not fulfilled on that day. Abraham's response to Isaac's question was a prophecy that was to be fulfilled some 2,000 years later.

The sacrifice of obedience

On that day Abraham's son, his only son, the son whom he loved, was spared. But in reality Abraham had made the greatest sacrifice he could have made. Do you think that Samuel could possibly have had Abraham in mind when he said to Saul: "To obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams"?

When you read this record of Abraham's great sacrifice, how are you stirred? Perhaps the pinnacle of the record in Genesis 22 is the declaration of the Almighty:

*"In thy seed shall **all** nations of the earth be blessed, because **you** have obeyed my voice."*

For us, brothers and sisters, it will probably not happen that *all* families of the earth will be blessed because *we* personally have obeyed and continue to obey the voice of God, but it is certain that *some* will be blessed. It may well be that the person to be so blessed because of your sacrifice of obedience is ***the person, or persons, in your life whom you love the most!***

Martin Webster (Kitchener-Waterloo, ON)

The moment we make up our minds that we are going on with this determination to exalt God over all, we step out of the world's parade. We shall find ourselves out of adjustment to the ways of the world, and increasingly so as we make progress in the holy way. We shall acquire a new viewpoint; a new and different psychology will be formed within us; a new power will begin to surprise us by its upsurgings and its outgoings. Our break with the world will be the direct outcome of our changed relation to God. For the world of fallen men does not honor God.

Millions call themselves by His Name, it is true, and pay some token respect to Him, but a simple test will show how little He is really honored among them. Let the average man be put to the proof on the question of who is above, and his true position will be exposed. Let him be forced into making a choice between God and money, between God and men, between God and personal ambition, God and self, God and human love, and God will take second place every time. Those other things will be exalted above. However the man may protest, the proof is in the choices he makes day after day throughout his life.

A.W. Tozer

Bible Study

**To Speak Well of God:
(8) Satan versus the Righteous Man:
The Debate**

One of the characteristic difficulties associated with expositions of the main debate between Job and his three friends, in my opinion, is the level of detail. They tend to have either too much or too little. Some expositors talk through the debate line by line, which generates a large volume of text, yet doesn't necessarily lend significant illumination on the unfolding progression of the philosophy. By contrast, other expositors barely quote word one from the debate, but simply agglomerate all of the speeches in hand-waving terms, speaking of Job's rectitude and his opponents' folly. In fairness, a definite progression is hard to identify. The questions and answers seem circular and, though we are aware Job is ultimately exonerated and his friends rebuked, sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between one of Job's speeches and one from his friends!

We shall attempt to find a middle ground where the details of the debate are not overlooked, yet we do not over-focus on the nitty-gritty of each accusation and rebuttal to the extent that we cannot see the bigger picture.

First, let's remind ourselves of the debate's structure.

Eliphaz speaks (1) (ch 4-5) Job replies (ch 6-7)	Bildad speaks (1) (ch 8) Job replies (ch 9-10)	Zophar speaks (1) (ch 11) Job replies (ch 12-14)
Eliphaz speaks (2) (ch 15) Job replies (ch 16-17)	Bildad speaks (2) (ch 18) Job replies (ch 19)	Zophar speaks (2) (ch 20) Job replies (ch 21)
Eliphaz speaks (3) (ch 22) Job replies (ch 23-24)	Bildad speaks (3) (ch 25) Job interrupts, and speaks twice (ch 26-28 and 29-31)	

Table 8.1: The structure of the debate between Job and the three friends

At first glance there appear to be eight speeches from the friends, each with a response from Job. But on closer examination Bildad's third speech is clearly

truncated. The speech is less than 15% of the average length of any of the friends’ speeches, strongly suggesting that Job has cut Bildad off before he got going. This leaves us with only seven complete speeches from the friends.

8.1 The debate proper

I divide the seven completed speeches and rebuttals by the differing tones which I perceive dominate (Table 8.2).¹ There are no crystal-clear watersheds between the proposed levels; to some extent the tones slide from one to the next. Some themes, such as interpretative arguments and the doctrine of retribution, appear throughout. In proposing these different levels, I hope to identify the tone that rises to prominence during that period of the debate, in order to represent the subtly advancing tide of attack on Job. We will also see a model of behavior where each of the friends picks up an idea passed to him by the former speaker, briefly repeats the ground covered, and then advances into new prosecutorial territory.

	Speaker	Dominant Tone of friends’ speeches	Dominant Tone of Job’s responses
1	Eliphaz speaks (1) (ch 4-5) Job replies (ch 6-7)	Level 1: Observations	Humility and despair
2	Bildad speaks (1) (ch 8) Job replies (ch 9-10)		
3	Zophar speaks (1) (ch 11) Job replies (ch 12-14)	Level 2: Interpretative criticisms	Self-justification
4	Eliphaz speaks (2) (ch 15) Job replies (ch 16-17)		
5	Bildad speaks (2) (ch 18) Job replies (ch 19)	Level 3: Condemnations	Anger and pride
6	Zophar speaks (2) (ch 20) Job replies (ch 21)		
7	Eliphaz speaks (3) (ch 22) Job replies (ch 23-24, 26-31)		

Table 8.2: The structure of the debate, identifying different levels according to the dominant tone of the speeches

I will not be reattributing speeches from one speaker to another, or changing the order of the speeches to suit my ideas. It is almost commonplace for expositors of Job to rearrange or reattribute the speeches, seemingly arbitrarily. For example, Balchin believes the speeches of Elihu are best placed directly subsequent to the conclusion of the friends’ speeches, before Job’s final addresses,² and many other

expositors perform similar reshuffles.^{3, 4, 5} In each case the transfer seems driven by the expositor's need for his chosen interpretation to run more smoothly. I have not encountered any persuasive evidence that any of the speeches belong with any other character than those to which they are attributed in the Scripture.

8.1.1 Level 1: Speeches characterized by Observations: Eliphaz 1 and Bildad 1

Eliphaz the Temanite, the kindest of the friends, bases his opening speech on observations of Job's life. He sees Job as loving and charitable, and he draws from these observations to encourage Job that God will restore him:

*"Think how you have instructed many,
how you have strengthened feeble hands.
Your words have supported those who stumbled;
you have strengthened faltering knees.
But now trouble comes to you, and you are discouraged;
it strikes you, and you are dismayed.
Should not your piety be your confidence
and your blameless ways your hope?" (Job 4:3-6).*

In this Eliphaz unwittingly predicts the future, though — alas — it is the last time he speaks with such accuracy.

Even then, this 'accuracy' is suspect. Eliphaz supposes God must restore Job because Job is upright and blameless; thus he extends directly the doctrine of retribution. As we will see, God will restore Job because He loves him, and because Job's work in suffering (which we will explore later) has been completed.

Bildad the Shuhite evidently takes his cue from Eliphaz and speaks similarly. However, even at this early stage, the first small step away from supporting Job is taken. Where Eliphaz speaks explicitly of Job's innocence, Bildad makes observations which imply, but don't state, that innocence (Job 8:20-22).

8.1.2 Job's response to Level 1 Speeches: Humility and despair

Job has not been put on the defensive by accusations, so he freely expresses his own inadequacy before his Maker, albeit in the context of all men's failings. Job pleads for release against his current condition and shows he understands God both knows about, and controls, his condition (Job 7:21 and 9:2).

Job offers statements which explicitly refute the doctrine of retribution and are, with some bitterness excused, accurate:

*"It is all the same; that is why I say,
'He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.'
When a scourge brings sudden death,
he mocks the despair of the innocent.
When a land falls into the hands of the wicked,
he blindfolds its judges.
If it is not he, then who is it?" (Job 9:22-24).*

This principle, of the obscurity of divine judgment, is one which his friends have not absorbed. This may count significantly towards the Almighty's final analysis of who has spoken "that which was right" about Him.

Job finishes this series of exchanges with a heartfelt plea to God to end his suffering, in full recognition of God's irresistible power and authority to do as He will (Job 10:5-9). For now at least, the plea is not granted, and Job's pain continues. To exacerbate matters, the tone of the friends' speeches subtly changes to a more aggressive form.

8.1.3 Level 2: Speeches characterized by Interpretations: Zophar 1 and Eliphaz 2

Zophar the Naamathite's first speech and Eliphaz's second are characterized by the rising dominance of interpretative arguments. To illustrate the point: "You are wearing a red shirt" is simply an observation, but: "You are wearing a red shirt because you are a member of a gang" is interpretative: an explanation, even a motive, has been attributed to the observation. Clearly there is more potential for error with interpretative reasoning than with observations.

Zophar, the most reckless of the three friends, immediately names Job a mocker and a generator of idle talk (Job 11:3), severely tarnishing any friendly or collaborative nature the discussions may have had. That done, Zophar proffers his opinion that Job's sufferings are a direct result of his sins and, furthermore, that an immediate cessation of those sins will realize, equally immediately, a cessation of his sufferings. It is the clearest declaration to date of the flawed doctrine of retribution (Job 11:14-16).

Perhaps emboldened by his colleague's lack of restraint, Eliphaz abandons his erstwhile supportive testimony. Copying Zophar's labeling of Job as a mocker and Job's words 'idle talk', Eliphaz deems Job 'crafty' and his replies 'useless words' (Job 15:3-5). Eliphaz then runs further with Zophar's argument, that salvation can be achieved when Job's sins are abandoned, by turning his attention to the negative side of the same coin. Eliphaz focuses on the detrimental retribution supposedly immediately received by the sinner while in the state of sin. He characterizes a hypothetical wicked man:

*"Terrifying sounds fill his ears;
when all seems well, marauders attack him.
He despairs of escaping the darkness;
he is marked for the sword.
He wanders about — food for vultures;
he knows the day of darkness is at hand.
Distress and anguish fill him with terror;
they overwhelm him, like a king poised to attack,
because he shakes his fist at God
and vaunts himself against the Almighty,
defiantly charging against him
with a thick, strong shield" (Job 15:21-26).*

Sadly, there seems an extra vignette of cruelty here. One of Eliphaz's chosen indicators of the wicked man's distress is that marauders will attack unexpectedly. As Eliphaz well knows, this is precisely what has very recently befallen Job: i.e., an unexpected attack by both Sabeen and Chaldean raiding parties (Job 1:15, 17). The perfect match of circumstances between Eliphaz's hypothetical wicked man and Job's actual case is surely deliberate; and how tragically sad for Job to see his former friend round on him this way. The three would-be friends are egging each other on, perhaps unwittingly, to attack Job more and more severely, each speaker borrowing an idea or tactic from the previous speaker and enlarging upon it in an increasingly condemnatory way.

8.1.4 Job's response to Level 2 Speeches: Self-justification

Job's integrity has now been denounced and his blameless motives replaced by imputations of wickedness. Perhaps it is understandable, but now his replies are sarcastic, energized and self-justifying. It is at this point, for the first time, he names himself righteous (Job 12:2-4). This is an unfortunate progression. An inherent danger of the self-declaration of righteousness is that the human mind is then tempted to take a combative role against others, even God, buoyed by the confidence that person has in his or her perception of righteousness. Job's language now adopts the flavor of one preparing a court case, with the implication that God is his prosecutorial opponent — his Satan (Job 13:18-22)!

But Job does not eschew Satan, or distance himself from him. To the contrary, Job taunts him and invites further combat. We will return to this later, as one of the critical points where Job may have stumbled:

*"But come on, all of you, try again!
I will not find a wise man among you" (Job 17:10).*

Sadly in a manner similar to the Br'er Rabbit story "The Tar Baby",⁶ this continued engagement is a poor choice for the hero. For Job, as for Br'er Rabbit, continued re-engagement with the opponent leads to a sticky mess from which the protagonist is unable to extract himself.

The overriding feature of this session is that we have seen the Satan show his true colors. Emerging from the earlier sympathy the three friends had for Job, Satan naturally devolves to harangue Job with an aggressive and self-righteous attitude.

And the attitude of Satan is so very, very contagious.

8.1.5 Level 3: Speeches characterized by Condemnations: Bildad 2, Zophar 2 and Eliphaz 3

The Satan has riled Job, and Job wants to box. It doesn't turn out well for anyone.

In the final level outright condemnation takes the reins. Bildad's second speech has a single thesis and employs a single mechanism. His thesis presents the lot of the wicked man. His mechanism is to observe every detail of Job's current condition and then, extrapolating backwards, claim that those details are exactly what would befall an evil man (Table 8.3).

	Calamity befalling Job	Calamity incumbent upon Bildad's hypothetical evil man (ch 18)
1	Job no longer knows peace and experiences only turmoil (3:26).	Terrors startle him on every side and dog his every step (v 11).
2	Job is afflicted with a wasting skin disease (2:7,8).	[Calamity] eats away parts of his skin; death's firstborn devours his limbs (v 13).
3	The 'fire of God' burned up Job's sheep and herdsmen (1:16).	Fire resides in his tent; burning sulfur is scattered over his dwelling (v 15).
4	Job's friends have forgotten him (19:14).	The memory of him perishes from the earth; he has no name in the land (v 17).
5	Job's children are killed (1:18,19).	He has no offspring or descendants among his people, no survivor where once he lived (v 19).

Table 8.3: (L) Job's contemporary circumstances and (R) What Bildad speculates in his second speech will happen to a hypothetically evil man

As is the pattern within the friends' speeches, Bildad is borrowing an idea that Eliphaz began in the speech before and enlarging upon it. Bildad has obviously chosen to have the circumstances of his hypothetically evil man match perfectly Job's current sorry state. Just in case Job could somehow miss the repeatedly implied condemnation, Bildad the Shuhite spells it out explicitly:

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

Zophar is still seething with injured pride, stung by Job's sarcastic rebuke. Zophar claims his depth of understanding prompts his response (Job 20:3). He raises the ante from Bildad's condemnation. Again he describes a hypothetical evildoer with Job's exact circumstances, for the third time, before advancing into new territory of describing specific crimes which this wicked man is alleged to have performed, such as oppressing the poor and seizing their property (Job 20:19-22).

Finally, Eliphaz speaks for the third time. He takes the ball Zophar ran with: the accusation of oppressing the poor and leaving them destitute. But where Zophar left the accused as an unnamed hypothetical man, Eliphaz advances in attack and crosses a new line, in some ways the final line, and specifically names Job as the perpetrator. Ironically it is a desperately sad insight into humanity that the kindest of all the speakers ultimately sinks to the deepest of accusatory depths:

*"Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins endless?
You demanded security from your brothers for no reason;
you stripped men of their clothing, leaving them naked.*

*You gave no water to the weary
and you withheld food from the hungry,
though you were a powerful man, owning land —
an honored man, living on it.
And you sent widows away empty-handed
and broke the strength of the fatherless.
That is why snares are all around you,
why sudden peril terrifies you, why it is so dark you cannot see,
and why a flood of water covers you” (Job 22:5-11).*

He caps the accusation with a flourish of the doctrine of retribution, naming the alleged sins as the necessary cause of Job’s suffering; even though, in voicing these accusations, he is flatly contradicting his earlier testimony (Job 4:3,4)!

8.1.6 Job’s response to Level 3 Speeches: Anger and pride

The aggression level has certainly risen. Where Job was driven to self-justification before, now the outright condemnation provokes an even more negative mindset, which as Gutierrez noted was largely provoked: “Job’s rebellious attitude is due not so much to his sufferings as to the arguments that his friends develop in their pompous manner.”⁷

We might suppose Job’s knowledge that the accusations were false might provide him some internal solace, even if he is angry with the accuser (Job 21:34). Yet I suggest Job’s innocence is a disadvantage to Job maintaining a spiritually healthy attitude; for pride is even more dangerous than anger. When one is well aware one is innocent of all charges leveled, it proves harder to keep a prideful counterattack in check.

Job stops short of condemning his friends, despite the fact they have roundly condemned him. But he utters stern warning to them:

*“If you say, ‘How we will hound him,
since the root of the trouble lies in him,’
you should fear the sword yourselves;
for wrath will bring punishment by the sword,
and then you will know that there is judgment” (Job 19:28,29).*

Why do I consider Job’s comments a warning, not outright condemnation, when he threatens them with the sword of judgment? Is it because I have pre-selected him as ‘the good guy’ and assessed his comments with more generosity than those of the friends? No. It is because Job uses the conditional tense, saying that if their intent truly was to hound him then his knowledge of his innocence likely spells trouble for them. This seemingly small distinction is important, though it is clearly a sentiment of didactic threat. More importantly, Job has veered away from speaking well of God: he is now drawn to speak well of himself. Job has been roused to anger, no doubt, though it would be a harsh exegesis that would accuse him of any sin at this point.

But, alas, worse is to come.

John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

Notes:

1. I believe it helps to read the debate in Job at least one 'level' at one time, i.e., two or three speeches along with Job's interspersed replies, to best appreciate the flow of the dialogue. Reading just one speech per day, and the reply the next, is too slow a sampling rate to easily deduce the genuine developments in the debate, and the book might always remain obscure if approached that slowly.
2. J. Balchin, "Sitting with Job," 1998, Rhoswel Books, Oswestry, UK, 55.
3. E.J. Kissane, "The Book of Job," 1939, Dublin, Eire, reassigns chapters 25 and 26:5-14 to Zophar; and 26:1-4 and 27:7-23 to Bildad.
4. W.A. Irwin, "Job," in "Peake's Commentary on the Bible," Ed. M. Black and H.H. Rowley, 1962, Thomas Nelson and Sons, London, UK, 391, reassigns chapter 27 to a variety of speakers including Zophar.
5. S. Terrien, "The Book of Job: Introduction and Exegesis," in "The Interpreter's Bible," 1954, Vol. III, Abingdon, Nashville, TN, USA, 878-884, reassigns chapter 27:13-25 to Zophar.
6. J.C. Harris, "Br'er Rabbit and the Tar Baby," 1881, in J. Torrence "The Importance of Pot Liqueur," 1994, August House, Little Rock, AR, USA.
7. G. Gutierrez, "On Job, God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent," 1987, Orbis, New York, NY, USA, 56.

What the Qur'an Says About...

(4) Women

In the first article of this series, we provided a brief biography of Muhammad. There it was noted that at 25 years of age he was taken as husband (she was the dominant personality in the relationship) by a 40 year-old wealthy widow, to whom he remained faithful until her death at 65. After that, Muhammad was urged to secure alliances through marriage and took some 11 to 13 wives, at least one of whom was already married. In spite of the number of his wives, he evidently fathered only two daughters. His personal situation is no doubt reflected in the Qur'an, both in his treatment of women and his justification of multiple wives.

In today's world, we often hear of the harsh treatment of women in Islamic society (witness the Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan). Such practices can be justified from the Qur'an in passages allowing for beating of wives, divorce laws which give a great advantage to the husband, and the permitted treatment of female slaves.

Same spiritual standards and eternal end

In 33:35 the Qur'an stresses men and women are treated alike in spiritual issues:

"For Muslim men and women — for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast (and deny themselves), for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise — for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and great reward."

The foregoing illustrates both points — the similarity of behavior required of men and women as well as the equality of reward that is promised.

This equality of women with respect to their eternal end comes up several times: in heaven the righteous...

*"...enter the Garden, **you and your wives**... to them will be passed round, dishes and goblets of gold" (43:70,71).*

*"If any do deeds of righteousness — be they **male or female** — and have faith, they will enter Heaven" (4:124; also 3:195; 9:72; 40:40, etc.).*

Of course, if there is equality of reward, the Qur'an states there will be equality of punishment:

"He (Allah) may admit the men and women who believe, to Gardens beneath which rivers flow... and that He may punish the Hypocrites, men and women, and the Polytheists, men and women who imagine an evil opinion of Allah. On them is a round of Evil: the Wrath of Allah is on them: He has cursed them and got Hell ready for them" (48:5,6; note also 66:10).

Virgins given to men

It has been rather memorably reported that those who kill themselves (such as suicide bombers) in the service of Allah go straight to heaven and receive 70 virgins as a reward. While there is no mention of a specific number of virgins, the Qur'an does promise the assurance of heaven for such "devotion" and does promise virgins for companions:

"For those Foremost in faith... we have created (their Companions) of special creation. And made them virgin-pure (and undefiled)" (56:10,35,36).

"As to the Righteous... We shall join them to companions, with beautiful, big and lustrous eyes. And those who believe and whose families follow them in Faith — to them We shall join their families... They shall exchange there one with another, a (loving) cup free of frivolity, free of all taint of ill" (52:17,20,21).

This scene provokes some obvious questions about the carnal rewards provided to men in heaven. The Qur'an itself makes no attempt to explain the picture as figurative or to reconcile the association of family with the complications of a harem scene.

Other areas of equality

Marriage to unbelievers is forbidden for both men and women:

"Do not marry unbelieving women... Nor marry (your girls) to unbelievers until they believe" (2:221).

Lewd behavior is punished the same for men or women:

"The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication — flog each of them with a hundred stripes: let not compassion move you in their case... Let no man guilty of adultery or fornication marry any but a woman similarly guilty, or an Unbeliever: nor let any but such a man or an Unbeliever marry such a woman" (24:2,3).

Both men and women are to respect the purity of the other:

“Women impure are for men impure, and men impure for women impure, and women of purity are for men of purity, and men of purity are for women of purity” (24:26).

In matters of infidelity, the word of the wife is equal in validity to the word of the husband:

“And for those who launch a charge against their spouses, and have (in support) no evidence but their own — their solitary evidence (can be received) if they bear witness four times (with an oath) by Allah that they are solemnly telling the truth... But it would avert the punishment from the wife, if she bears witness four times (with an oath) by Allah, that (her husband) is telling a lie” (24:6-8).

So the word of the wife has the same requirements for validity as the word of the husband.

The modesty issue

Most of us are familiar with the head covering worn by many Islamic women. This is not a specific requirement of the Qur'an. But the Qur'an is more detailed on the matter of women's modesty than is the Bible:

“And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to... their husbands, fathers, husbands' fathers, sons, brothers, nephews, eunuchs, small children, etc. [listing all close relatives and household servants]” (24:31).

This same chapter expresses specific lenience for...

“...such elderly women as are past the prospect of marriage — there is no blame on them if they lay aside their (outer) garments, provided they make not a wanton display of their beauty: but it is best for them to be modest” (24:60).

Evidently any specific application of these dress restrictions is the product of later rulings and custom rather than the word of the Qur'an.

Inequality in marriage

Wives are to obey their husbands as the husbands are to be the supporters of their wives:

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard.”

This section continues on to specify the punishment the husband is permitted to mete out if he feels his wife is not acting appropriately:

“As to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next) refuse to share their bed, (and last) beat them; but if they return to obedience, do not seek against them means (of annoyance)” (4:34).

Since a “beating” is subject to wide interpretation, the Qur’an here opens the door to approving male brutality.

Evidently seeking to offset this potential for brutality is the instruction:

“O you who believe! you are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should you treat them with harshness, that you take away part of the dower you have given them — except where they have been guilty of open lewdness; on the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equity” (4:19).

The brutality which exists toward women in some Muslim societies today is clearly beyond the overall spirit of the Qur’an.

Further protecting women

The Qur’an provides further protection to wives in that they can accumulate their own money and can initiate a divorce if they feel mistreated. Their own money would come from several sources, including the dowry, an inheritance, and their own earnings:

- (1) Dowry: Under the Qur’an, the dowry is paid to the wife: *“And give the women (on marriage) their dower as a free gift” (4:4). “Seeing that you derive benefit from them, give them their dowers (at least) as prescribed” (4:24).*
- (2) Inheritance: *“Allah (thus) directs you as regards your children’s (inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females” (4:11).* The instruction continues with detailed percentages depending on family circumstances. The male consistently gets a larger share but the female does get a portion of the inheritance.
- (3) Earnings: *“And in no wise covet those things in which Allah has bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than on others: to men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn” (4:32).*

Women can divorce

Under the Qur’an, it is evident women can seek a divorce as well as men:

“If a wife fears cruelty or desertion on her husband’s part, there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves; and such settlement is best” (4:128).

It is recognized, however, that in most cases men have the advantage:

“Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods. Nor is it lawful for them to hide what Allah has created in their wombs, if they have faith in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands have the better right to take them back in that period, if they wish for reconciliation. And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according

to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of advantage) over them. And Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise” (2:228).

Further protecting the women are restrictions upon divorce and remarriage to the same person, a requirement that the man supply two years of support for a divorced wife, and the classification as a great sin any slander of a chaste wife (2:229,230,233; 24:23). It is noteworthy that there are similarities to the Law of Moses in the regulation, not prohibition, of divorce, and the specific legislation designed to prevent trivial divorces on the part of the man.

Solving domestic problems

An interesting provision of the Qur'an is a suggestion for settling domestic disputes:

“If you fear a breach between them twain (husband and wife), appoint (two) arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers; if they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation: for Allah has full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things” (4:35).

Multiple wives

There are a number of places where the Qur'an alludes to men having multiple wives as well as slave wives. According to the Qur'an, multiple wives can be required when a man takes on the responsibility of caring for orphaned children. However, even in such a case the additional wives must be limited to the number the man can treat “justly”:

“If you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice” (4:3).

Conclusion

The harsh treatment of women in several of today's Muslim societies has basis in the Qur'an. At the same time, the Qur'an offsets brutality with several references to the just and fair treatment of women. A balanced application of the book would no doubt lead to a male-dominated but tolerably civilized domestic structure. One notable omission, however, is “love”. Husbands are nowhere instructed to love their wives. In fact, the Qur'an is not big on “love”, as will become a topic of a future article, Lord willing.

Don Styles (Ann Arbor, MI)

Let woman certainly be modest, but let her not be reduced to a cipher, which God never intended. She is intended as a comrade and a help, which she greatly is, when enlightened and treated rightly. We ought to be thankful when women turn up who are able to help with wise suggestions.

Robert Roberts

Bible Study

The Arrangement of Chapters in Jeremiah

The Book of Jeremiah grew out of the scroll that Baruch wrote down as the prophet dictated it. This began in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Jer 36:2) and was completed and read before the king in his fifth year, in the ninth month (vv 9, 21, etc).

Apparently the prophets made written records of their predictions, and collected and kept those that were intended for permanent use. The Book of Ezekiel is the most regularly arranged of all the prophetic writings. It consists of two collections, the first containing those predictions from the time before the destruction of Jerusalem (Ezek 1-24), and the second those after it (Ezek 25-48). Similarly Isaiah falls into two divisions, the one division consisting mainly of prophecies leading up to Sennacherib's defeat (Isa 1-35), and — after the historical interlude (Isa 36-39) — the other division consisting of his "Servant" prophecies, or kingdom prophecies, after that great event (Isa 40-66).

In Jeremiah's case, however, we have a different situation. When Jeremiah and Baruch first collected his prophecies, we are told that Jehoiakim's scroll contained a record of "all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now", a period of 23 years — from approximately 626 BC to 603 BC, Jehoiakim's fifth year (Jer 36:2).

We know, however, that Jeremiah 21 was written some years later, in the reign of Zedekiah (597 BC to 586 BC). Furthermore, we can reasonably guess that Jeremiah 19 (with Jeremiah 20 as a sort of appendix) was just about the last of the Zedekiah collection. On this, R. Payne Smith writes, "Most appropriate would it [Jer 19; 20] have been for the closing prophecy of the woeful scroll: for under the type of a potter's vessel crushed into worthless fragments the prophet proclaimed before 'the ancients of the people and the ancients of the priests' in terms of unflinching severity the final doom of the kingdom of Judah" (*Speaker's Commentary, Jeremiah*).

Smith also writes, "An attentive perusal of Jeremiah 13 makes it more than probable that the prophecy of the linen girdle belongs to the very close of Jehoiakim's reign [597 BC], containing as it does a message to Jehoiachin, his successor, and to the queen-mother, together with allusions to the march of the Chaldean army, which brought that monarch's short period of power to so disastrous a conclusion."

Furthermore, from Jeremiah 20 onward, all signs of any general arrangement vanish. Attempts have been made to show that these later chapters are grouped together upon some sort of system, but a coherent and logical arrangement is difficult to achieve.

It may be that Jeremiah died in Egypt before he ever had an opportunity to put together a more chronologically arranged Book. Such a scenario is imagined by Payne Smith, again in *Speaker's Commentary*: "And when the catastrophe had come, and city and temple lay in ruins, Jeremiah for the last time assayed [determined] to arrange and publish his prophecies. All was over, the prophet's work done, and he probably looked forward to a tranquil but sad old age in the house of Gedaliah, his friend and protector. His first business was to rescue his writings from destruction, no easy matter, for he himself, contrary to Nebuchadnezzar's orders, had been loaded with chains, and dragged, with other captives, to Ramah (Jer 40:1-4)... When Nebuzaradan set him free, he had been spoiled [robbed] of everything but the few clothes wherewith he was clad. Whether any portion of his writings perished in the ruin of Jerusalem we know not: he rescued, however, those we now possess from destruction, but could do no more. Shortly afterwards Gedaliah was foully slain (Jer 41:2). The prophet was then forced to go into Egypt against his will (Jer 43:6)... and soon afterwards died, being, as Jerome asserts, stoned by the Jews at Tahpanhes."

It may also be that, after Jeremiah's death, his helper and friend Baruch did not feel free to attempt any better organization or arrangement of his prophecies. Smith adds: "Placed immediately before the prophecies relating to the Gentiles [Jer 46-51], we find one spoken to comfort Baruch for not receiving the gift of prophecy (Jer 45). And nothing is more likely than that, feeling the difference between himself and Jeremiah to be so vast (Jer 45:5), he would regard himself as destitute of the necessary authority for arranging his master's memorials [i.e., writings], and would leave them as they were."

When Jeremiah died, Baruch may only have had his master's writings, such as they were, hastily gathered up on several different scrolls. If that were so, then we now have, in the Book of Jeremiah, those same prophecies in practically the same form as they came into Baruch's care after the fall of Jerusalem.

We might have hoped for a more regular order of the chapters of the Book, but it does not exist now. We might ask, "Why didn't the LORD give Baruch the Holy Spirit guidance to continue and finish Jeremiah's work after the great prophet died?" The only answer we have, based on Jeremiah 45, is that He simply did not.

We do learn something of value, however, if we think of this scenario. We learn that, no matter how difficult the circumstances, and no matter what struggles its human actors went through, God's Word was kept intact and preserved until our day. The fact that it is preserved, while still bearing the marks of the trials and turmoil of the times, reminds us of another wonderful fact: the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth condescends to use the most feeble mortal "helpers", laboring under the most frightful conditions, to preserve for us the inspired record of His thoughts and actions.

The slender thread of a barely discernible story, the details of which we can only guess, ties together this part of the LORD's message. It is a story within a story. Through the mists of time we see the faithful Baruch scrambling to recover and

hang on to the scroll fragments while his world crumbles around him. Perhaps after his master's death, he worked on in fear for his own life, never knowing how long he himself might be allowed to live. And then, when he had escaped with his life and at least some of the precious scrolls, he still felt himself (as Jeremiah 45 suggests) unqualified to arrange the scrolls in a more logical order. But what he felt able to do he did. He began making copies of what he had, just as they were gathered up and preserved by him, to send forth Jeremiah's messages to communities of believers who themselves were perhaps scattered and living in fear.

In such ways, God worked for good to those who were called to be His elect ones. In such ways, His precious Word has survived, and been preserved, for us.

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

The Dew, or Night Mist

There is a very remarkable and regular provision of Nature, peculiar to Bible lands, which may be observed in a first sight of Palestine on any night in the hot season when a west wind is blowing. I allude to the sea night mist of the hot season. It explains in a very striking and hitherto unsuspected manner the numerous occurrences of the Hebrew word "tal", uniformly rendered "dew" in the KJV. Some of these have presented hitherto unanswerable difficulties, such as the statement of the wise man that "the clouds drop down the 'dew'" (Prov 3:20), which, if "dew" in the scientific sense of the word is understood, is just what clouds do not do, no dew ever forming when clouds are about. Again, the words in Isaac's blessing, "God give thee of the 'dew' of heaven" (Gen 27:28); those of Moses, summing up the precious things of heaven in the "dew" (Deut 33:13); the power of an absolute eastern king being likened to "a 'dew' upon the grass" (Prov 19:12); and Israel's future influence amongst the nations to "a 'dew' from Jehovah" (Mic 5:7); such words as these, and those in many other passages, bespeak a peculiar excellence and value which dew does not possess even amongst us, and still less in Palestine, where it only occurs in the winter, the time of abundant heavy rains, which render it comparatively useless!

It was my good fortune, as a result of my residence in Jerusalem, to discover the deeply interesting natural feature that is called in our version "dew", and fully to realize in what its importance and excellence consists (Hos 14:5). From the end of April till about the end of October no drop of rain falls; while each day, for some ten or twelve hours, the sun shines with great strength, unveiled by a single cloud. This fierce wind is in May and October intensified by a burning wind, the sirocco, which gathers its withering, scorching power as it sweeps over the vast sands of the Arabian desert, and is the awful "east wind" of the Bible. During this period, but more especially at its close, in September and October, the west wind, which then prevails, comes up laden with moisture from the Mediterranean Sea, which is condensed in low-lying clouds of mist as soon as it reaches the land. These cloud-masses sweep along near the ground, leaving behind them an im-

mense amount of what is misnamed in our version “dew”, but which is really a very fine, gentle rain in the form of a light Scotch mist.

Its great excellence consists:

- (1) in its coming only in the hottest and driest season, when no other moisture can be had;
- (2) in its only coming during the night, “when no man can work”, and so interfering in no way with the business or pleasures of life;
- (3) in its coming in such rich abundance as far to exceed the moisture deposited by any formation of dew;
- (4) in its coming in such fine particles and moderate quantities as not even to hurt the gathered grain lying out on the open-air threshing-floors; and
- (5) in its effects ceasing as soon as the sun is hot, and so leaving no miasmatic [*harmful*] or other injurious results behind, whence it is well called by Hosea, “the night mist which early goes away”.

This explanation exactly accounts for “the clouds” being said “to drop” it down, which is just what they do. Very beautiful are the silvery shining mist-clouds which may be seen as the day dawns being drawn up and dissolved into thin air, the fugitive clouds to which Hosea (Hos 6:4) compares Israel’s brief and transient seasons of goodness — “Your goodness is like the morning cloud, and like the night mist (‘tal’) which early goes away”. It also displays the naturalness of the great amount of “tal”, or “night mist”, which fell miraculously on Gideon’s fleece (Jdg 6:38). It adds a new intensity to our Savior’s pathetic appeal in Song 5:2, “Open to me... for my head is filled with the night mist (‘tal’), and my locks with the drops of the night.” There is an icy chill often attending exposure to the “night mist” that is not experienced on a dewy night, the latter being always fine. In a word, let “night mist” be written in each of the 34 places in our Bible where “dew” occurs, and it will be found to give a new meaning and a new beauty in every instance! What fresh point and power now clothe the gracious promise in Hosea 14:5, “I will be as the night mist (‘tal’) to Israel”! and also that beautiful but difficult passage, Psalm 110:3!

James Neil (Palestine Explored, 1881)

A Christian is like the rose that drinks the dew as the sunbeam opens all its folds, then sheds a grateful fragrance on the wings of every gentle breeze which blows across it. Also like the rose, which spreads its varied colors to the sight of each beholding eye, proclaiming thus God’s glory; the glory of Him who sustains the shining sun, and sends refreshing morning and evening dew. So the believer, drinking of the flowing streams of God’s love, with generous heart and bounteous hand, diffuses blessings like a fragrance around him, and blesses the place where he dwells.

H.G. Salter

Ruth's Story

The prophet Micah, in speaking of it as the future birthplace of the Messiah, describes Bethlehem Ephratah as “little among the thousands of Judah” (Mic 5:2). However, that small village already had a long and important history, dating back to when Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin (Gen 35:19; 48:7). It was the hometown and burial site for the judge Ibzan (Jdgs 12:8-10; cf Josephus's *Antiquities* 5.7.13). Bethlehem also receives mention as the hometown of both the Levite named Jonathan who ended up in the city of Dan by way of Micah's house (Jdgs 17; 18), and of the concubine who was later attacked all night long (Jdgs 19). It was of course also the hometown of King David (e.g., 1Sam 16:1; 17:12), and this fact alone might make us suspect that it would be the birthplace for the Messiah even if we didn't have Micah's prophecy.

Not to be overlooked is that Bethlehem is also the primary setting for the beautiful story about Naomi, Ruth and Boaz. This article will explore the question of how this story came to be written and included as inspired Scripture. In particular, we ask: how did the writer of this book know about the details of the story?

Like many other Old Testament books, the author of the book of Ruth is anonymous. Later Jewish tradition refers to Samuel as the author, and while this is very plausible, it is not provable. Whoever the author was, he began the story by referring to the days in which the judges ruled, and so he wrote the book some time after Saul had become the first king of Israel. Further, reference is made in Ruth 4:7 to a “former custom” that needed explaining in the author's time. Finally, the book concludes with a genealogy that runs to the time of David the son of Jesse, and thus must have been written some time after David was first anointed by Samuel as recorded in 1 Samuel 16. Therefore, whoever the author was, we can safely deduce that the author was not present at the various events described in the book. How then did the author know about Ruth's “thy people shall be my people” statement, the touching story of how Ruth and Boaz met, including their private conversation of 3:7-13, and other private details that were not generally known?

While appeal to outright divine revelation can be considered, a preferred solution in all such similar questions is to carefully consider whether and how the author could have had access to such information by way of having the story handed down by eyewitnesses. As an example of this, consider the opening words of Luke's gospel. There the author noted that, while not an eyewitness himself to the events of our Lord's life, he carefully obtained the facts from those who were themselves eyewitnesses. Thus Luke's knowledge, for example, of the words spoken by Gabriel to Zacharias in the temple (Luke 1:13-20) was undoubtedly obtained from someone to whom Zacharias had related the story.

In similar fashion, it is beautiful to consider how the true story of Naomi and Ruth would certainly have been a favorite family tale passed orally through Obed and Jesse to David, before it was written down under inspiration as inspired Scripture. How many of us have a family story about the first Christadelphian in our lineage,

and/or about our own conversion to the Truth? Telling and sharing these stories with others can often be a source of inspiration to us and others.

In the case of Ruth herself, it is perhaps remarkable that David would want the story to become publicly known, since Ruth was a Moabite. Under the Law, no descendant of a Moabite was to enter the congregation of the LORD even to the tenth generation (Deut 23:3), and thus some may have considered that it might be best to keep the story about this part of David's lineage private. But clearly the story was so touching, not only because of Ruth but also because of the faithfulness of Naomi and Boaz, that it was worth telling.

David might well have told the story to Samuel in the time between their first meeting (1Sam 16) and Samuel's death (1Sam 25:1), and Samuel could then have been inspired to write it down. Alternatively, David would have had many opportunities over the course of his reign to tell the story to either Nathan the prophet or Gad the seer, both of whom are said to have written down events concerning David's reign (1Chron 29:29). Perhaps Solomon himself wrote down the story. Until Christ returns, we cannot be sure about who committed the story to writing, but we can be sure that it was orally retold until someone, under divine inspiration, wrote it down so that we might learn from it. And learn from it we can!

Ruth became an 'Abraham', leaving her people and her homeland behind in order to follow the Truth (Gen 12:1; cf Ruth 1:16,17). Boaz as the kinsman-redeemer was a type of Christ. And beautiful Naomi was a female counterpart of Job. Much like Job, she had lost everything — her husband, her sons, and her original homeland. Upon returning to Bethlehem, she asked that her name be changed to Mara, which means bitter, "for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me" (Ruth 1:20,21). But she remained faithful to God and was blessed in the end. Job remained steadfast, knowing that his redeemer lived (Job 19:25) — and Naomi's redeemer Boaz saved both her and her faithful daughter-in-law (Ruth 4:14,15). Easily overlooked is the wording of Ruth 4:17, which states that when Obed was born the women didn't remark that, "A son has been born to *Ruth*", as we might expect. Instead, they said, "A son has been born to *Naomi*." Job in his latter days had seven sons (Job 42:13), but Naomi had Ruth, who was "better than seven sons" (Ruth 4:15).

What wonderful ancestors David (and Jesus!) had, and what touching exhortations we have in this story. Our thanks go out to David and his family for passing this story down, and to the anonymous author of this book who preserved it under inspiration for our benefit. In a time when there was so much unfaithfulness in Israel (cf Jdgs 17:6; 21:25), it is refreshing to hear about such a faithful remnant who lived in those same days. May the Lord Jesus Christ find us to be a similar faithful remnant when he returns.

Dean Brown (Avon, IN)

"A good house does not rest upon the ground, but upon a good woman"
(Mexican proverb).

Science

Dealing with Dawkins

*“The fool hath said in his heart, **There is no God**” (Psalm 14:1).*

A recent article in the Wall Street Journal (WSJ)¹ featured a dialog by Karen Armstrong and Richard Dawkins under the banner headline “*Man vs. God*”. Dawkins is a well-known professor at Oxford University, in evolutionary biology, who in recent years has spread himself far from the realm of a science writer to become, as it were, the high priest of Atheistic Philosophy. His recent book called *The God Delusion* is a virulent polemic bashing belief in a God. The issues raised by Dawkins’ rejection of God in his “Delusion” book have been admirably answered in the monograph *The Dawkins Delusion?*, and the reader is referred to these volumes if they would like further information.² I will confine these comments to the issues raised in the pages of the WSJ. Ms. Armstrong is a well-known Christian apologist and acquits herself admirably using standard theological arguments. While I don’t endorse all her comments I also didn’t find anything offensive. Dawkins on the other hand is an outspoken blatant opponent of all religious beliefs in any higher power. He is an equal opportunity offender being obnoxious to Christians, Moslems, Hindus, etc., with the same venom. The WSJ arguments that Dawkins makes take on a new tack from him that I am not aware that he has emphasized much in the past. This new approach has him hiding behind the cloak of “physics” and deliberately intending to give the reader the impression that physical laws somehow bless “evolution”! My response to this is that either Dawkins is unaware of the full extent of physics or he is a charlatan trying to pose as a knowledgeable physicist. To justify my take on this it is necessary to examine closely some of the claims that he makes in the Journal article.

For starters, Dawkins makes the following assertion about evolution without at the same time providing any proof: “*Far from violating the laws of thermodynamics (as is often ignorantly alleged) they are relentlessly driven by them.*” Excuse me, but I must be one of those ignorant people that Dawkins is talking about and so must a lot of other very prominent physicists. Consider, for example, the statement made by Erwin Schrödinger, one of the founders of modern quantum mechanics; he suggested “*that a defining property of living systems is that they self-assemble against nature’s tendency towards disorder, or entropy*”. Now Schrödinger couldn’t have been that ignorant a physicist, since he won the Nobel Prize for his work in 1933. Geneticists, who are more closely related to Dawkins’ own expertise, also dispute his contentions. One example of this has already been pointed out above in the book “*The Dawkins Delusion?*”³ where one of the coauthors, Alister McGrath, is both a clergyman and a Ph.D. biologist. Calculations have been made using statistical mechanics on the entropy that needs to be overcome to create even the most elemental building block of life, deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), and the figure is enormous. In fact such computations, which solely focus on

DNA, oversimplify and actually greatly underestimate the entropy problem. Such calculations leave out the additional entropy that is associated with creating chromosomes, cell structure, sexual differentiation, and the development of complex organs. The issue of complexity arises in trying to understand how various mutations could actually occur in a *coordinated* and *timely fashion* to create something as marvelous as the human eye. This issue is usually glossed over by proponents of atheism like Dawkins who generally resort to pointing out other modes of visualization in lower animals and then extrapolating it to us. Even Charles Darwin pointed out the difficulty in coming to terms with the presence of complex organs in his treatise on the “Origin of Species”. What good is a partially functioning eye; or how would you explain needing millions of years to get all the mutations necessary to have sight functioning properly? Dawkins goes on to say in the WSJ article: “*Darwinian evolution....starts with primeval simplicity and fosters, by slow, explicable degrees, the emergence of complexity.... Certainly up to the human level of complexity...*” But is this true? Actually it is complete nonsense — this is simply an assertion without proof. It is the old Darwinian notion of gradual changes over eons of time that is invoked to explain everything. The problem is the fossil record doesn’t back this up! Consider the following quote from a noted evolutionary biologist — the late Harvard Professor Stephen Jay Gould:⁴ “*The Cambrian has always been a mystery, a highway starting in a desert. Now we have pathways converging to feed it, and it turns out to be a broader road than we knew. Yet it is **no gradual story** that our discoveries reveal, but a revolutionary episode, crammed with new animals, some big and some small, some with skeletons, and some without. Can we account for the sudden appearance of so many fundamentally different kinds of animals — the basic phyla? And why did the variety of animals within each phylum rocket so steeply upward? Scientists would like to know...*” So how did we go from the “*by slow, explicable degrees*” of Dawkins to “*no gradual story*” of Gould? The only way I can explain this is that one of them simply doesn’t know what he is talking about. Gould at least bases his conclusions on careful examination of the fossil record. I have no idea how Dawkins can ignore Gould’s conclusions, and I find that his assertion is based more on wishful thinking than on hard detailed scientific evidence.

The poor quality of Dawkins’ scientific thinking in this article is disappointing, to say the least, but these objections pale in comparison with the horrendous philosophical conclusions he reaches which literally blaspheme the Lord God (and any other notion of a higher power for that matter). Dawkins’ god is “evolution” and he clearly worships it with extreme passion. For Dawkins there is no place for any kind of God in the Universe when he says something as offensive as: “*God is not dead. He was never alive in the first place.*” Dawkins jumps from considering evolution as the explanation for life on earth to completely discounting God as the creator of the entire physical universe. He accomplishes this with a ridiculously bold leap of logic when he says: “*Making the universe is the one thing no intelligence, however superhuman, could do...*” Really? A little evidence would be a godsend! I find it difficult to believe that an evolutionary biologist such as Dawkins can appreciate why so many accomplished physicists would consider such an assertion beyond belief. Countless books have been written in recent years by very capable

physicists that have elucidated on the extremely fine-tuned nature of the physical laws of the universe which are hard to accept by mere blind chance.⁵ Even the smallest change in the basic laws of gravity, electromagnetism, the strong force, and the weak force (the four fundamental physical forces in nature) would lead to a universe that would have never existed. Consider the following: *“..if gravity were just slightly stronger, the universe would have collapsed long before life evolved. But if gravity were a tiny bit weaker, no galaxies or stars could have formed. If the strong nuclear force had been slightly different, red giant stars would never produce the fusion needed to form heavier atoms like carbon, and the universe would be a vast, lifeless desert. Are these just happy coincidences? The late cosmologist Fred Hoyle called the universe ‘a put-up job.’ Princeton physicist Freeman Dyson has suggested that the universe, in some sense, ‘knew we were coming’.”*⁶ I think this illuminates the point that lots of qualified scientists don’t accept Dawkins premise of a universe without a God. However, I wouldn’t want the reader to think that science can prove or disprove God. The proof of the existence of God, and that He has a plan and purpose with the earth and by extension the entire universe, had to exist long before modern science came about. After all the modern scientific method is a very new phenomena having begun only a few centuries ago, ostensibly with Galileo and Newton. What was mankind supposed to rely on for proofs of God for all the thousands of years prior to modern science? I submit that these proofs can be found in the pages of the Judeo/Christian Bible. The diligent Bible student doesn’t believe in God based on blind unthinking faith; rather he/she examines the evidence of two or three witnesses as instructed by the Word itself (cf. Deut 17:6). I will offer a few of these proofs and the reader is invited to expand on these with further Bible study.

The first proof of God, specifically the Lord God of the Judeo/Christian Bible, resides in our knowledge of history. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah declares: *“I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end.”* (Jer 30:11, ESV). In another prophecy concerning Israel we read: *“ ‘You are my witnesses,’ declares the LORD”* (Isa 43:10, ESV). Hence, the Bible makes the extraordinary claim that God is with the Jewish people and that their existence is evidence for his existence. Rabbi Benjamin Blech⁷ has commented on the connection between Jewish history and faith by saying that, *“Over three hundred years ago King Louis XIV of France asked Blaise Pascal, the great French philosopher of his day, to give him proof of the existence of miracles. Without a moment’s hesitation, Pascal answered, ‘Why, the Jews, your Majesty — the Jews.’ We don’t have to speculate what Pascal meant when he gave this answer, because he took the trouble to spell it out. In his masterwork, *Pensees*, he explained that the fact that the Jewish people had survived until the seventeenth century — the time period in which he lived — was nothing short of a supernatural phenomenon.”*⁸ The fact is that all the great empires that ruled over Israel in the past, including the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, have passed away and their power and gods forgotten. But the Jew persists exactly as Scripture has predicted. Given what we know today from the attempt by Hitler, and the Nazis, to destroy the Jews in the holocaust this persistence is nothing short of miraculous.

Another proof that there is a God resides in Bible prophecy. We should regard the prophecies in Scripture as a means of confirming the faith of the faithful, but as the words of Jesus proved in the Gospels — nothing seems to convince the doubter. Nevertheless, there are Bible prophecies that are so stunning that they are hard to ignore and the odds of them occurring by mere chance difficult to accept. Consider the words of the prophet Isaiah speaking of the re-gathering of the Jews to the land of Israel in the latter days: *“In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea”* (Isa 11:11 ESV). The prophet speaks quite precisely — a second time and a remnant — these were bold predictions made more than 2700 years ago. Yet this is precisely what happened in 1948 when a remnant of the Jews (who, let us not forget, Hitler had tried to utterly destroy) founded their nation for the second time in history. Furthermore, the prophet Ezekiel styled this as if the nation came about as being a people resurrected from the grave — an apt description of the holocaust (cf. Ezek 36, 37). Many other prophecies could be cited, but a full description of these will be deferred to another time.

Finally, the most important proof of the existence of God, and specifically the God of the Bible, is given to us in the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Skeptics, such as Dawkins, dismiss this as mere myth and legend, but that is nothing new. The apostle Paul tells the Corinthians: *“Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”* (1Cor 15:12, ESV). Thus, even in the first century AD, within the lifetime of many who had seen and heard Jesus, there were deniers of the resurrection. Yet the resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate confirmation of the existence of God and the fact that He has a plan and purpose for mankind, which goes beyond the death of an individual. It is Jesus Christ, who time and again in the Gospels quotes the Genesis record, giving credence to the creation story. The apostle Paul lays out a detailed argument for the resurrection by citing the testimony of a host of reliable firsthand witnesses which included not only his closest disciples, but also *“...to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep”* (1Cor 15:6, ESV). Why should we consider these reliable witnesses? Because history has proven that none of these witnesses had anything to gain from their testimony, and in fact many suffered immeasurably for their beliefs, being convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that they too would someday be resurrected.

I have offered briefly a few proofs of the existence of God, but I have no doubt that the skeptic may have a hard time accepting any of them. I suppose Dawkins would say it is all a coincidence or a delusion! All I have attempted to do is present a scientific rebuttal to Dawkins’ worship of the god *evolution* and to present some insight into the evidence that Scriptures offer to the existence of the LORD God. Readers are left to examine all the arguments for themselves and come to their own conclusions.

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)
October 19, 2009

Notes:

1. Wall Street Journal, *Life and Style Section*, Saturday, September 12, 2009
2. Alister McGrath and Joanna Collicutt McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion?*, Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, (2007).
3. *Ibid*
4. Stephen Jay Gould, editor, *The Book of Life*, W. Norton & Co, NY, (1993), p56-57.
5. See for example; Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, G. J. McLeod, Ltd, Toronto, Canada, (1992). Or, Gerald L. Schroeder, *Genesis and the Big Bang*, Bantam Books, New York, NY, (1999), or by same author, *The Science of God*, The Free Press, New York, NY, (1997).
6. From an interview with Physicist Paul Davies, posted at <http://www.gaudiya-repercussions.com/index.php?showtopic=2252&pid=50912&mode=threaded&show=&st=0>
7. <http://hnn.us/articles/38887.html>
8. Benjamin Blech, *Eyewitness to Jewish History*, Wiley & Sons, New York, NY, (2007).
9. Editor's note: Bro. John has a Ph.D. in Materials Science and Physics, and has written hundreds of articles in professional journals. He is also the author of the book *The Bible and Science*, which was published by the Tidings.

Reflections

Well-Known Speakers

In my young days in the Christadelphian body there was probably an excessive veneration paid to well-known speakers. No doubt this was partly due to the fact that there were less of them.

Ecclesias were not so well-off financially then and could not afford to pay the traveling expenses of a great number of visiting speakers. Education was not so widespread — we were more of what Dr. Bryan Wilson called “the artisan classes”. (Dr. Wilson wrote a sociological study of Christadelphians in a book called *Sects and Society*, which deserves study.) Perhaps, too, there was still an innate respect for elders and a hold-over from 19th century hero-worship. Whatever the reasons, the fact is that young brethren, and many older too, did regard “famous” lecturing brethren with something akin to awe. Whether we are better off now, in the age of disillusion, I do not know. Certainly it seems to me that well-known speakers are not regarded in the same way that we did. Perhaps that is all to the good — for their souls anyway. Whether the young have lost something by it I am not so sure.

Some years ago, I was speaking to an audience of young Christadelphians at the Harrogate Youth Conference and mentioned this change in attitudes towards speakers of repute. I told them how, as a young man, I first met Bro. Islip Collyer, whose speaking and writing I had always so admired. It was at one of the early Whitsuntide gatherings and the great man was surrounded by a bevy of brethren and sisters, so I waited my time and edged towards him with trembling, sweaty hands, and my mouth dried up with excitement, so that when I eventually got to him, all I could blunder out was something to the effect that I so enjoyed his writings and just wanted to shake his hand, which was about all I did, for he seemed a little taken aback by my earnestness.

At this point in my talk the young people roared with laughter, totally amused by the description of my youthful encounter. But I pointed out to them that their reaction simply proved my point. They had no idea what I was talking about. They thought it strange and amusing that a young brother should get himself into such a state, just because he was meeting somebody called Islip Collyer. Poor dears, they had never had the experience, but I still cherish it.

Later on, when he came to speak at Reading in the war years, my wife and I had the privilege of “entertaining” Bro. Islip, and what a delight it was. He was a gentle and humble man, who I am sure would have eschewed any thought of being a great man, and rightly so, but was I any the worse for having such a regard for him? And are young people today any better for being on matey Christian-name terms with brethren whose labors in the Lord over so many years deserve their respect as well as their love? Paul has a good deal to say about our attitude to “elders” (e.g., 1Tim 5; Heb 13; etc.), and although few older brethren would feel themselves either worthy of, or desirous of, such a respectful attitude today, I wonder if the young people themselves are not missing out on something of value to their souls.

On the occasion in question, when we had Bro. Islip in our home, he told us a story about Bro. Robert Roberts, who had been his own “hero” as a young man and whose home he frequently visited. It appears that at tea the great man flicked some water from his celery over his wife Jane, who felt called upon to excuse what she called “these foibles of a great man”. “Tut-tut, my dear”, said her husband, “we don’t meet great men in the Bible,” and went on to quote Psalm 62:9: “Surely men of low degree are vanity and men of high degree are a lie.”

To this, Lady Jane replied, “Ah, yes, but we do read of a great woman.” Poor Bro. Roberts, the “great man”, was nonplussed, for he could not recall where it was and had to have it pointed out by his wife, in 2 Kings 4:8: “in that place was a great woman.”

Len Richardson (Sixty Years a Christadelphian)

Watching for the Sun

We stood there, the three of us, in the predawn darkness. The sand beneath our feet was cold from the night air, and the ocean lapping at those same feet seemed almost warm by comparison. We had traveled many hours for our first vacation on the south Texas coast. The ocean seen from an airplane is one thing, but the ocean experienced up close for the first time is quite another. And so it was that for our third and final day we wanted to see the sun rise over the ocean.

We tiptoed out of the motel in our bare feet and walked the short distance to the beach. How empty it was. How dark the endless, ceaseless waves were. The sky over the sea betrayed the slightest hint of light. We walked along the beach together, eyes carefully watching where we stepped, as jellyfish lay in a long line where the night’s tide had abandoned them. All the time we watched the horizon, because we were there to see the sun rise. We were watching for the sun.

Slowly, very slowly, the darkness lifted from the horizon. We could see the outline of great ships on the very edge of ocean and sky. The clouds in one area slowly billowed upward in pink tones, etched with gold. And we walked and watched for the sunrise. We knew it was coming. We were not sure of the exact location or minute. But we knew it was coming.

We took several photos as we waited and watched. There in front of us on the sand were some small birds. They were busy darting in and out of the surf, selecting their breakfast out of the incoming and retreating tide. And we watched them, but only for a minute, or two at most, because we were there to watch for the sun. We took a picture of them, and as we turned our eyes up to the eastern sky... it was there!... almost halfway above the horizon, and burning brightly!

How disappointing! We had missed the first rays of the sun. How had this happened? We were there — right there on the beach — we had only looked away for a minute... and we had missed the sunrise, not all of it, but the initial appearance.

That night, as I lay in bed, I reflected on the day. I remembered its beginning. I remembered how disappointed I was when the realization hit us that we had missed the first view of the sunrise. Then a strange feeling came over me as Scripture came to mind: This was the story of the bridegroom and the virgins. Like the virgins, we had all been there — ready, waiting, eyes watching. But for the merest moment of time we were distracted — all three of us — by busy little birds, with their fleeting concerns of the day. And we had missed what we had been waiting and watching for.

*“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour”
(Matt 25:13).*

P.S. — When the film was developed a few days later, there was one photo of those small birds... and in the background, there it was — the sun just peeping over the horizon! The sun had surely come, even if for the moment our eyes had been elsewhere.

A sister

Scraps of Bread, and Banquets

*“To show partiality is not good —
yet a man will do wrong for a piece of bread” (Prov 28:21).*

Partiality (“respect of persons”: KJV) in judgment is wrong. The Hebrew “hakken [from the root ‘nakhar] panim” means literally “to choose among faces (plural)”, thus to distinguish between one face and another, and by implication to favor one face, or person, over another. The “greatest” of men, that is, the rich and powerful, are especially susceptible to this fault — for they tend to favor their own, that is, those who are most like themselves. Such partiality is a mockery of justice (Lev 19:15; Deut 1:17; 16:19; Prov 18:5; 24:23).

When Samuel was called to visit the family of Jesse, the prophet prejudged the sons and selected — at least in his own mind — Eliab, over all the others:

“Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD” (1Sam 16:6).

But he was rebuked by the LORD Himself:

“Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (v 7).

King Jehoshaphat exhorted the judges:

“Now let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Judge carefully, for with the LORD our God there is no injustice or partiality [‘respect of persons’: KJV] or bribery” (2Chron 19:7).

The phrase “is not good” is not — as it might appear at first reading — a weak negative, but a deliberate understatement to call attention to a terrible wrong (compare Prov 16:29; 18:5; 1Sam 2:24).

“Yet a man will do wrong for a piece of bread.”

In *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Allen Ross writes: “The second line of this verse has several possibilities. It could mean that:

- (a) a man can be bribed for a very small price (a piece of bread being the figure for it), or that
- (b) some might steal for a piece of bread so the judgment should show a little more compassion on the crime of desperation, or that
- (c) even in such a desperate act one should show no partiality.

The first interpretation harmonizes best with the law. Kidner adds poignantly that the price can go even lower than a piece of bread and that what is true of judges is true of preachers as well.”

Ross then calls attention to Malachi 2:9; there God, through the prophet, castigates the priests of Israel:

“So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law.”

On the first of the three possibilities, the JFB Commentary says: “The judge who at first was induced only by a great price to transgress by favoring one side, through the habit of sinning comes at last to do so for a mere trifle.” So Ezekiel rebukes the pseudo-prophets who “have profaned [Jehovah] among my people for [no more than] a few handfuls of barley and scraps of bread” (Ezek 13:19).

In Proverbs 28:21, the Hebrew “pat lechem” means basically a piece of bread. This deceptively simple phrase has an interesting history. The Hebrew, or Aramaic, “patbag” would appear to be a compound word along the same lines:

- “pat”: a bit or morsel;
- “bag”: prey, meat, or perhaps food in general.

According to Robert O’Connell, however, “This term probably derives from the Old Persian ‘pitfabaga’ (cuneiform ‘pitipabaga’), a portion, ration, a distribution quota... in Egyptian Aramaic ‘ptpa’ means food supply, ration” (*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*).

This Aramaic word “patbag” is the NIV’s “choice food”, or the KJV’s “portion of their meat”, in six passages in Daniel (Dan 1:5,8,13,15,16; 11:26). “All six Old Testament uses of this expression occur in the book of Daniel, a book that preserves several technical terms of Old Persian origin... The term ‘food quota,’ table ration, relates to a custom of Persian kings described by Xenophon as the sending of food or drink portions from the royal table to favored friends” (O’Connell).

As for “pat lechem”, used here in Proverbs 28:21, O’Connell continues: “Perhaps because several other Old Testament texts use the Hebrew ‘pat’, morsel, in the idiom ‘pat lechem’, bit/morsel of bread/food (Gen 18:5; Jdgs 19:5; 1Sam 2:36; 28:22; 1Kgs 17:11; Prov 28:21; or plural ‘petotei lechem’ in Ezek 13:19), the scribes of the Masoretic Text posited that the obscure term ‘patbag’ should be presented as two words, ‘pat’ (bit/morsel) + ‘bag’ (prey, meat, food) and, hence, separated the supposed parts of the expression, so as to mean a bit of food, tidbit, delicacy.”

Considering this historical connection, then, the writer of Proverbs here may be drawing a parallel, but a parallel with a strong contrast. The parallel is this: Just as the most favored courtiers received fine food and wine from the Persian king’s table, so the rich and powerful counted on the Jewish judge or priest to show them favoritism.

Now for the contrast: even when the prize to be had was the smallest token — the “pat lechem” and not the “patbag”, that is, the crust of bread instead of the royal banquet — even then, the unseemly competition and the awarding of prizes to personal favorites continued!

One further step takes us to an interesting conclusion: At his “passover”, Jesus gave a “piece of bread” (KJV “sop”) to Judas (John 13:26,27,30). Commentators have pointed out that this was a custom at the Passover Meal; the host would take a bit of bread, dip it in the common dish, and hand it personally to an honored guest. As one writer puts it: “For the host to select such a tidbit from the main dish and give it to a guest would be a mark of courtesy and esteem” (Merrill Tenney, EBC, on John 13:26). This passover tradition may have been borrowed from other Middle Eastern customs, such as the Persian and Babylonian ones, of kings providing honored guests with the bounty from their tables.

In this case, with Jesus, it may only have been a bit of bread (a “pat lechem”, if you will). But, with Judas as with all of us who partake of the Memorial Service, the bit of bread represents the greatest banquet imaginable (the “patbag”, this time) — the “bread of life” from heaven, “which a man may eat and not die” (John 6:25-50). Just as our Lord could take a few small loaves and create from them a feast for thousands, which he did on more than one occasion during his ministry — so he could manufacture out of his own single body the one bread, and the One Body, emblematic of eternal life in his Father’s Kingdom.

The proverb is a pathetically sad picture. It shows a worldly moneygrubber (rich or poor) seeking for the special favor of banquets, or even crumbs, from other men who are in the last analysis as powerless as he. His desired “patbag” or feast proves in the end to be no more than a pitiful “pat lechem” or crust of bread. No matter what or how much he eats, he will die.

On the other hand, the seeker after Christ will find that even the “pat lechem”, the little bit of bread which he receives each week from his Lord (“Do this in remembrance of me”), will turn at last into the endless feast of eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

“To obey is better than sacrifice”

“Samuel said, Hath the LORD has great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king” (1Sam 15:22,23).

There is no such thing as “perfect obedience” with human beings (Num 20:10; 2Sam 11:14,15,26,27; Rom 7:15-18). It is only the Lord Jesus who achieved the perfection of obedience and the sinlessness required by God (Heb 4:14,15). However, God still does require His sons and daughters in Christ to trust and obey Him fully.

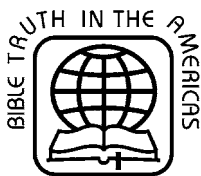
“Eternal life has been the Hope of those who have walked with God in all past ages and generations, since the Fall. In walking with God they have trod the same path, and journeyed along the same road, which is the only ‘way that leadeth unto eternal life.’ The entrance upon this way is strait, and its passage narrow, and, though it leads to glory, honor, incorruptibility and life, there are few that find it. Belief in the testimony of God, and obedience to His commandments, are the grand characteristics of ‘His Way’ in its successive manifestations in all time. Dispensations have varied; but these leading principles have always remained the same. ‘These are written that ye may believe’, and ‘Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God’ ” (John Thomas, *The Faith in the Last Days*, pp. 71,72).

Brothers and sisters in Christ, even our Lord Jesus, was not exempted from showing his love, in this God-required way, for God and for us. So why should we?

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” (Heb 8:10).

This is the New Covenant. “Though he were a Son (the only begotten of the Father), yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb 5:8). It was his obedience which brought him life for evermore. “Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil 2:8). As we come to remember Jesus our Lord in the emblems of the bread and wine, let us remember his faith, trust and obedience to his Father (and our Father). Amen!

Anthony Semple (Georgetown, Guyana)



Bible Mission News

A Visit to Jamaica

Jamaica is one of the most beautiful places to be found in God's creation. At every point on an island tour one marvels at the mountains, tropical forests, fruit laden trees, meandering or rushing rivers, and beautiful beaches. Regrettably, the country has a reputation for anger and hostility which has frightened some away who may have come to this place. Locals will say the only time Jamaica is mentioned in the world press is when something has gone wrong, never when there is good news.

However, there are a number of very good and very encouraging events taking place among the populace of the country which will make every brother and sister in Christ gratefully happy. Amidst all the challenges of life in the twenty-first century, there are a group of believers who are facing up to the challenges in this modern-day Corinth, who are contending earnestly for the Truth once delivered to the saints.

At present, there are eleven ecclesias scattered throughout this mountainous country who have been encouraging each other in belief and conduct. Sunday school students study using material provided by the Christadelphian Sunday School Association from Australia. The lesson books, supplementary materials, craft supplies, prizes and gifts are donated annually by the Christadelphian Save the Children Fund in London, Ontario. These welcome donations allow ecclesias to build and operate schools for children anxious to learn and grow in their understanding of saving truth. The Sunday school at the May Pen Ecclesia near the center of the country has so much developing and continuing interest in their Sunday school program that they need an addition to their hall to accommodate the increasing number of classes and students.

In the past, requests like this one at the May Pen Ecclesia have been graciously supported by the kindness of brothers and sisters worldwide. Additionally, a number of ecclesias in North America regularly have collections for the CBMA/C program called Faith at Works. The photos attached will show where the ten-foot by ten-foot addition will be attached to the existing hall. The cost of this addition is budgeted to be about \$357,000 Jamaican dollars which is equivalent to \$4,200 Canadian dollars. Currently, some of the children's classes are being held under the trees in the background. Sis. Annette Johnson, shown in the photograph works with the children in May Pen. In addition, Sis. Annette is the secretary of the CBMJ, the Christadelphian Bible Mission of Jamaica.



Sis. Annette Johnson and the May Pen Hall

The CBMJ is the agency recognized by the government of Jamaica to carry out preaching and pastoral activities on behalf of the Christadelphian community in Jamaica. The CBMJ is supported by regular contributions from the CBMC. At present, about 24 elderly Christadelphians in the country are supplemented each month with financial assistance which provides food, nursing home accommodation, medical supply assistance, and pastoral care. Jamaica is one of the heaviest financial responsibilities for the CBMC. As the economic condition in North America becomes more challenged, the circumstances in countries like Jamaica become even more difficult.

It is for that reason the CBMC is so deeply indebted to the brothers and sisters worldwide for their continuing donations. In addition, the CBMJ is a preaching organization in the country. The CBMJ organizes and sponsors at least three Bible school/gatherings each year. Local or overseas speakers come to help with these Bible schools. In the past, Brethren Joe Badlu, Daniel Wilton, Ken Sommerville, Stanley Owen, Nigel Patterson, Chris Brooke, and a host of others have helped with these activities, working with local brethren to edify and encourage the brethren in the country.

During 2009, members of the Toronto East Ecclesia assembled a barrel of clothing and food which was shipped to the brothers and sisters of Jamaica. The contents were received with joy and thanksgiving.

Advertisements have been placed in the *Jamaica Gleaner*, a local newspaper encouraging residents to go to www.thisisyourbible.com to take the Bible correspondence course. A good number have responded to the invitation and are now in the process of being exposed to principles of saving truth.

The Round Hill Ecclesia meets in a beautiful hall built into the side of a hill in the village of Round Hill. From the hall, it is easy to see the Caribbean in the dis-



tance. This ecclesia has activities most nights of the week. There is a CYC, and there are mutual improvement and sisters' classes, as well as ongoing instruction for baptism classes. The ecclesia as the photos indicate is quite large and is in need of additional chairs. This could be a good Faith at Work project for North American ecclesias who may be able to help.



From time to time one meets that 'special' person who finds a place in your heart. Sis. Daisy Allen from the Kingston Ecclesia is one of those people. Sis. Daisy was a nurse who, in a difficult life, has lived in most areas of Jamaica. Throughout her life, she has maintained her faith and grown in her knowledge of God's saving Word. In a visit to her nursing home residence in Kingston,

Sis. Daisy actively engaged in a discussion about the Song of Solomon. Her clear understanding and easy dialogue on features of the Song were a joy to behold!

Visitors are always welcome! At the end of December there is the annual year-end Bible school. Over the Easter holiday one can come and enjoy the Young People's Bible camp. We have many very wonderful brethren and sisters in this corner of the world who need our thoughts, prayers, visits and support.

Bro. Rod Ghent

11th Triennial Caribbean Christadelphian Youth Camp Held in Guyana at Kuru-Kuru Training Center August 8-15, 2009

Brethren in Guyana began preparation two years prior to the camp. At a special meeting on Feb. 17, 2007, eight committees were formed to oversee all aspects of planning. Most committees had an average of five to seven members led by an appointed committee leader. (Brethren served on multiple committees.) From this initial meeting, the committee teams began their work with Bro. Jerrold Joseph acting as the overall chairman/secretary.



Most of the attendees were younger teenagers, with females outnumbering males, and for the most part their behavior was reasonably good. Most of the attendees are not from Christadelphian families, but attend the CYC youth groups in their various places, and the youth in general reflect the culture of their region.

The accommodations at the camp were basic, with all the females in two dorm rooms, and all the males in one large dorm room. Adults stayed either in the dorm or in a couple of cottages (teachers primarily); those in the dorms acted as supervisors. There were some cleanliness and hygiene problems all week, requiring hauling water daily to clean the facilities. Food was cooked in a well-equipped kitchen and served in a separate area. There was also a bakery on-site and their services were hired for the week. There were large two-story buildings that were used for the senior and junior classes as well as the assemblies. Outside these buildings there were large fields for playing various outdoor games.

A volunteer staff of brothers and sisters from the Demerara and Plegt Anker ecclesias supervised the youth, provided all the background support, and prepared all meals. The young people also willingly supported the camp staff by helping in kitchen duties, dorm duties, and the planning and execution of activities.

Bro. Patrick Joseph, who was the camp leader, gave the youth circlers an orientation talk the first evening, distributed T-shirts, each having a different color so that every youth's country of origin could be identified. After the talk, representatives from each country introduced themselves, and the Guyanese youth circlers did a very special welcome program. After the session ended around 10:30 pm, everyone was sent off to bed.

On Sunday before the Memorial Service, Nathan Rupenarine (son of Sis. Bibi in New Amsterdam) was baptized. Then at 10 am everyone gathered for the Memorial Service, at which Bro. Clive Drepaul gave words of exhortation. Many brothers and sisters from Demerara and a few from Berbice joined with the youth circlers for this meeting and a special lunch afterwards. After the evening meal, Jamaica and USA youth circlers each gave an informative presentation on their respective countries, a pattern followed through the week. Following the presentations, young people were put into one of four mixed groups for discussion activities. Each group was given a name (Gold, Silver, Brass, Bronze) and young people

stayed in one group for the week. This was to encourage participation through a little competition. Prizes were awarded at the end of the week for the group earning the most points.

Saturday was the end of the camp. It finished after the morning assembly, breakfast and camp evaluation.

Daily readings were shared by the youths each morning. Discussions were held in groups and the youth gave presentations at the end of each session. Following classes and lunch, there was canvassing of the residents in the area, and games for all to participate in later in the afternoon. After the evening meal there was a program which always began with a Guyanese proverb having a spiritual lesson, presented by Bro. Patrick Joseph. This was followed by activities that included hymn singing, presentations, games, debates, and general fellowship activities.

Thank you to all who helped make the week successful and helped with the funding. This article was compiled from the official report by Bro. Jerrold Joseph and unofficial reports from other brethren.

Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

Baptism in Bolivia



We are absolutely thrilled to be able to share with you the joyful news that one of our contacts, Justina Quispe Canaza, was baptized into Christ Monday night, October 26, 2009.

Justina first came into contact with Christadelphians through her employer, our recently baptized sister Aleyda. Justina was working as an empleada (maid) for Aleyda and so attended ecclesial activities when

Aleyda attended, and witnessed the process of Aleyda's own conversion and baptism. Justina began instruction a year and a half ago, and throughout has shown a wonderful attitude of keenness to learn, determination to pursue this course, and an understanding of the wonder and seriousness of God's call to salvation. Just recently she turned down a profitable job offer in another area of Bolivia in order to avoid isolation and pursue work closer to the ecclesia in La Paz.

On October 24 it was the privilege of Bro. Don Luff, Bro. Jacob and Sis. Fiona Styles to witness Justina's good confession of faith, and then to arrange for her baptism on Monday night. Unfortunately none of her family attended the baptism, which is not an unusual reaction on the part of the family. But Justina now has a new spiritual family in Christ! After the baptism we all went back to Martin and Laura's house for a talk, hymns, and fellowship together.

If you would like to send a card to Justina on this momentous occasion of her life, please write to her at our ecclesial PO box as follows: Justina Quispe, Casella 1280, Core Central, La Paz, Bolivia.

As Justina speaks only Spanish, we've put together a few phrase lines in Spanish which you can pick and choose from to write so that Justina will understand you! If you would rather write in English, that's fine — she will appreciate the thought anyway.

The start:

*Querida Justina (*Dear Justina*)

The middle:

*Bienvenidos a nuestra familia en la fe (*Welcome to our family in the faith*)

*Que Dios te bendiga y te guarde (*May God bless you and keep you*)

*Estamos felices tener una nueva hermana en Cristo (*we are happy to have a new sister in Christ*)

*Que Dios te guíe en tu camino hacia su reino (*May God guide you in your walk towards His kingdom*)

*Estábamos felices al escuchar de tu bautismo en Cristo (*We were happy to hear of your baptism into Christ*)

The ending:

*Con mucho amor y cariño fraternos de parte de tus hermanos en _____
(*With much fraternal love and care from your brothers/sisters in _____*)

*Saludos en Cristo / Con mucho amor en nuestro Señor (*Greetings in Christ / With much love in our Lord*)



Sis. Justina Quispe Canaza and the La Paz Ecclesia

We are also pleased to say that about 30 visitors attended each night of our public conference last weekend, half of which were familiar faces, which is a good sign! And we now have another contact asking for baptismal classes after consistently attending our Thursday night seminars during the year.

May the word of God take root and blossom in hearts everywhere in the world, so that there will be a fruitful harvest when Christ returns! May that day be soon!

Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA/CBMC Publicity

Baptisms in Guadalajara, Mexico

We are pleased to report the following good news just in from Guadalajara.



Sergio Arturo Lomeli Medina and his wife, Martha Olivia Carrillo Toscana were baptized Oct. 11, 2009, at Bro. Carl and Sis. Cynthia's place in Guadalajara, Mexico. The various views in the photos were taken in their carport and patio area. There is ample covered area by the house for these gatherings/occasions. They, along with Bro. Gabriel, worked hard to get it ready for an activity that had been already planned for today, but after Bre. David Lloyd and Don Luff were there in mid-September, Sergio and Olivia made the commitment to complete their preparation for baptism.

The interviews were undertaken by the brethren of the ecclesia. A portable pool was purchased for this and future occasions. There were over 40 present. May our heavenly Father continue to bless these two new members and all the members of the ecclesia in Guadalajara!

Sis. Jan Berneau, CBMA Publicity



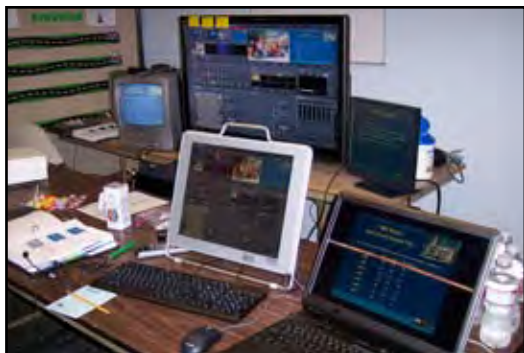
**Bro. Sergio Medina
and Sis. Martha
Toscana and
the Guadalajara
Ecclesia**

ThisIsYourBible.com

LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION!

A studio was set up in the Los Angeles Meeting Hall on October 10-11, 2009, for filming 16 lessons of the Learn to Read the Bible Effectively seminar. These lessons are intended for use as a new video-based correspondence course on TIYB beginning in early 2010. This was a joint effort between the TIYB and the Christadelphian Preaching Committee of Southern California.

It was quite a set up — both the camera equipment and the “Control Room”. We even had a “back lot” with the “Barbeque Boys” from the Simi Hills Ecclesia



helping to keep presenters, crew and audience members very well fed throughout the two days. The sisters from Los Angeles also helped, serving breakfast and snacks.

A volunteer audience of nearly fifty were on hand for the taping sessions. Each lesson was from 15-40 minutes long. There were four different

brothers who were presenters. The audience regularly changed places and sometime sweaters or jackets so it appeared that there was a different audience each time.

The new course will feature these 16 video classes, which will be viewed online by students. After completing each class, they will be provided with several questions that encourage them to apply the skills just presented in the previously-viewed class. They will submit their work to the tutor, who will provide important feedback and coaching. After the review of the lesson, they will be able to go on to the next lesson.



We believe that this new course will provide a new aspect of education for TIYB. The Learn to Read the Bible Effectively course has long been a useful tool for teaching foundational skills for Bible reading. The design of this new course will help students to personally analyze and assess Scriptural passages and conclude

for themselves what the Scripture is teaching us. The tutor's role will be to assist the student with the learning of the skill, and to offer direction.

We continue to see great results from the TIYB preaching and believe that this new course may offer a useful addition to our educational resources.

*Sis. Jan Berneau,
CBMA Publicity*



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.)

BRANTFORD, ON

The Brantford ecclesial family has been blessed once more with the baptisms of two more of our Sunday school scholars on October 17, 2009. The call of the gospel message to repent and be baptized was heeded by LEVI MYERS, son of Bro. Paul and Sis. Melody Myers, and SHAPHAN BOWEN, son of Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Charlene Bowen. God has greatly added to the laborers in the Master's service in the last year at the Brantford Ecclesia.

God willing, on January 2, 2010 we are looking forward to hearing a three-part study led by Bro. Brian Luke on the theme of "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty." The first class is scheduled to commence at 10:30 am. Lunch will be provided and afternoon classes will be available during the second and third classes for children ages two to nine.

Michael Moore

BROUGHTON, JAMAICA

On August 1, 2009, DANIA BECKFORD was baptized in the Broughton River. At first I was reluctant when asked to baptize her, since she was a few days short of 16 years. I had second thoughts; is she a minor by law? Then I checked with Sis. Carlee Beckford, a pillar in the truth and our Sunday school.

She confesses she did not coerce or was in any way responsible for the request. It was a request from a very mature mind at a young age. Then I reflected on her Sunday school records and her performances at youth camps. I was forced to yield to the request. After a short period of instruction and interview it was clear where the head of this young lady was. She is the daughter of our Sis. Carlee Reid Beckford, and granddaughter of our Bro. Eustas Reid, now deceased.

She is now the third of a third generation of Christadelphians at Broughton. While our numbers are indeed few, our spiritual strength still outweighs our numbers.

R. Arthurs

LONDON, ON

We welcome by transfer Sis. Amanda Meaker (Short) from the St. John's, Newfoundland Ecclesia following her marriage to Bro. Caleb Meaker of our meeting. We look forward to benefiting from the fellowship shared with Sis. Amanda.

With joy in heaven and on earth, we announce the baptism of PHILIP WALKER, son of Bro. Michael and Sis. Pauline Walker, on Sunday, November 8, 2009. May we gain strength from the youthful enthusiasm of our brother as we walk toward God's Kingdom together.

Our annual fraternal gathering held in September was enjoyed by all. The topic of Nehemiah was both spiritually uplifting and sobering in these last days as we all learn to "Rise up and build". We thank Bro. Gary Cousens from the Cambridge, Ontario,

Ecclesia who led the studies for the day. Also in September, the whole ecclesia had the privilege of renting a bus for an all-day event. We visited the display of the Dead Sea scrolls at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. A day of fellowship was enjoyed by all.

Dave Birchall

SUSSEX, NB

We wish to thank Bro. Ted Hodge, Jr. (Orangeville, ON) for speaking at our Thanksgiving gathering in October 2009. His studies on "Bible Based Problem Solving" were greatly appreciated by the brothers and sisters. We were encouraged by all the visiting brothers, sisters, and families from Canada, the US and the UK during that weekend, and thank them for their fellowship.

We are looking forward to the visit of Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT) on April 24-25, 2010, at our spring study weekend. If you are able to join us during the weekend, please let us know if you require accommodation. You may contact us at 506-433-1728, or by email at christad@nbnet.nb.ca.

Our second annual Youth Camp will be held May 21-23, 2010. Bro. Nathan Badger will be the speaker for the young people.

Cliff Baines

TORONTO EAST, ON

We rejoice in the baptism of EMILY CARRICK on August 5, 2009, into the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ, after a good confession of her faith. Sis. Emily is the daughter of Bro. Brian and Sis. Lynne Carrick.

After a good confession of her faith, we witnessed the baptism of SARA BOYLE on September 13, 2009, into the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sara first came in contact with Christadelphians back in April 2005, when she was invited to attend her first CYC class by a co-worker who is a member of our ecclesia.

Brian Carrick

TORONTO WEST, ON

The ecclesia wishes to bring to the attention of the brotherhood a number of events that have occurred in the ecclesia over the past months. On March 14, 2009, Sis. Marjory Wilson died at age 94. Sis. Marjory watched for some time the changing lecture titles on the sign in front of our Scarlett Road hall. One day she came in and never looked back. An enthusiastic member of our ecclesia since her baptism on October 28, 1973, Sis. Marjorie was always quick to engage in discussion about prophecy or doctrines of the nearby churches. She was a tremendous help to older members of the ecclesia in earlier years as she regularly visited and provided loving care. Our sister died in hope and belief in resurrection to life at the return of our Lord from heaven.

On August 26, 2009, DIVINA MENDOZA was baptized into the saving Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sis. Divina, from the Philippines, was working on contract with the elderly in Israel when she met four Filipino brethren. Sis. Divina's initial tutoring in the truth came from Bro. Joseph Fredrick and Sisters Margarite, Imelda and Lota Bautista. When Sis. Divina's employer moved to Canada, she came too and contacted

our ecclesia. We are so grateful to our God that one more has chosen to walk in His ways and we pray that our sister will be encouraged by the word and prayer in her journey to the Kingdom.

We are happy to gain by transfer on October 11, 2009, from the Hamilton Book Road, Ontario, Ecclesia, Bro. Wayne and Sis. Libby Campbell. May our loving Father keep them in all their ways.

The ecclesia is grateful to Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON) for leading our study weekend on October 17, 2009, with the theme entitled "The Lifting Up of the Son of Man".

Rod Ghent

Caregiver wanted

Sister wanted as live-in caregiver for elderly sister in Sidney, BC, starting in May, 2010. Wages plus room and board offered. The house is next door to the ecclesia and two blocks from town center. For more information, please write to Sis. Jean Hunter at jdhunter@gte.net or phone her at 626-303-2222.

Jean Hunter

New meditational piano CD available

The third CD of meditational piano music by Sis. Julia M. Baines, entitled "A New Beginning", will be available shortly. If you would like to receive a copy of the CD, please contact Sis. Julia Baines by email at christad@nbnet.nb.ca, by regular mail at Mrs. Julia M. Baines, 8 Jordan Mountain Road, Mount Hebron, NB, Canada, E4G 1G7, or by phone at 506-433-1728. The first two CDs "Meditations of My Heart" and "On Eagles' Wings" are still available at a cost of \$15 (CDN) or 8 GBP each. After covering initial expenses, funds are forwarded to brothers and sisters in Bible Mission areas who are in need of welfare assistance, either through CBM, CBMC or similar funds.

Julia Baines

The Last "Harvest"

The story is told of a farmer in a Midwestern state who had a strong disdain for 'religious' things. As he plowed his field on Sunday morning, he would shake his fist at the church people who passed by on their way to worship. October came and the farmer had his finest crop ever — the best in the entire county. When the harvest was complete, he placed an advertisement in the local paper that belittled the Christians for their faith in God. Near the end of his diatribe he wrote, "Faith in God must not mean much if someone like me can prosper."

The response from the Christians in the community was quiet and polite. In the next edition of the town paper, a small notice appeared. It read simply, "God doesn't always settle His accounts in October."

"His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt 3:12).

Minute Meditation

Wise unto Salvation

Rene Coty, a president of France in the last century, once said, “It’s taken me all my life to understand that it is not necessary to understand everything.”

Nowadays, there is so much that can be known about almost everything. Universities are churning out research, the internet puts at our fingertips more information than can be absorbed in a dozen lifetimes, and the frontiers of knowledge are expanding rapidly. We must be in the time of the end of which Daniel spoke, where many would run to and fro and knowledge would be increased.

How do we keep up? We can’t, and, as Rene Coty realized, it is not necessary. Solomon in his day said, “Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.” In our times we are overwhelmed, forcing us to make choices by the sheer volume of knowledge available.

We have only so many hours in a day. How do we choose where to put our focus and efforts? Hyrum Smith suggests, “New knowledge is of little value if it doesn’t change us, make us better individuals, and help us to be more productive, happy, and useful.” We might add to this list the desire to become more godly and useful in doing the will of our heavenly Father.

God has a plan for mankind, and the reward for those who serve Him is eternal life, a rescue from the death we all face. The most important issue of life is to understand what we need to know to be chosen by God for this salvation, and this information is contained in the pages of our Bibles. We should put our efforts into knowing what really matters, and resolve to work at understanding the saving gospel message. The Bible may be the best-sold book year after year, but it is also the most neglected book on the shelves of most people who own one.

We are constantly amazed at how contestants on quiz programs such as Jeopardy can know so much about so many topics such as Greek mythology, Shakespeare, modern art, and pop culture and yet miss so many basic questions in a category about the Bible. What good will all this knowledge do for gaining salvation for anyone? Absolutely nothing. So much irrelevant knowledge acts like weeds in people’s minds, filling up the space and squeezing out any godly thoughts. As the French president Coty discovered, it is not necessary to understand everything, and making the attempt can keep our minds from meditating on the issues of life that really matter.

Sadly, we read in the Bible that ignorance of God’s message is no excuse. Paul tells us that most people are without hope and without God in the world because they are separate from Christ and have no part in the promises God has made, about which they know nothing. Surely none of us want to be in this precarious position. It is a matter of life and death to understand the important truths that God has revealed to us in the pages of our Bible. We must be willing to open

our Bibles and open our minds to the simple gospel message. And we must be willing to act on it.

Solomon tells us not to even bother to pray unless we open our Bibles and read the important things written there. He uses different words, but that is the lesson we learn from Proverbs 28:9 which says, “One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.”

We read in the gospels, “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” The message of salvation is hidden from those who think that they know a lot and who spend their time seeking the wisdom of this world. To which group do we belong — the wise and prudent, or those with a childlike eagerness who look for salvation in the pages of the Bible?

We surely do not know everything, but let us be sure that we know those things that are able to make us wise unto salvation.

Robert J. Lloyd

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

DECEMBER 2009

25 Hamilton, ON Study day. Held at the Milgrove Community Center, Milgrove, ON. Speaker: Bro. Brian Luke (Adelaide, AUS): “Mercy and Truth are Met Together”. Talks begin at 1pm. A warm supper and plenty of fellowship will conclude the day.

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 (Adelaide, AUS), 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

26-January 2 Texas Youth Conference at T4C. Bro. Max Wickham on “The Life of Joseph”. Workbook and registration at www.texasyouthconference.com

JANUARY 2010

2 Brantford, ON Study day. Bro. Brian Luke (Adelaide, AUS): “Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty.” Classes will begin at 10:30 am. Lunch will be provided and afternoon classes will be available during the second and third classes for children ages 2 to 9.

9 Thousand Oaks, CA Annual Day with the Word. Bro. Jonathan Bowen. Held at the Union Building in Camarillo, CA., as in years past. For information please contact bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com.

16-17 San Francisco Peninsula, CA Weekend with the Word. Ecclesial hall, 1536 James Ave., Redwood City, CA. Classes will begin at 1:00 pm on Saturday and end with the exhortation on Sunday. Bro. John Pople (San Francisco Peninsula, CA) will lead classes on "The Sign of the Dove." Saturday evening, the Norcal Preaching Committee will provide an update about the intention of the San Francisco Bay Area ecclesias to host a week-long P2P training session and coordinate volunteer/preaching activities in July 2011. 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): "Faith in the last days". Lunch provided. Contact Bro. Kent Ellis ellisk@san.rr.com or 858-674-5645

FEBRUARY 2010

13-14 Saanich Peninsula, BC Study weekend. Bro. Nathan Badger. Subject to be announced. Classes are Saturday afternoon, Sunday morning, and exhortation. Contact Kevin and Rebekah Hunter bible@christadelphia.org for details.

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. To register, contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau at Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or visit www.californiabibleschool.org

MARCH 2010

13-14 Paris Avenue, OH Spring study weekend to be held at the ecclesial hall. Our speaker will be Bro. Bryan Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI)

APRIL 2010

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

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 sfaver@unitedagencies.com or 406-388-3378

20-26, California Christadelphian Kids Camp Subject: "The Apostle Paul". Teachers are Bre. Richard Morgan and Nathan Lewis. For children ages 9-16. Registration by Feb. 28, 2010. Registration forms online at kidscampcalifornia.com. Information from Bro. Tom Graham tom@bigbrand.com.

*The flower, beautiful in form;
The bird, beautiful in motion and melody.
Merely by being themselves,
By living the only life they can live,
They manifest the God that made them beautiful.
So will it be at last in the liberation
Of the spirit from the bondage of the flesh.*

C.A. Ladson

The Christadelphian Tidings

Index for Volume 72 (2009)

Editorials, G. Booker

Bringing back the banished	475
Caring for animals	211
"I will come like a thief"	3
Memorial Day	159
Memorial meeting, significance of	55
"More perfect union, a"	264
Names and titles	527
Refuge in death, a	107
Rules of civility and decent behavior, the	371
Son called Laughter, a	263
Which view is right?	423

Editorial Notes, G. Booker

Critical mass in Christadelphian history	30,78
--	-------

Exhortations

"Be of good cheer", J. Harper	7
Eliminate the parasites, J.M. Ghent	377
God's journey, or ours? (Jer 41), T. Sleeper	162
Greatest sacrifice, the, M. Webster	530
"Joy cometh", D. Caudery	110
"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?", J. Harper	478
On the road to Gaza (Acts 8), S. Cheetham	214
"Therefore, brethren, we are comforted...", R. Mutter	266
True "Pilgrim's Progress", the, S. Strickland	427
Workers in the vineyard, K. Carrell	59

Series and Special Issue

Hearing the Word: Studies on the parable of the sower, J. Hill	314
Little words that mean a lot, J. Bilello ...	12,62
To speak well of God (Job), J. Pople ..	114,165,218,271,379,430,480,534
What the Qur'an says about ..., D. Styles	387,436,486,541

Articles and Bible Study

Arrangement of chapters in Jeremiah, the,	
---	--

G. Booker	546
Beyond the borders of Israel, P. Bartle	452
Christ's wilderness temptations, J. Pursell	284
Cloak and the parchments, the, D. Brown	448
Dew, or night mist, the, J. Neil	548
Genesis 1, the allegory of, E. Styles	497
Glory, what is?, M. LeDuke	69
"Head of. . . , the", W. Johnsen	67
Joshua's "long day", G. Booker	225
"Not only, but also", G. Booker	119
Ruth's story, D. Brown	550
True tabernacle, the, G. Booker	491
"Woven together" (Psa 139:13-16), G. Booker	277

Life in the Truth

Badger, Colin	121
Bereavement, D. / M. Styles	124

History

Black history month, V. Long	75
From beyond your walls, M. Drabenstott ..	17
Reith, John and Elizabeth, G. Hensley	72
Stocks, Robert and Marian, G. Hensley ...	170

Reflections

Almond and the coin, the, Uncle Raymus ..	82
Bible exposition and exhortation, P. Jones	511
"Christadelphian standards" and a young earth?, A. Hayward / A. Fowler	236
Disciple at Damascus, named Ananias, a, J.S. Baxter	287
Locusts of Palestine, the, W.M. Thomson ..	230
Making connections, J. Ribaud	83
Millstones and gnats, S. Cox	85
"Old man and full, an", G.C. Morgan	87
One Body, the, I. Collyer	507
Quest, the, J. Webb	457
Scraps of bread, and banquets, G. Booker	558
Threat to unity, a, A. Nicholls	81
"To obey is better than sacrifice", A. Semple	561
Watching for the sun, A sister	557
Wearry years and silent tears, P. Jones	290
Well-known speakers, L. Richardson	556
When the ecclesia fails us, J. Livermore ...	456

Why of suffering, the, <i>G. Burns</i>	233
<i>Wide as the Waters</i> , <i>B. Bobrick</i>	288
“Wounded and bruised”, <i>A. Semple</i>	509

Youth

“Distractions”, <i>J. Sleeper</i>	177
“I will always remember”, <i>M. Berry</i>	392

Current Events

Global financial turmoil, still, <i>P. Jones</i>	175
--	-----

Archaeology

How Hezekiah’s tunnelers met, <i>A. Booker</i>	183
---	-----

Science

Dealing with Dawkins, <i>J. Bilello</i>	552
---	-----

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

Christadelphian hymn collections.....	134
Hymn 132, “To God be the glory”	130
“Messiah” — a personal view, <i>K. Camplin</i>	501
“Messiah” — a spiritual and musical delight.....	500
“Messiah” — Jesus’ remarkable life in music.....	503
William H. Doane, composer.....	132

Letters and Questions

Did Jesus fold the head cloth?.....	136
Dinosaurs, why aren’t they mentioned in the Bible?.....	235
“Faith on the earth” and critical masses..	135

Reviews

<i>Building a Library</i>	138
<i>Gold of Exodus, the: A misguided treasure hunt</i> , <i>P. Wade</i>	441

Bible Mission

Agape in Action.....	241
Argentina.....	35,459
Bahamas	88
Bolivia	37,238,566
Brazil	459
Building a house for our God, <i>J. Hunter</i> ...	42
Caribbean Christadelphian Youth Camp	564
CBMA / CBMC report, 2008.....	93
Chile.....	458
Colombia	188
Costa Rica.....	189
Ecuador.....	39,191,298,399,400

El Salvador.....	90,397,513
Faith at Work	397
Guatemala	192
Guyana.....	514
Guyana Bible School.....	461
Haiti.....	194
Jamaica.....	562
Jamaica: “My baptism”, <i>L. Blair</i>	401
Mexico	140,188,395,568
Peru	35,37
San Diego to Guadalajara, Mexico.....	91
Spanish Truth Corps, <i>S. Alexander</i>	34
St. Lucia.....	196,402
“Touched by his grace”, <i>M. Seagoe</i>	301
ThisIsYourBible.com	94,142,239, 403,515,568
Water is life! (Kenya).....	143
What do people want to know?, <i>D. Jennings</i>	299

Miscellaneous and Poems

Advice for speakers and writers	386
Age of haste, an, <i>F. Rector</i>	217
Balancing the Book, <i>L. Richardson</i>	426
Builder of history, the, <i>H. Mears</i>	522
CGAF invitation: Gathering.....	71,134, 164,224
CGAF invitation: Shepherds’ retreat	447
Crystal hourglass, a, <i>T. Fuller</i>	174
Discovery of DNA, the, <i>M. Seiglie</i>	282
“Fear not”, <i>J. Carter</i>	529
Fifty years is a long time	499
Flower, the, <i>C. A. Ladson</i>	576
“Follow peace with all men”, <i>R. Marston</i> ..	255
Fruit of the Spirit, the, <i>C. Attridge</i>	485
Genius of discipleship, <i>D. Gillett</i>	123
God manifested in His Son, <i>J. Thomas</i>	526
Golden rules for easier living.....	376
Good Samaritan, on the parable of the, <i>I. Collyer</i>	474
Hidden rattlesnake, the, <i>H. Vander Lugt</i> ..	262
“Holy Land” in the time of Christ, the, <i>A. Edersheim</i>	455
How far to go, and where to stop, <i>R. Roberts</i>	426
“I cannot tell . . .”, <i>W.Y. Fullerton</i>	293
“I wait for the LORD”, <i>E. Elliott</i>	240
Intellectual probation, <i>A. Plummer</i>	490

Job, the Book of, <i>J. Kitto</i>	169
Land and the Book belong together, the, <i>W.M. Thomson</i>	80
Last “harvest”, the	573
“Let another praise you”, <i>M. Jermin</i>	142
“Light within”, a false theory, <i>S. Cox</i>	161
Like the rose, <i>H. G. Salter</i>	549
Lincoln, the wisdom of Abraham	101
Little things, do the, <i>B. Pascal</i>	293
“Love your enemies”, <i>G.V. Growcott</i>	151
Making a choice, <i>A. W. Tozer</i>	533
Meaningful personal relationship, a.....	440
Measure of a man, the, <i>M.L. King, Jr.</i>	229
Measure of our lives, the, <i>J. Mitchell</i>	451
Meekness, the spirit of, <i>I. Collyer</i>	426
“No man is an island”, <i>J. Donne</i>	203
Our candidate, <i>R.J. Lloyd</i>	2
Ox and the donkey, the, <i>R. Foster</i>	257
Privilege and an honor, a, <i>M. Curry</i>	394
Redemption of man, the, <i>H. Tennant</i>	295
Rules for Bible study, <i>J. Thomas</i>	422
Sheep, not a lamb, a, <i>T. Spurgeon</i>	213
Shortcoming of money, the, <i>H. Ibsen</i>	477
Spirit of Antichrist, the, <i>J. Thomas</i>	210
Strigelius, Victor, and theologians	469
Thanks for bread and wine, <i>R. Roberts</i>	58
Three years, and half a year, <i>E. Ladson</i>	294
“To fear God...”, <i>R. Roberts</i>	286
Trial of faith, <i>M. Purkis</i>	158
Trials and disappointments, <i>J. Buckham</i>	286
Two men in Philemon’s letter, <i>W. Draper</i>	307
Valley of weeping, the.....	429
“We go to the Bible to be learners”, <i>J.W. Burgon</i>	257
Weaver, the, <i>G.C. Tullar</i>	283
Welsh girl and her Bible, a, <i>A. Whittaker</i>	296
What do we lack in our journey?, <i>C. Bridges</i>	106
“What is that in your hand?”	309
Whole armory of weapons, a, <i>M. Smith</i>	516
William Tyndale’s dying prayer	300

News

Austin Leander, TX.....	250
Austin South, TX.....	97
Avon, IN	45
Baltimore, MD.....	45
Barrie, ON	145,464

Bedford, NS.....	145,407
Boston, MA	251
Brantford, ON.....	45,97,251,407,464,518,571
Broughton, Jamaica.....	145,571
Calgary, AB	198,251,407,464
Cranston, RI.....	46
Detroit Livonia, MI.....	145,407
Echo Lake, NJ	46,146,251,408,464,518
Edmonton, AB.....	198
Georgetown, Guyana	198
Hamilton Greenaway, ON.....	518
Honesdale, PA.....	305,408
Kamloops, BC.....	146
Kingston, ON.....	147
Kitchener-Waterloo, ON	408,519
Largo, FL.....	465
London, ON	97,251,410,571
Manhattan, NY	410
May Pen, Jamaica	198
Mendocino County, CA	305
Meriden, CT.....	410
Milford Road, MI	147,305
Naples, FL.....	97
New Westminster, BC.....	47,252,519
North Battleford, SK	199
Orangeville, ON	199
Orlando, FL	98,305
Panama City, Panama	47,148
Paris Avenue, OH	98,411
Petersburg, VA	148
Round Hill, Jamaica.....	149
San Diego County, CA.....	412
San Francisco, CA	199
San Francisco Peninsula, CA	199
Santa Barbara, CA.....	306
Sarasota, FL	412
Seattle, WA	200
Shelburne, ON	149,307
St. Johns, NF.....	149
St. Lucia.....	200
Sussex, NB	252,465,572
Thousand Oaks, CA	201
Toronto Church Street, ON	413
Toronto East, ON	413,572
Toronto West, ON	150,572
Vernon, BC.....	47,202,519
Victoria, BC.....	150
Wachusett, MA	202

Washington, DC 98,252,466
Wichita Falls, TX.....253,466
Worcester, MA202,414

Announcements and Notices

Ameral, Eleanor.....416
Anderson, Gail.....467
Bible Message calendars47
Bible Message calendars, 2010.....415
Camp Hashawha Family Bible Study
Camp307
Caregiver wanted.....573
Caribbean Christadelphian Youth Camp196
CBMC: financial appeal404
CHC teacher appeal99
Christadelphian Meal A Day Fund.....253
Christadelphian Sunday School
Association202
Fairhaven Christadelphian Foundation..181
Giordano, Tony.....99
Lies from the Pulpit.....416
Manitoulin Bible Camp.....151
Manitoulin Family Bible Camp.....151
Minute Meditations, a new edition of370
Music for meetings.....203

New meditational piano CD573
Ontario Winter Bible School415
Paris Avenue, OH, ecclesial meetings.....48
Run for the everlasting cure.....520
Texas Spring Youth Retreat48
Texas Youth Conference 2009520
Unlocking the Mystery, a new book520
Wells, Elisabeth.....254
Woodcock, Frank466

Minute Meditations, R.J. Lloyd

“Be ye angry and sin not”521
Does Ego stand for “edging God out”?.....204
Faith and works308
Jesus is the Son of God but not
God the Son.....468
“Nothing shall offend them”100
One thing you can give and still keep... is
your word.....256
Pessimist and the optimist, the.....152
Pushing someone up a ladder.....417
Seeing is not believing, but
believing is seeing49
Wise unto salvation.....574

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.