

THE CRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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"God is within her [the city of God], she will not fail; God will help her at break of day" (Psa 46:5).

*O Thou whose ear is ever bowed;
To strains of human care,
Who writest on my darkest cloud
Thy rainbow soft and fair:
When silent grief implores Thy aid,
And begs Thy hand to move,
Let my extremity be made
The chariot of Thy love.*

*A triumph of Thy loving skill,
I rest upon Thy grace,
Though midnight pains and tears conceal
The glory of Thy face.
Help me to wait till light appears,
And let the morning prove
How false and baseless were my fears,
How faithful is Thy love.*

Author unknown

Editorial

The Common Cup

“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:19-20).

If you travel around our community, you will find quite a wide variety of procedures at the memorial service. In all cases, the members join together in remembrance of the death of our Lord Jesus, but the way they do it differs quite widely. For the bread, some use a white loaf, which is split by the presider. Some use unleavened bread, often in the form of the Jewish matzo. And the cup comes in many more varieties. I have experienced wine, non-alcoholic wine, and grape juice in “common cups”, and all three types in individual cups. It is interesting that the differences tend to be local: in the UK, the common cup is (or at least used to be) almost universal, as are individual cups in Australia. In North America, there is much more variety, with some ecclesias even having switched back and forth.

It is an area that causes much internal disputation in many ecclesias, but they usually come to some compromise. I will consider very briefly the reasons for and against at least some of the choices, but I must echo the words of CC Walker when asked about this problem in 1919:

“Let the ecclesia discuss the matter [of individual cups] and decide the practice in its own sphere (and not look beyond it). And let the minority submit to the majority as the law of both God and man requires.”

Incidentally, the year of the question is significant, because it was the fear of the flu epidemic of that period that was the main driver of the change in some North American ecclesias to individual cups.

Leavened Versus Unleavened Bread

It all depends: on whether you believe the memorial meal was a Passover or not. The arguments for and against this have been marshaled many times: I might refer to those summarized by Bro Harry Whitaker¹. It is my personal opinion that it was a “normal” meal, following the evidence of John’s gospel, and also the universal practice of the early church to use leavened bread. It was probably the closest counterpart to the original memorial feast for each participant to receive the bread from the presiding brother, although there are not many ecclesias in these days where this would be practical. It is interesting that in Virginia in the earliest days of Christadelphia, they had an unusual custom. “Each one rises, walks to the table, and helps himself. By this custom, they relieve themselves of the responsibility of handing the elements to those who might be improper persons.”² Today, we handle this dilemma differently, which is perhaps one of the causes of some of our local difficulties. Perhaps they were wiser 150 years ago.

Before we get to the topic of the infection potentially transmitted by the common cup, I might mention there is a similar potential hazard with the bread. It is the common practice for the presiding brother to break the bread manually before dispensing it, and commonly the participants also handle the bread. This is a reason that those who are suffering from any illness might choose to partake of the emblems after all others. And for the presider to ensure his hands are scrupulously clean.

The Cup

There can be no doubt that the disciples and the early church shared a common cup of wine, and such was the universal practice in Christendom for the first few hundred years after Christ. After all, our lord said *“This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”* Many have wondered how the large numbers of disciples in the early church could have followed this practice, but it should be pointed out that most early ecclesias were house based: for example we read *“Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ...greet also the church in their house”* (Rom 16:3-5). This would naturally limit the size of each individual ecclesia.

The practice was only really challenged until around the turn of the 20th century, with the greater knowledge of bacterial infections: the practice of individual cups has become widespread among most protestant churches in North America. This became the practice of some Christadelphian ecclesias in the USA just after WWI, as I have mentioned before. Many other churches, however, continue the use of the common cup, in particular the Catholic Church.

So it was the fear of transmission of infection that produced the impetus for the use of individual cups, and this fear continues. Very few will share drinking cups outside their immediate family, so why do we continue this practice in our ecclesias? In addition, the use of individual cups allows us to easily accommodate those who prefer the use of grape juice rather than wine.

So is the fear of infection a reality? Is this fear strong enough to justify abandoning the practice of the early disciples, not to mention the custom of our early Christadelphian ecclesias?

Infection and the Common Cup

There have been quite a number of medical articles on the risk of infection being transmitted via the common cup: indeed the most commonly cited article³, written in 1987, includes 129 references, and quite few have been published since. Almost all come to a common conclusion: although the transmission of micro-organisms has been observed, such transmission does not imply infection. “No episode of disease attributable to the shared communion cup has ever been reported.” In addition, the Centers for Disease Control in the USA has issued its opinion.

“Within the CDC, the consensus of the National Center for Infectious Diseases and the National Center for Human Immunodeficiency Virus, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, and Tuberculosis is that a theoretic risk of transmitting infectious diseases by using a common communion cup exists, but that the risk is so small that it is undetectable.”⁴

In addition, several statistical studies have been conducted that found no greater incidence of infectious diseases among those who received communion via the common cup compared to those who did not. Despite this lack of evidence, the CDC continues “... churches may wish to consider advising their congregations that sharing the communion cup is discouraged if a person has an active respiratory infection (i.e., cold or flu) or moist or open sores on their lips.”

However, the fears still linger, and it is not my intention to minimize these fears. If you have ever seen “foreign matter” in the cup, one can appreciate the inevitable distaste. Thus a practice has recently arisen (or at least if it was used in the past I am not aware of it.) This is to supply a choice, thus leaving it up to the decision of each individual. Commonly, both the common cup and trays containing individual cups are passed around, and this seems to work quite well. This accommodates both those who believe the symbology of the common cup overcomes the chance of infection, and those for whom such fear would tend to inhibit the importance of partaking in the memorial in a suitable frame of mind.

It has also become the practice that anyone with a cold or any sort of infectious illness will ask to defer partaking of the cup until after all others.



I must also mention a method by which the occasional problems with handling both a common cup and the trays of individual cups can be overcome. This is to use a combined tray, as shown in the enclosed picture. Details of this combined unit can be obtained from Bro. Phil Snobelen: (philsnobelen@shaw.ca). It seems to me to remove any lingering objection to allowing each individual member to choose either the common cup, on

the basis that this most closely follows the example of our Lord, or the individual cup, over caution about infection.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. *The Christadelphian*: (1963) p 61-65
2. *The Christadelphian*: (1866) p 222
3. The hazard of infection from the shared communion cup, Noel Gill, *Journal of Infection*: (1988) p 3-23
4. Risk of Infectious Disease Transmission from a Common Communion Cup, *American Journal of Infection Control*: (1998) Vol 2, #5

Letters to the editor can be sent to letters@tidings.org. Please include your name, address, email, and phone. Submissions under 300 words are encouraged — the magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions.

Exhortation

Self-Sufficiency or God-Sufficiency?

Imagine you are living in the ecclesia in Colossae. You recently experienced a surprise visit from a small group of brethren belonging to the Circumcision party. You, as many in the ecclesia, were awed by their Bible knowledge and exposition. But you were bothered by their continual insistence that the Jewish traditions needed to be kept. Not many days following their visit a letter from the Apostle Paul, to whom the ecclesia owed its very existence, was read before the ecclesia. The account below is a fictional story of one brother's reflections on these experiences and the profound insight he gained through Paul's letter.

The Messengers' Message

I think it was their Godly demeanor and exceedingly devout and reverent behavior that set these brethren so much apart. They seemed to epitomize what "holiness" was all about with the intensity of their piety and disciplined living. And their knowledge of Scripture? It was unparalleled! They knew their Bibles backwards and forwards, especially the Law of God! No one was their match when it came to arguing a point of doctrine or exposition. It was so easy to understand why so many brethren in the community held them in such great esteem. If it hadn't been for that letter from Paul...

Do you know what these brethren were saying to us?

First, they insisted, we must keep certain divinely appointed rituals, that our very salvation depended on it: "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses," they proclaimed, "you cannot be saved!"

I am personally so very thankful that Brother Paul addressed this in his letter. He told us that we already were circumcised! We were circumcised in Christ when we were baptized. We didn't cut off a piece of our flesh; instead, in baptism, we put away our old lives, driven as they were by the sins of our fleshly bodies. This was the work of God's hands and not mans! (Col 2:11)

Second, they taught that true devotion to God required a strict keeping of all the Jewish food laws and observance of the divinely appointed annual festivals, monthly feasts, and, especially, the weekly Sabbaths.

Paul again was very clear there was no such requirement for salvation. No one, he said, had a right to judge us in this matter. It was up to us if we personally wanted to follow the food laws and observe the feast days. All these things were only shadows, of which Christ was the reality. It is the reality we must look to, not the shadow. (Col 2:16-17)

Finally, they argued, that if we really wanted to ensure a holiness and purity of life acceptable to God and free from uncleanness, we must rigorously adhere to a

specified set of rules and regulations for our lives. It really was amazing how much of what they taught had to do with negatives: “Don’t do this and don’t do that.” I wondered whether there was anything positive in their religion!

Paul truly caught the essence of their teaching in what he wrote: *“If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations, ‘Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch’ (referring to things which all perish as they are used), according to human precepts and doctrines?” (Col 2:20-22 NIV).*

And what would be the outcome if we faithfully followed their teaching? An assured life of godly purity and satisfying self-denial and holy sacrifice; a life, they said, that would be “holy, blameless, and irreproachable” in God’s sight.

If it weren’t for Paul, we would never have seen the tragic flaw in their teaching: *“These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh!” (Col 2:23 NIV).* What an irony, their religion accomplished the very thing it sought to deny — the satisfaction of the flesh!

Reflections on a Religion of Rules

I have thought long about the religion of these brethren. I would like to share with you my reflections.

The first thing I noticed was how easily zealous, capable, “together” brethren could be attracted to this religion. Here was such a clearly marked path to God... and what wonderful feelings of holiness and purity this can bring! What intensity of devotion and piety! What closeness to the Holy God!

But what of those “less fortunate”, those who struggle mightily with temptation and sin, who know only their weaknesses and failures? What of those brethren whose lives are less than “perfect”, who are feeling crushed under the weight of painful circumstances — an abusive husband, a faithless wife, or rebellious child, a disintegrating marriage? I wondered: What could this religion possibly hold out for them, but impossible demands, unachievable holiness, failure and rejection by God and man, leading to depression, despair, and death.

How quickly an ecclesia would become divided into two groups: Those who are “holy” and those who can’t quite make it.

Next I noticed how the religion of these brethren seemed to undermine the most fundamental lesson of the Gospel, a lesson that our beloved brother Paul illustrated for us so vividly from a recounting of his own life as a Pharisee: He told us how he was *“circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless” (Phil 3:5-6 NIV).*

Paul, like all Pharisees, was such a superbly disciplined man; his powers of rigorous self-denial set him apart and above the ordinary Jew. And, like his companions, his zeal for the highest standard of righteousness was unmatched: *“as for righteousness*

based on the law, faultless”! To this could be added his extraordinary single-minded devotion to a cause he deemed to be right.

Would not such an individual develop an extraordinary confidence in his own abilities and strength? How easily pride rises up in you because of what you can achieve that others cannot! This pride, Paul said, this “*confidence in the flesh*” (Phil 3:4) only underscored the real essence of the Pharisees’ religion: It was a religion of self-sufficiency. They did not need God in their religion.

When Matthew, always such a perceptive and insightful man, wrote his account of our Lord’s life, he put side by side in one of his chapters these two groups of people in an absolutely remarkable way. The record is found in his account about the Pharisees’ tradition of washing of hands (Matt 15).

The Pharisees have always been unmatched in their zeal for the highest standard of righteousness, a standard that had become codified through the centuries into a book of rules and traditions so that one following this standard might keep themselves from transgressing the commandments of God.

But there were two problems with their religion then, as now: Pride came easily to these men because of what they could achieve that others could not. Who, indeed, can exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees! (vs 20) And, they thought that their strict adherence to their religious traditions and rules made them clean in the sight of God. Ironically, all it created was an external holiness without any impact on their hearts: an unclean spirit still ruled inside! (vv. 16-20)

Mark the contrast to the Canaanite woman: She and her daughter were the very epitome of uncleanness! But this woman had two things the Pharisees did not: She knew her desperate need and her complete inability to meet it with her own resources, and, she had a persistent, tenacious faith in Christ (vv. 21-28).

The marvel of it all? One was cleansed, the other was not... and never knew it!

What a lesson our beloved Matthew was led to put before us! Salvation and the cleansing of our hearts from the uncleanness of our flesh can never come by a rigorous self-discipline and adherence to a set of rules defining “righteousness”: It can only come when our self-sufficiency is slain and we must look to God alone in faith. This is where true holiness and the blessing of God begins as the prophet Isaiah said: “*For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, (Isa 57:15).*” I marvel at the greatness of our God who defines the place of His holiness to be those who know their desperate need!

The Spirit of our Lord’s Religion

I have always thought the spirit of our Lord’s religion was best seen when he was in the garden for the last time. Matthew again fills in the picture for us. “*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*” (Matt 26:41).

“Spirit willing” — what an understatement! Jesus always sought to please his Father! And yet, this only begotten Son of God, who could with a word silence a storm and quiet an angry sea, who could command 72,000 angels for his protec-

tion: this one confessed his own utter powerlessness in the face of his own flesh. “The flesh — my flesh, Peter — is weak.”

Where, then, did our Lord get the power and strength to drink the cup of humiliation and suffering?

It is our beloved Luke who draws the curtain for us to see: “*Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him*” (Luke 22:42-43).

The determination, the willingness, came from our Lord, but the strength to overcome came from his Father. Truly, as the prophet said, Jesus was the man God made strong for Himself. Like Sarah who received strength to conceive seed because she believed Him faithful who had promised (Heb. 11:11), even so our Lord, by his faith, received strength to conquer sin in his own flesh.

The spirit of our Lord’s religion is the very antithesis of Self-Sufficiency: God wants us to trust in His provision, in His strength, in His righteousness as it is written in Isaiah:

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength” (Isa 45:22-24).

How hard, Paul told us, it had been for him to learn this simplest, and yet most profound lesson about faith in Christ. He shared with us what the Lord said to him when during one particularly troubling period of his life he begged the Lord to remove the thorn in his flesh: “*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness*” (2 Cor 12:9).

I will never forget what he said next: “*For when I am weak, then I am strong.*” Here, I thought, is the fundamental paradox of life in Christ. I remember a portion of Paul’s letter to the brethren in Philippi that I have thought often about: “*Not that I speak according to need, for I have learned to be content in whatever state I am. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. In everything and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*” (Phil 4:11-13 NKJV). This is the secret of the religion of faith.

Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

Tidings on Facebook

*There is a now a Facebook page for the **Tidings**. Hosted by Bro. Levi Gelineau, it currently posts the Daily Readings along with some other comments. In future we hope to add relevant News and Notices, so please “Friend” this page. (Bro. Levi can be contacted at leviandjessica@gmail.com.)*

Bible Study

Creation's Gospel:

(4) The Physical Environment Adjusts to the Spiritual Environment

Our continuing premise is that the spoken word of God (creation) demonstrates the exact same eternal truths and divine principles as the written word of God (Bible). One of the endless ways to validate this relationship is by examining how the dramatic shifts in the creation's environment have and will be prompted by shifts in the spiritual environmental. A very dramatic environmental shift was prompted by the violation of divine righteousness at Eden, when the curse of sin and death infected a previously "very good" creative order. Another dramatic environmental shift occurred when the waters above the firmament were released upon the earth. Following the global flood man's length of life shrank by more than 90%. These environmental changes were the direct result of God's assessment that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

The Effects Related to Chaining Sin

The next dramatic environmental change will follow upon the circumcision of the hearts of mankind through the fear of the Creator. The dragon, serpent, devil and Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years (Rev 20:1-3). Sin will be restrained. Therefore, on the basis of the principle we are examining, the effects of sin will have to be restrained. Carnivorous animals become herbivorous. Lions will eat straw. Dangerous reptiles and insects will lose their venom. All types of danger itself is dramatically reduced. Agricultural yields abound. Mortal life terms are increased to the degree that someone dying at 100 years old is considered to be only a child, having had most of their lives still before them (Isa 65:17-25; 11:1-9). These three dramatic periods of change in the features of creation are the direct result of dramatic changes in the spiritual environment. This physical/spiritual relationship is also true of both temporary and regional environmental changes, such as the fascinating law of the early and the latter rains (Deut 11:10-17). We will be considering these in a future commentary.

Accepting and pursuing this relationship between physical and spiritual, between the creational environment and divine truths and principles, has consequences. This is not simply an entertaining meditational exercise. This frame of reference confirms doctrinal truths, reveals doctrinal distortions and defines the very concept of peace. Literally everything must eventually harmonize with the Creator's principles. All that is physical and all that is spiritual must perfectly agree without contradiction, for the Creator to be all in all (1Cor 15:28). This is why death and the grave must end (cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death). Death (the result of sin) must be eliminated as it is a consequence for violations to the Creator's right-ness (sin).

Death was introduced as the defining feature of that first dramatic environmental mutation. After six evenings and mornings of verbally commanding earth's flourishing environment into existence, everything was declared to be very good. Each individual day had only been good. The final interdependent, sustainable created environment was better than good. It was divinely very good. The curse of sin and death changed everything. That degree of change is powerfully validated by our Messiah. The best component of our cursed environment that the world has ever seen was Jesus Christ. Yet he refused any legitimacy for being addressed as simply "good" (Matt 19:17; Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19). If the best of our sin cursed environment does not qualify as being good, then how could our current environmental order ever have been divinely declared as very good? Since the mere restraining of sin will dramatically change the environmental order in the Millennial Kingdom, imagine how different the original creative order had to be prior to the introduction of sin and death. The foolishness of the religion called 'evolution' dramatically disrespects our Creator by assuming gradual, accidental environmental mutations over an extended time period without any relationship to sin.

The Introduction of Death

Death could never have been part of the original creative order declared to be divinely very good. This is a highly significant understanding as this issue is a foundational point for doctrinal challenges within the Christadelphian community for over 100 years. Was the original death threat for touching and eating from the tree in Eden's center intended to be understood as an immediate execution or the infliction of a dying nature? The answer has everything to do with the concept of atonement. Are we supposed to understand that death preceded sin, or that sin preceded death. We can certainly quote Paul's comments on the subject. *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men"* (Rom. 5:12). We can also quote creation.

Guiltless Sin Offerings

Could death have been part of a creative order our Creator declared to be very good? The mere touching of the dead under the laws of the Kingdom of God required a person to leave the community of God, living outside the camp for seven days and participate in two sin offerings. The ashes of the red heifer constituted a purification for sin (Num 19:9,17). Although this procedure was a purification for sin, there had been no transgression of any divine law in touching the dead (except for the High Priest or a Nazarite). This is one of the six guiltless sin offerings that highlight the physical aspect of sin. The six guiltless sin offerings were:

- 1) The ashes of the red heifer for touching the dead;
- 2) The sin offering for a new mother for the righteous behavior of giving birth (Lev 12:6);
- 3) A recovered leper (Lev 14:22);
- 4) A person recovered from a bodily issue (Lev 15:15);
- 5) The initial dedication of the bronze sacrificial altar (Exo 29:36-37):

- 6) The annual sin offering for the Tabernacle and the things associated with it (Lev 16:15-20).

All of these sin offerings were for physically unclean conditions... just like the creational environment following the introduction of a defiling contradiction to the Creator's righteousness in Eden.

The defilement of sin did not simply physically affect mankind. It affected all of creation. This is the Creator's foundational policy. Nothing is completely isolated. Everything affects everything else. This is true Scripturally and this is true environmentally (ecologically). This is the principle of God manifestation. Understanding that death could have been part of a divinely very good creative order would be presumption which despises God, as is the case with all false doctrine.

The Blasphemy of Immortal Sin Capacity

Adam and Eve chose the serpent's testimony, thereby rejecting the Creator's testimony as a lie. They chose the right-ness of the serpent over the right-ness of the Creator. Ever since then, the majority of mankind has eagerly embraced the serpent testimony that we don't really die and that sin does not have to mean death, which despises the Creator. Sin and immortality are partners in the apostasy, but are contradictions of the divine truth. Declaring an immortal angel to be capable of sin as well as promoting sin is a blasphemous insult to the divine nature. The doctrinal fact is that angels cannot die (Luke 20:36), therefore they cannot sin. The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23), therefore it is impossible for immortals to sin. However it is not the mere doctrinal fact that is so significant. The significant feature is how doctrinal distortions degrade and insult the right-ness of the Creator. Those insults are tolerated for a time, but will not remain unaddressed.

Divine truths and principles are demonstrated in the features of creation. This is because that which is physical is bound up with that which is spiritual. If we try to separate the two we are working against the divine pattern for activity and communication. It is never a safe position to contradict the Creator of heaven and earth.

Our next commentary will begin to address the overlapping template 'layers' of this avenue for witnessing an increasing measure of divine glory. This will demonstrate the depth of how the features of creation (spoken word of God) project the same truths and principles as expressed in the Bible (written word of God).

Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)

Tidings Committee

We wish to thank Brethren Randy Davenport (Orlando, FL) and Kevin Flatley (Paris Avenue, OH) for agreeing to join the committee of the Tidings. We also wish to thank Brethren Mark Giordano (Norfolk, VA) and Tony Isaacs (Atlanta, GA) for their past services on the committee. Bro. Mark resigned earlier this year because of work commitments, and the term of Bro. Tony has come to an end.

Joe Hill (Chairman, Tidings Committee)

Bible Study

The Creation Text: Studies in Early Genesis: (3) Sabbath

It seems superfluous to devote a day for God to do nothing but declare the creation complete (Gen 2:1-3).

Day Seven is a day of no production; nothing new comes into existence. A short closure statement to sign off on all the vigorous activity of the creation week would have sufficed. Yet the text describes it as a full day, nearly equal in format to the other creative days. What is the purpose of this? Day Seven reaches back to the Prologue (1:1-2) to inform us that the unformed is now formed, the dark now lighted, and the void furnished and populated.

Day Seven does not begin with “*And God said,*” as do the six creation days. It begins with “*Thus the heavens and earth were finished and all their host.*”^{1, 2} This is the first of three statements all declaring the work done. The work doesn’t just stop, but it is fully complete, because it has accomplished all of the goals implied in the Prologue.

Verse 2 has two sentences that focus on God’s role. The first records his act of completion, this time with an active verb (it’s passive in the preceding sentence), “*God completed on the seventh day the work he made.*”³ The second reads, “*He rested on the seventh day from all the work he made.*” For emphasis, the sentence repeats an already repetitious phrase, “*work that he had made.*” The second iteration adds the comprehensive “all,” making quite sure the reader knows that the creation program is indeed complete. The misleading “rested” is translated from the verb form of the familiar shabbat.

The third and last statement, in verse 3, adds God’s blessing and sanctification of the Sabbath. This statement also uses the “*work he had made*” phrase, but expands it to “*all his work God created in making.*” Word tally for Day Seven: “work” three times, “make” three times, and “create” once, plus “ceased” and “completed” twice each.

A whole day to do nothing?

It would be nothing unusual for the text to have a completion announcement, such as “the work of creation was completed.” One-liners to this effect occur at the end of Job’s discourses, “*The words of Job are completed*” (Job 31:40) and Book II of the Psalms, “*The prayers of David, son of Jesse, are ended* (Psa 72:20).⁴ The short sentence in verse 1 could do the job. Instead, the closure statement is raised to the same level as the production statements of the first six days, with its threefold structure using two different verbs, “complete” and “cease.”

The five-word (in Hebrew) first sentence of the Sabbath account (2:1), which includes “the heaven and the earth,” would make a fine bookend to the five-word opening sentence of the Prologue (1:1). This closure statement could have been set off from Day Six to stand alone as an Epilogue to match the Prologue. As it is, (and

this is a matter of text itself, not of any later division of the text into chapter and verse), the conclusion receives its own “day.” This seems both odd and unnecessary; odd in that nothing happens creatively, and unnecessary because a simple Epilogue would make a symmetrical format. There’s an unusual asymmetry, or so it seems.

The key is that God’s work did not finish on Day Six. God’s activity on Day Seven requires its own “day,” although the nature of that activity is not defined until John’s gospel. The Sabbath is much more than a closure statement. Its “activity” involves a concept not fully developed until the New Testament: sustenance and restoration.

The contrast between creation and completion

A seventh day, in which God rests and pronounces all of his work completed, puts the work of active creation into perspective. The expression of closure is just as important as the creative activities. This parallels previous separations: light from dark, waters above and waters below, and the dry land of earth from waters that covered it. The creation week is a program of not just creating entities, but also separating them to give them a distinct place and function. Each created item is separated, specified, and assigned a role or place. Day Seven introduces a larger and somewhat abstract teaching: the separation of creative work (activity) from rest (non-activity). God’s rest gives relief and perspective to God’s work. If the text only recorded “work” as a unilateral condition, then we couldn’t consider it work, as it would be a constant state with no opposite or contrast to give it definition. Thus, the rest on Day Seven gives definition to the activity of the preceding six days. Obviously God didn’t rest because he got tired, or because he had finished creating all he could create. However, he did finish what he needed to do for his purpose, and then made that clear by concluding with a day devoted to non-creation.

What God did on the Sabbath

Even though the Sabbath is counted as the seventh day, its verbs set it apart from the six days of God’s work. None of the four verbs of God’s activity on Day Seven has as its direct or indirect object any part of the creation. The first two verbs state that God did no work and the last two report what God did to the day itself, not to the creation. God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. He did not bless any part of creation on this day, as he had done previously.

What does it mean to bless a day? What does sanctifying actually entail? Their meanings intertwine to give a picture that God set this day apart in the same way that he set the humans apart from the other animals. The two ideas put forward are completion and sustenance. The meaning of “sanctified” denotes being set apart, typically for holy purposes. Day Seven represents both the celebration of the completion of a full work of creation and also the continued presence of God as still involved with that completed work.

The idea of sustenance is implied in the fact of a day devoted to closure. God didn’t cease his involvement; he continued his presence with the creation.

Jesus’ teaching on the Sabbath

New Testament evidence for God’s sustenance is direct, conclusive, and deeply

instructive. It arrives in the context of Jesus' use of the Sabbath as he encounters the Pharisees, and counters their legalistic notions about what this day meant. Jesus has several confrontations with the Pharisees on the Sabbath. In each case he choose to cure someone with a chronic ailment. He could have easily waited until sundown to effect healing and not drawn any attention to himself. However, he selects the Sabbath day on which to cure chronic conditions such as lameness and congenital blindness. In so doing, he demonstrates that the holiness of the Sabbath does not imply a day of protecting oneself from any possible interpretation of "work," but a day in which God's healing power continued the work of sustaining the creation.

Jesus' proclamation, "*My father is working still, and I am working*" (John 5:17 RSV), tells us that God continued to work on the Sabbath. His abiding presence with creation tended to its needs, all the more as humanity developed in all of the attendant frailties and needs of mortal, sinful human life. The work of forgiveness and providence attends us daily, as it has from the beginning.

The ultimate Sabbath

Although Genesis records a sanctified day of no work, it does not establish the Sabbath as a commanded day of rest. It does not become legally encoded as a day when people should cease from their work until the Decalogue (Exod 20:8-11), but the principle upon which the Sabbath became sanctified refers to Day Seven (Exod 20:11). By citing the original creation reference (or the Exodus attestation thereof), the letter to the Hebrews hangs the Sabbath argument on a sturdier peg. It connects the ultimate Sabbath rest with not only the law, but also its Genesis precedent.

The letter to the Hebrews encourages believers to continue living under grace and not to relapse into the law. This epistle focuses on the role of the high priest as an example of the vast difference between the limitations of the law and the abundance of life available through faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before the high priest contrast, however, the text visits the issue of the Sabbath.

Hebrews offers considerable detail of how the high priests' sacrifices had to be repeated, serving only as a reminder of sin, but not really doing anything to ameliorate sin's effects or remove sin's root cause. In the case of the Sabbath, the letter reminds us that Scripture points to another Sabbath to come (Heb 4:3-5) with extensive quotations from Psalm 95, especially the key verse, 95:11 "*they shall never enter my rest.*" The argument in Hebrews rests on the fact that if another rest remains, then the original is inadequate. This parallels the Scriptural usage and logic of the High Priest argument; if another high priesthood (Psa 110:4) remains to be filled, then the original is found wanting.

The metaphorical "*Sabbath rest that remains*" in Hebrews 4, yields two further meanings derived from the original Genesis treatment of the Sabbath as a day with its own rightful place in the creation week. The two themes announced in Hebrews are the rest from works and the ultimate Sabbath rest that is the Kingdom of God. Jesus invited those weary with the vain attempt to live by laws and

rituals to come unto him, “*all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matt 11:28). Hebrews says the stiff-necked Jewish nation “*shall never enter my rest*” (Heb 3:11). Never, that is, under the terms of the Old Covenant, the covenant of law, the paradigm of rituals, and the ineffectual animal sacrifices. But God, through the grace offered in the covenant of faith based on the greater sacrifice of his Son, our Lord Jesus, gives rest.

Those who abide in his grace await his coming and his kingdom — the “day” of restoration, of healing, of renewal. The now blighted Earth, a place of corruption, violence, pollution, filth, pain, disease, misery, hatred, strife, and ungodliness will return to its pristine Day Seven state, and God will again pronounce it “very good.” This ultimate Sabbath will restore the magnificence of the creation.

The Sabbath rest of the kingdom provides a thoughtful reason for according a calendar day to the cessation of God’s work. Furthermore, unlike the six days of active creation, the Sabbath day does not conclude with “there was evening or morning.” Like Melchidezek, it has no beginning or end, and thus points to an eternal fulfillment.

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Notes:

1. The oddly placed chapter break severing the Sabbath Day (Gen 2:1-3) from the first six days unnecessarily disturbs the Sabbath’s position in the creation week.
2. Many of the passages are as translated by Bro. David
3. The LXX translators evidently thought that if God ceased on the seventh day, he was still actively working up until that point. That implied the Sabbath wasn’t a full day of rest, so they changed this sentence to read (literally) “And God finished on the sixth day his works.”
4. The Hebrew word for “completed” in Job 31:40 is the same used at the beginning of the book to describe Job’s complete (legalistic) righteousness (1:1). It is an iconic use of the common Hebrew literary device of repeating a key word for emphasis. The end of Book II of the Psalms uses the same word as Genesis 2:1, with the same nuance of “completed,” not just “ended.”

A Gift of Tears

“Put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?” (Psa 56:8, KJV).

The “bottle” here was probably a wineskin, a sort of leather container.

In his novel, The Tears of the Giraffe, Alexander McCall Smith recounts a beautiful Botswanan tradition. In this small African country, the artwork on some baskets includes a number of small lines and marks. These are called “the tears of the giraffe”. The legend is that, once upon a time, all the animals brought gifts to God. There were many wonderful gifts, but the giraffe had nothing to bring. It wept because of this, and its tears became its only gift.

The lesson for us is this: There are many gifts which we might offer to God. But the greatest gift we can give is our tears: the tears of repentance and devotion — the tears of our hearts. God receives these tears, and keeps them, and cherishes them. They are the gift of love.

George Booker

First Principles

The Atonement in Practice (4) Abraham and Lot

Living the atonement is a life of righteous living by faith. The principle is illustrated in the life of Abraham who is presented to us as the preeminent example of faith. In Abraham we see the intimate connection between faith and sacrifice; we see a man who chose to sacrifice the things of this world because he looked forward to a greater hope to come. He was a righteous man who lived by faith. In his interaction with Lot we can learn a most important lesson.

In Genesis 13 Abraham and Lot had to separate from each other, an example of the separation of a man who walked by faith from a man who walked by sight. Although the divine record says Lot was a righteous man (2Pet 2:8) in this instance we have an example of a man who made a terrible choice. He failed to live the atonement — to live by faith — a decision that cost the lives of most of his family and the ecclesia he led towards Sodom.

We're told in verse 10 that "*Lot lifted up his eyes and saw...*" with his natural eyes and was led astray. Just like Eve in Gen 3:6 he let the lust of the eyes direct his actions and when he "*saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere*"(NASB¹) he let the desire to have the things of the world take over. This is the antithesis of living by faith and later on in the same chapter we see the contrast with Abraham who was told "*Now lift up your eyes and look*" but unlike Lot we know that Abraham looked with the eye of faith. Hebrews 11:10 says "*he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God*" (see also verse 13). The apostle Paul also brings out the contrast between these two men:

"For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2Cor 4:17- 18).

Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the temporal; Abraham did the same but saw the eternal. Abraham walked by faith and sacrificed immediate advantage (the well watered valley where Sodom was located) for an eternal future. That is the definition of the righteous living by faith and we can see the direct relationship with the atonement: sacrificing the things of the flesh by clinging on to the things of the spirit. In fact we next read about Abraham receiving an exhortation that matches his faithful way of life.

In Genesis 14 Lot is captured by a confederacy of kings and Abraham takes it upon himself to rescue his nephew. It is then that the king of Sodom, whose enemy Abraham vanquished, offers Abraham something which Lot could not resist — present advantage:

"The king of Sodom said to Abram, 'Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.' Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, 'I have made Abram rich' " (Gen 14:21-23).

Abraham would have nothing of this world's store and in response to Abraham continuing to live by faith God says in the next chapter *"Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great"* (Gen 15:1). This is the chapter in which Abraham *"believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness"* (verse 6). After God tells Abraham he will receive the land of promise as an inheritance, Abraham asks God a very important question, *"O Lord GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?"* (Gen 15:8)

What is entrance into the Kingdom of God predicated upon? The answer God gives is sacrifice: *"Bring Me a three year old heifer..."* (verse 9) and the great lesson that comes out of this is that the cross must come before the crown. This is what our Lord said: *"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?' "* (Matt 16:24-26).

Abraham was tempted to gain the whole world, in a sense, by giving into the desire of present advantage. But he refused the king of Sodom and looked with the eye of faith. In other words he sacrificed the temporal gains the king wanted to give him and instead trusted that God would provide what he needed. This is what it means to take up the cross and follow Christ. It is the example our Lord set for us. He was sorely tempted to give in to the desires of the nation of Israel and save them now and avoid the cross. Even his closest disciple, Peter, tempted him after Jesus announced for the first time that he must die (Matt 16:21-23). What Jesus said in response was as much as an exhortation to himself as it is for us. The atonement, which we participate in by taking up our cross and following Christ, is about living by faith, not looking at the well watered valleys of this world but sacrificing what this world can give us now because we want to be in the Kingdom of God more than anything the world offers now.

Of course that's not the only example from the life of Abraham. His life was all about sacrificing the things of now and looking forward to future promises. He rejected his old life in Ur of the Chaldees for a land he knew nothing about, except Yahweh had told him to go there. Living by faith is believing God is right and acting on that belief. Abraham exemplified this basic principle of the atonement by not striving for the things of this life. He put no trust in the flesh. Nestled between two of the most well-known chapters on the atonement it's the example of Abraham in Romans 4 which at the centre of Paul's argument:

"What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness'" (Rom 4:1-3 ESV).

Faith is the bottom line, the central characteristic that drives the atonement in practice. Faith in God is the sacrifice and an utter rejection of wanting to provide for our natural fleshly desires. Abraham's trust in God was mirrored by his distrust in the flesh:

"In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, 'So shall your offspring be.' He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was 'counted to him as righteousness' " (Rom 4:18-22 ESV).

Abraham could not trust in the flesh. His body was as good as dead and his wife was not only barren but she had gone through menopause (Gen 18:11). And yet he had faith that God would provide a seed — life out of death. This is the essence of living the atonement. We need to develop such a faith that the things of this world and the present advantage it gives are far outweighed by the invisible benefits of trusting in the living God. But all of this requires sacrificing what the world would give us, and that's never easy. But think of Jesus on the cross as he manifested the same faith as Abraham. Like Abraham his body, nailed to the tree, was as good as dead. He died without a seed (Isa 53:8) and so we can say in a spiritual sense he was barren. Naturally speaking, as he hung there like a common criminal, he lost everything. He had none of this world's goods and none of its prestige. He denied the lusts of the flesh and eyes and the pride of life. He said no to all offers from the world, to those who said *"if you are the son of God, come down from the cross"* (Matt 27:40). He said no to the king of Sodom and instead put his trust in the idea that God can create something alive out of that which is dead.

It is a challenge to walk in the footsteps (Rom 4:12) of our father Abraham. Sodom is all around us and, like Lot, we tend to trust what our eyes tell us. We think that if only we had more money, or a better job, or could move to a new area, our problems would be sorted out. And when Sodom offers us something we grasp hold of it. But that's walking by sight. Walking by faith is saying *"Let God be true though everyone were a liar,"* (Rom 3:4) and actually trusting — in real life and not just through a theoretical understanding of Jesus Christ and him crucified — that if we say no to the world and yes to God, and live by faith, we shall be part of God's Kingdom.

Living like this is a huge challenge and sometimes it asks of us tasks that seem impossible. Again think of the faith of Abraham. Decades previously God had called him to leave his home and go to a land that he promised he would give to his seed. That was despite him having a wife who could not bear children and him being seventy-five years old. Over the next twenty-five years God led him and Sarah to a point where they simply could have no trust in the flesh and it was then that God himself provided the seed through the miraculous birth of Isaac. Finally it seemed the promise would be fulfilled but then God tells him to take his

son, his only son, and to sacrifice him. Aside from the fact that God was asking Abraham to kill the very reason for his calling, the promises, God's very purpose, it is hard to imagine the intense emotional turmoil of being asked to sacrifice your beloved child. Sacrificing prestige, wealth, the trappings of this world, these things seem easy in comparison. How many of us would follow in Abraham's footsteps? And yet here was God, through his servant, demonstrating the importance of the righteous living by faith, a true faith that understands that God can make someone who is dead alive once more. That is what Abraham understood (Heb 11:19) and that is how our Lord was able to endure the cross. This is the atonement in action.

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Notes:

1. All references are from the NASB except as noted.

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Using Bible Learning Centers



Twenty years ago, two sisters teamed up to teach a large group of Sunday school children. They did this very successfully for five years. Please see "Teaming Up" in last month's issue of *The Tidings*. The way the sisters planned and carried out instruction was vital to the success of their work together, and a key part of the instructional plan that they put in place was the use of Bible learning centers. Again, they tell the story of what they did.

Q. What are Bible learning centers?

A. Bible learning centers are activities related to the Sunday school lesson. A center might be a craft project, a word puzzle, a filmstrip, a book, a creative writing assignment, a game. The availability of a few centers each Sunday provides the children with a choice of individual or small group activities to do on their own after the main lesson has been taught. The children carry out center activities at their own pace and in keeping with their individual interests and abilities.

Q. What kinds of centers have you used with your class of eight to 12-year-olds?

A. There is an enormous range of activities that a teacher can draw on for creating centers. We must say up front, though, that we don't offer a huge selection of centers every single week. We don't want people to think centers are overwhelming to run, because they aren't. Once you get used to planning centers, it's surprising how easy it is to come up with four or five for every lesson. Of course, it's even easier when you have two teachers sharing the work load as we do. Some of the center activities our eight to 12-year-olds have done are these: (1) craft projects; (2) art work for bulletin boards; (3) model making with Play-Doh, Legos, or Bristle Blocks; (4) Fuzzy Felt or flannel graph recreations of Bible stories; (5) coloring book activities; (6) jigsaw puzzles (homemade, custom made at photo labs, and

commercial); (7) sequencing and matching cards (e.g., 39 file cards with the Old Testament book names for sequencing; e.g., Bible quote cards with one word of the quote on each card for correct sequencing; e.g., name cards with a famous Bible name on each for chronological sequencing; e.g., Bible quote and reference cards for matching); (8) lacing or sewing cards; (9) videos; (10) filmstrips; (11) View-Master reels; (12) audio tapes (we have headsets for the tape player and TV to control the sound); (13) books and stories in the reading center; (14) word puzzles (homemade and commercial); (15) Bible games (homemade and commercial); (16) creative writing assignments; (17) decision-making and problem-solving activities; (18) Bible study worksheets, maps, etc., and (19) service center projects such as creating thinking-of-you cards and give-away crafts.

Q. You say that it is easy to provide four or five centers for every lesson. Even that sounds like a lot. How do you do it?

A. It's helpful to have an inventory of teaching materials to draw on. Between the two of us we can almost always come up with a book or story about the lesson. This provides a reading center practically every week. Bible word puzzles often provide another center activity. Puzzle books on various Bible topics are available in book stores, and we either draw on these or make up our own. Bible activity books and Bible craft books are also easy to find, and we're usually able to get one or two more ideas from these. Some of the children like to color with crayons or markers or colored pencils. They also like to embellish their pictures with bits of fabric or other appliques. This can provide another choice that is not difficult to prepare. We keep a supply of Play-Doh and Legos handy and have been impressed on several occasions by the Bible models some of the children have constructed completely on their own (of course, we stipulate that the model has to be related to the Sunday school lesson). It only takes a minute to put these materials out for the children. The same is true for the flannel board and stick-on pieces which the children enjoy using to portray some aspect of the lesson. We also provide a creative writing center on a fairly regular basis. It isn't fancy. All we do is supply a sheet of paper with instructions to write a 'newspaper report' on some feature of the day's lesson. That's more than five center possibilities already, most of which are easy to get ready. It is also possible to have one or two standard centers that you pull out from week to week. For example, sequencing cards on the books of the Bible can be used almost any Sunday until the children have mastered these. We have found that it gets easier to provide centers once you have some experience doing it. We had our doubts at the beginning, too, but it has turned out to be much easier than we anticipated. And the results are worth it. Our kids love doing centers. They really look forward to them.

Q. Please describe how you run centers on a typical Sunday.

A. First of all, let's say a few words about our space arrangements. Since we have combined two classes into one, we now have both of the class areas available to us every Sunday. And we use them. In one area we run our whole-group instruction which roughly occupies the first half of the class period. The other area has two tables in it, and these are set up ahead of time with the center activities on them.

When the whole-group instruction is over, the teacher for the day (who also has primary responsibility for preparing the learning centers for the lesson) briefly identifies the centers that are available. At this point the children are quite quick to choose a center and go to work. Once they get started, we pretty much leave them to work on their own. We only give help or direction when it is called for. With two teachers on hand it is easy to keep an eye on things, and one of us is almost always available if our special child needs help. Depending on the available time and the nature of the projects, some children may do more than one center on a given Sunday.

Q. Do the children usually work alone?

A. That depends on the kind of center activity they are doing. A craft project might be done alone. A small group might decide to do a word puzzle, and this could be done individually or cooperatively. Bible games often involve two or more children playing together. There can actually be a lot of quiet interaction going on among the children during center time.

Q. Are some kinds of centers more popular with the children than others?

A. Things go in cycles. When we first started centers with the children, they tended to avoid the craft activities and do more word puzzles, perhaps because they had done a lot of crafts prior to this. But now they are coming back to craft activities again. It's not easy to predict what they will choose to do, though, and a variety of centers gets used almost every week.

Q. Do you attempt to guide the children in the activity choices that they make?

A. No, unless they are having trouble making up their minds which one to start on, and that doesn't happen very often. It is possible, of course, to prepare only certain kinds of centers for a given Sunday if you want to control the selection that the children have. It is also possible to limit the number of children who participate in a given center so they have to take turns or choose an alternative activity. Beyond this we don't try to steer the children. For them, having a choice is part of the fun of having centers.

Q. What advantages do you believe Bible learning centers offer over the more traditional, one-activity lesson in which all the children do the same thing?

A. First of all, we have found that centers are a boon for the teacher. We used to rack our brains trying to figure out what single activity to do with the children each week. Looking back on it, we were making all of the decisions for the children. Now we simply take stock of available materials and draw on any that are relevant to the lesson. It is no longer a case of agonizing over what craft to do and what project to omit. Now the children decide. And giving the children a choice gives them control over what they do. They respond very positively to this. It's not uncommon for them to arrive at Sunday school with the question, "Are we going to have centers today?" One Sunday, not long ago, one of our youngsters simply exclaimed in the middle of a center activity, "I love Sunday School!" Needless to say that made our day. Attitude development is one of the most difficult things for a

teacher to promote, and centers are excellent attitude builders. Another important benefit of centers is the fact that they accommodate as wide a range of age, ability, and interest levels as you wish. Centers respect the fact that children differ, and they allow for these differences. With a little forethought you can usually provide centers that will engage all of your children in the learning process. Many of our Sunday schools are faced with wide age or ability spreads among the children, and centers provide an effective way of dealing with this problem. Also, centers take a lot of pressure off the teacher. Once the children make their choices, it has been our experience that they take responsibility for the things they do. We have had no discipline problems with our eight to 12-year-olds when they have been involved in center activities.

Based on an interview with Patricia Hemingray and Esther Harper

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Reflections

Marriage Proverbs: Guidelines for a Happy Relationship (3) Guideline Number 2: Making Love Last

What do we mean by “Love”?

The fairy tale romance typically tells the story of a boy and a girl attracted to each other with magical passion; enduring some perverse trial, which threatens to destroy them and painfully end their relationship, only to find in the final chapter (*or the last reel if it is a Hollywood or Lifetime TV movie*) that they conquer all and go on to live happily ever after! Unfortunately, in real life almost all the challenges in relationships begin after the fairy tale ends. In Scripture, the term “everlasting love” appears only once — “*Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee*” (*Jer 31:3*)¹ — where the LORD God is speaking of His everlasting love for Israel. It is extremely interesting that in the context of the Jeremiah discourse Israel is metaphorically pictured as an espoused virgin — typifying her betrothal to the LORD made in Sinai whereby God expected His faithful love to be reciprocated (*Deut 6:13, 10:20, 11:13, 13:4* and many others). Unfortunately, lifetime faithfulness on the part of both partners in a marriage doesn’t always happen and the odds of a relationship eventually failing in our society are approximately 50-50 judging from recent divorce statistics.² Hence, the burning question facing anyone romantically involved with someone is — *will it last?*

Before answering that question we first need to consider what exactly do we mean by the word “love”? The English language has often been considered the most expressive mother tongue with comprehensive dictionaries recording definitions of more words, with many shades of meanings, than any other language. However, when it comes to the word “love” the English language is sadly deficient. The word “love” gets used like ketchup, i.e. spread around to compliment almost anything and

everything. We use the same word “love” to express our feelings for our favorite sports team (e.g. I love the Jets), our preferred food (pasta!), and our relationships (I love my wife). Surely, these cannot all evoke the same emotional feelings within us — if they do then something is sadly out of line in our relationships. Other languages do a far better job of finding the many shades of meaning involved in one’s emotional and intellectual response to this thing called “love”. For example, in the Italian language there are over 100 different ways to express all the shades of meaning embodied in one’s feelings of “love”.³

In the King James Version (KJV) of the Scriptures the various meanings that can be attached to the word love are obscured because of the limitations of the translators having only one option in the English language. Most readers probably know the New Testament was originally written in Greek and in that language three very important aspects of “love” are expressed by three entirely different root words — *eros*, *philo* and *agape*.⁴ I believe that the meanings of these three words provide a framework for considering how one can tell whether or not “love” will last. Let’s explore these Greek words one at a time.

The word *eros*⁵ is derived from the Greek god of the same name also known as Cupid in the Roman pantheon. It is obvious from this association that *eros* is associated with “passion” and “intimacy” in a relationship.

The Greek word *philo* should also be familiar to us and is associated with the concept of friendship. The word *philo* is used by the Apostle Paul in conjunction with the Greek word for “brother” to denote that we need to regard each other with brotherly love, i.e. with deep friendship.⁶ Paul gives an excellent example of this type of love — “*Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*” (Rom 12:9-10 ESV). (For some other examples see also — 1Cor 16:22, Heb 13:1 among others.) Thus, we can regard this aspect of love as embodied in “friendship”.

The word *agape* (*agapao*) is the most frequently appearing word that is translated as “love” in the New Testament. It is used to indicate “unselfish” love, i.e. a love that is totally committed to another. This is the kind of love epitomized in the well-known passage: “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*” (John 3:16 ESV). This is the kind of love the Father extends to us and it is also the type of love he expects us to give to Him. In fact the kind of love a faithful believer should reciprocate to all. This is best illustrated in Mark 12:33: “*And to love Him [the LORD God] with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices*” (ESV). *Agape*⁷ thus represents total self-sacrificing commitment in a relationship, in brief, “unselfishness”.

To sum up the above; there are three important aspects of “love” that need to be present in a relationship between man and woman: passion (*eros*), friendship (*philo*) and unselfishness (*agape*). The weight which each of these carries will often be the measure of how successful a relationship can be and whether or not it has the staying power of a lifetime commitment.

Three aspects — all required

A good association between a man and a woman will have roughly equal balance between these three aspects of what we call “love”.

If the liaison is based mainly on “passion” it will certainly fade away with time — it is no more than an infatuation. It is certain that looks fade; flab happens to some, wrinkles to most, hair turns grey and baldness is all too common. Worst of all there is the temptation that, if outward beauty is the only standard for love, then that person will always be seeking to find someone prettier. While passion is an essential element that often initiates a relationship, it is a poor foundation to build a life upon if taken in isolation from all the other attributes that create a true love story (Matt 7:26).

For a relationship to grow, “friendship” is the stimulant (John 15:14). If two people can share honestly and openly their thoughts, dreams, plans, wishes, ideals, likes, dislikes, sorrows, euphoria’s, etc. they are on the way to a good friendship. Unfettered communication is essential to a good relationship. Most people don’t like unpleasant surprises and there is no worse shock that one can endure than to find out that the one we apparently care for has some serious flaw that we abhor. Back in ancient times, when I was going with my beloved, we spent almost a year apart while she was in school some 350 miles away from where I was studying. With no Internet, twitter or cell phone readily available.⁸ There was only one pay phone booth in the college dormitory where I lived with 100 guys wanting to use it every night. Even if I was lucky enough to be able to make a call, after five minutes others were banging on the door to the booth wanting their turn.

After a few weeks of non-communication my very smart mother suggested that when I could come home on weekends I should call Mary and Mom would pay for the phone calls (this was a big deal then given my family’s finances at the time). This was one of the best things that happened for our relationship (plus of course snail mail — which worked but didn’t have the advantage of being interactive). It allowed us plenty of time to discuss many things without the distraction of *eros*! These days couples have a tremendous advantage in this regard. There are so many relatively inexpensive communication media available that a great deal of dialog can readily be accomplished. Open and honest communication is a good habit to develop if one expects to have a successful lasting relationship. Communication, communication, communication (to mimic the old adage in real estate about “location”) is at the heart of any true friendship and without a doubt one of the main keys to a lifelong love. But it cannot exist without the other important concepts of love.

No matter how hard we try there will always be potholes and bumps along the road in any relationship. A very successful book once had a famous line which stated; *love is never having to say you are sorry*. Frankly, I personally think that is the silliest thing I ever heard! In fact thinking that way is sure to lead to disillusionment. One young person once said to me that he wouldn’t marry anyone unless they were perfect in every way. My rejoinder was — why would a perfect person want to marry anyone as imperfect as yourself? The key principle here is

that true *agape* love starts with one's own unselfish desire to please another rather than always expecting the other person to please us. True love is facing up to our mistakes and being willing to say you are sorry and then do something about so it doesn't keep happening. The Apostle Paul tells us — “... *God shows His love (agape) for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Rom 5:8 ESV). This is how God shows His love for us. He knows we are not perfect and still has reached out to offer us salvation.

The relationship between two people is just like the relationship described in the Roman passage: the ultimate success depends on willing self-sacrifice of *both* partners. In Philippians we are told “...*in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves*” (Phil 2:3). If the person you are involved with is always insistent on their way, and that their friends and their interests being paramount, it is a relationship that one should flee. If that person is never sorry and everything is always your fault — find a way out. Better to find out before marriage than after. *Agape* love is never selfish and always seeks the welfare of others first. That is the type of love that the Lord Jesus Christ offers to us and it is the model we should use in judging whether or not a prospective partner has the love of Christ in him or her.

Next: *Committing to a relationship.*

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. In the ESV the expression appears twice i.e., in Isa 54:8 where the word “kindness” in AV is translated as “love”. The Hebrew word is not the same in these two passages.
2. See Article number 1 (Prologue) to this series.
3. <http://italian.about.com/od/vocabulary/a/say-i-love-you-in-italian.htm>
4. There is another Greek word, *epithumia*, used in the New Testament, which is aptly translated as “lust” not “love”, though sometimes it is mistakenly thought to be related to English concept of love. This word is akin to the feelings David must have had when he first saw Bathsheba — this type of emotion is not a healthy place to start a relationship. Also *agapao*, which is also translated as love in the AV comes from the root *agape* and is usually associated with loving in a social or moral sense. Finally, another Greek word that is translated as “love” is *storge*, which is associated with familial affection. This word does not appear in the New Testament.
5. *Eros* is not to be found either in the NT or the Greek OT.
6. Philadelphia = brotherly love
7. The distinction between *philo* and *agape* is clear in the New Testament, but is not clear either in the Greek Old Testament or in other Greek literature of the time.
8. None of these communication media existed in the 1950's in case young people are wondering — they hadn't been invented yet!

Examining the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (the Mormons) Part 2

According to Joseph Smith, before his death, Moroni buried the plates containing the genealogical record of his people, The Nephites. At that time, of course, the map of the United States did not exist as it would in the time of Joseph Smith. According to Smith's claim, he was eventually instructed to attend a hill in a well-known location. He was personally familiar with the hill as it was close to

his home. It is known as the Hill Cumorah. At the appointed time he journeyed there to find the angel Moroni waiting for him. He would subsequently make the trip for four successive years — on the anniversary date of the angel Moroni's initial visit to his bedroom. On the fourth year's visit he was permitted to remove the plates. He was instructed that no one must know of their existence, for many would attempt to steal them. The angel instructed him to protect the plates at all cost as his mission to translate them was divinely appointed.

Joseph Smith's family were believers in prophecies and practiced religious folk magic. His grandparents had claimed to see visions, and stated that they had had dreams which they believed to be from God. His family read the Bible and prayed daily. Like the Catholics with crucifixes, Indians with eagle feathers, etc., Joseph Smith's family attributed divine protection to all objects designated by their folklore. This was a common practice of the day. Small farming communities often believed in witchcraft and sorcery as well. Rituals were often performed to ward off the negative effects of these phenomena. These practices were popular among those who did not ascribe to a particular creed or attend church meetings regularly. Such was the case with Joseph Smith's family.

Joseph Smith was an avid treasure seeker and, indeed, used what he referred to as "seer stones" to aid him in his endeavours. It was upon one of his attempts to find buried treasure that he boarded with the Hale family on their farm in Pennsylvania. Here he met Emma Hale, and he eloped with her. Her parents disapproved of their new son-in-law's treasure hunting business.

Joseph Smith had involved himself with several partners in his initiatives. Upon word that he had found golden plates, there was much animosity among them. They felt that they had been cheated by Smith. Joseph Smith had taken no one with him the day he uncovered the plates except for his wife, Emma.

As he dug into the earth on Hill Cumorah, he made contact with a large rock outcrop. After unearthing it, he found a stone box containing the genealogical plates. He also states that other items were contained within; specifically, the breastplate worn by the priest, seer stones, and the Urim and the Thummim, which appeared in the stone box that was unearthed due to the apparent accompanying of them when the ancient family of Lehi (mentioned in Part 1) crossed over the Atlantic Ocean from Jerusalem. Accordingly he claims that the latter two, along with guidance and revelation from the Holy Spirit, were what enabled him to translate the script which he classified as revised Egyptian.

Because of the intense persecution that Joseph Smith faced, it was decided that he and his wife would relocate from upstate New York to Pennsylvania. Here he met an affluent neighbour by the name of Martin Harris. Taking Harris into his confidence, Smith revealed his possession of the plates, but did not show them to him. Harris says that he took some copied symbols which Joseph Smith had given him, to a few local scholars. One of them authenticated the symbols. This scholar, Charles Anthon later recanted his statement after hearing that the plates were obtained from an angel.... according to Harris. The year was 1827.

Over the course of the next year Martin Harris began to doubt Joseph Smith. He had never seen the golden plates, although a manuscript of translations did exist. Harris convinced Smith to allow him to take the only copy with him to show some of his family. Harris claims he lost the manuscript. It was never recovered. Joseph Smith then apparently lost the ability to translate citing it as punishment for parting with the translation to date. After a few months his ability was evidently restored. In the interim his wife gave birth to a stillborn son.

Although his "gift" of translational ability had been restored in the fall of 1828, Joseph Smith did not resume this work until the spring of 1829. At this time he met Oliver Cowdrey, who became his scribe. They then moved back to New York State where Cowdrey's friend Peter Witmer joined the effort.

Later, the translation began to speak in terms of the creation of an institutional church. Baptism was a requirement and so Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdrey baptized each other. Five years later, in documents which emerged at this time, they claimed to have experienced a visitation from John the Baptist, who conferred the Aaronic priesthood upon them. He instructed them that this priesthood authority was necessary in order to baptize. The translation itself was completed around July 1 of 1829.

Joseph Smith realized that the story of the Golden plates was quite remarkable. In order to make his story more believable to would-be converts, he had 11 male members of his circle; including members of his own family, sign a document swearing that they had seen and even handled these plates. This was despite the fact that Joseph Smith himself had stated that the angel had taken the plates away at the termination of the translation effort.

The translation became known as The Book of Mormon. It was published in March of 1830, and was financed by Martin Harris who mortgaged his farm. Small branches of the church formed in Colville, Palmyra, and Fayette, New York. The publishing along with the establishment of this new church drew praise and criticism of Joseph Smith. There were those who remembered well his gold digging philandering accompanied by his trial for fraud in 1826. Albeit, many new members were baptized and confirmed during this time, and the church grew. Many threats from a growing angry mob were levied on the new Mormon Church, and against Smith himself. This resulted in another move. Later Joseph Smith would state that it was during this time that he was visited by Peter, James, and John, who conferred the title and authority of the Melchisedec priesthood upon him. Subsequently all males in the LDS church would even eventually ascribe to these two priesthoods.

(To be continued.)

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Correction: In last month's article, Sis. Mary's baptism date was given as June 25, 2011. It should have been June 25, 2007.

Forgiveness (1)

This series of articles will address the following topics related to forgiveness:

- 1) God forgives — this is an essential part of His character.
- 2) “Forgiveness” terminology and definitions — God’s Word is full of expressive language enabling us to talk about forgiveness.
- 3) We must forgive others — God makes His forgiveness of us contingent on us forgiving.
- 4) Cognitive therapy in the Bible as regards forgiveness — God instructs us how to reprogram our minds to conform to His way.
- 5) Myths of forgiveness — we need to avoid the many misunderstandings associated with forgiveness.
- 6) Activities of forgiveness — we can learn and practice the discipline of forgiveness.

Why are we writing about forgiveness?

Here are few of the reasons we have chosen to write on this important topic:

- Forgiveness removes the sin that separates us from God, bringing us into harmony with our heavenly Father.
- Refusing to forgive those who have sinned against us causes us great harm. The positive benefit of forgiving others is well established.¹ Forgiveness can change you completely. Research shows that the effects of forgiveness are quite amazing.
- We cannot get through life without having to face serious forgiveness issues; for example, being jilted, suffering from family break-ups, being fired from work because your boss had it in for you, suffering the distress of a car accident, being the victim of alcohol abuse, and a multitude of other misery-inducing dramas. We cannot avoid these situations, so wisdom dictates that learning how to forgive is both prudent, and a practical necessity for our own well-being.
- The Lord teaches us to pray, *“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,”* then after completing his pattern prayer, he continues: *“For if we forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”* (Matt 6:12, 14-15). The importance of us forgiving is clear, especially when we recognize that this is the only petition in the Lord’s Prayer on which Jesus comments. It is also the only petition in which we have an active part.
- We can get better at forgiveness. Like any skill, there are techniques, and we can grow in our maturity in using them. Forgiving is one of the few traits of God we can mimic, and we can become more like Him by practicing forgiveness. We need to improve our ability to forgive, as individuals and as a community.
- Comedienne Lily Tomlin cleverly summarizes, “Forgiveness means giving up all hope for a better past.” Put another way, forgiveness is the first step to a better future.

The character of God

Forgiveness is a key element of God's character. In response to the children of Israel fashioning and worshiping the golden calf, the LORD declares His intention to destroy them all and to create from Moses a new nation (Exod 32:10). Moses intercedes and the LORD relents (Exod 32:11-14). Moses smashes the tables of the law and the 3,000 men directly responsible for the sin are executed (Exod 32:15-29). Moses asks that the LORD forgive the nation of their great sin:

*"And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt **forgive** their sin —; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (Exod 32:30-32).*

The LORD responds:

"Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made" (Exod 32:33-35).

God declares the danger of His continuing in the midst of this stiff-necked people and tells Moses He will not go up with them. Moses pleads with Him, and again God relents (Exod 33) and reestablishes the covenant (Exod 34). In particular, the LORD declares the essence of his name:

*"And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, **The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,** and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (Exod 34:5-7).*

This affirmation forms the basis for LORD's relationship to His people and becomes the foundation of Israel's prayers for forgiveness. When ten of twelve spies returned with an evil report, the LORD said to Moses:

"How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they" (Num 14:11-12).

Moses' response is based on Exodus 34:

"And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the

iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now” (Num 14:17-19).

This forgiveness is an essential part of David’s prayers:

*“Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily. Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. **For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee...** But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Psa 86:3-5, 15).*

*“**The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.** He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psa 103:8-12).*

The Sons of Korah follow the same pattern:

*“LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. **Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin.** Selah. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease. Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee? Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation” (Psa 85:1-7; cf. Exod 32-34).*

As do the Songs of Degrees:

*“Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But **there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared**” (Psa 130:1-4).*

The Law of Moses

In the sin and trespass offerings, the LORD repeatedly emphasizes His provision for forgiveness, and its dependence on the shedding of blood:

*“And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock for a sin offering, so shall he do with this: **and the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them...***

*“And he shall burn all his fat upon the altar, as the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings: **and the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him...***

“And he shall take away all the fat thereof, as the fat is taken away from off the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn it upon the altar for

a sweet savour unto the LORD; and the priest shall make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him...

"And he shall take away all the fat thereof, as the fat of the lamb is taken away from the sacrifice of the peace offerings; and the priest shall burn them upon the altar, according to the offerings made by fire unto the LORD: and the priest shall make an atonement for his sin that he hath committed, and it shall be forgiven him..."

"And he shall offer the second for a burnt offering, according to the manner: and the priest shall make an atonement for him for his sin which he hath sinned, and it shall be forgiven him..."

"And the priest shall make an atonement for him as touching his sin that he hath sinned in one of these, and it shall be forgiven him: and the remnant shall be the priest's, as a meat offering..."

"And he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him..."

"And he shall bring a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass offering, unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his ignorance wherein he erred and wist it not, and it shall be forgiven him..."

"And the priest shall make an atonement for him before the LORD: and it shall be forgiven him for any thing of all that he hath done in trespassing therein" (Lev 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7; cf. Num 15:22-29, esp. vv25, 26, 28).

Solomon's dedication prayer

Forgiveness is the repeated catchphrase of Solomon's dedication prayer for the temple:

*"And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, **forgive**" (1Kgs 8:30; 2Chr 6:21).*

*"Then hear thou in heaven, and **forgive** the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers" (1Kgs 8:34; 2Chr 6:25).*

*"Then hear thou in heaven, and **forgive** the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance" (1Kgs 8:36; 2Chr 6:27).*

*"Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and **forgive**, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;)" (1Kgs*

8:39; 2Chr 6:30).

*“Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven they dwelling place, and maintain their cause, And **forgive** thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them” (1Kgs 8:49-50; 2Chr 6:39).*

In response, the LORD confirms His commitment to hear their prayer from heaven and forgive their sin:

*“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will **forgive** their sin, and will heal their land” (2Chr 7:14).*

Next: “Forgiveness” Terminology and Definitions

David Lloyd (Los Angeles Hispanic, CA)
and Joe Hill (Austin Leander, TX)

Notes:

1. Robert D. Enright, *Forgiveness is a Choice: A Step-by-Step Process for Resolving Anger and Restoring Hope*, 2001, American Psychological Association: Washington, DC; Robert D. Enright and Richard P. Fitzgibbon, *Helping Clients Forgive: An Empirical Guide for Resolving Anger and Restoring Hope*, 2000, American Psychological Association: Washington, DC; Beverly Flanigan, *Forgiving the Unforgivable*, 1992, MacMillan: USA; Philip H. Friedman, *The Forgiveness Solution: The Whole-Body Rx for Finding True Happiness, Abundant Love, and Inner Peace*, 2009, Canari Press: San Francisco; Edward M. Hallowell, *Dare to Forgive: The Power of Letting Go and Moving On*, 2006, HCI: Deerfield Beach, Florida; Fred Luskin, *Forgive for Good: A Proven Prescription for Health and Happiness*, 2002: Harper: San Francisco; Sidney B. Simon and Suzanne Simon, *Forgiveness: How to Make Peace with Your Past and Get on with Your Future*, 1990, Grand Central Publishing: New York. Dick Tibbits, *Forgive to Live: How Forgiveness Can Save Your Life*, 2006: Integrity Publishers: Nashville.

Forgiveness

“Life is an adventure in forgiveness” (Norman Cousins).

“I have always found that mercy bears richer fruits than strict justice” (Abraham Lincoln).

“May God’s grace give you necessary humility. Try not to think — much less, to speak — of others’ sins. One’s own are a much more profitable theme! And if on consideration, one man can find no faults on one’s own side, then cry for mercy; for this must be a most dangerous delusion” (C.S. Lewis).

“The noblest vengeance is to forgive” (Unknown).

“O Thou who has given us so much, mercifully grant us one thing more — a grateful heart” (George Herbert).

“Never does the human soul appear so strong as when it foregoes revenge and dares to forgive an injury” (Edwin Chapin).

One, But Not the Same: Bible Evidence for Gender Roles

(1) Gender Roles from the Beginning

This is the first in a four-part series; Part 2 will present teaching and examples from the Old and New Testaments, and Parts 3 and 4 will be a consideration of some of the most common objections to gender roles as taught in the Bible.

Why do we do it that way?

Have you ever been asked — by a Sunday school student, an interested friend, or a member of your ecclesia — why we have different roles for men and women in the ecclesia? If so, did you have a good answer? It's a question we've probably all thought about at some point, as we compare our practices to those of other churches or to organizations in the world and wonder: why do we do it that way? If someone approached you — either from outside or inside the ecclesia — to try and convince you that the Bible's teaching about the roles of brothers and sisters is not what Christadelphians think it is, would you know what to say in response? Maybe you, like me, have wondered — are our practices really based on Scripture, and if so, do I understand these practices personally?

Are the roles we practice in ecclesial life a product of human tradition and culture? Are they a reflection of male dominance, sexism, and the putting-down of women in general? Or are they a reflection of something deeper: a rich Biblical symbol that God challenges us to put into practice in our lives together as Brothers and Sisters? I'd like to challenge you to look into the teaching of the entire Bible on this subject and to help, I'm going to use the next several pages to outline the path I took and the conclusions I found in God's Word. Whether you're seeking answers for yourself, or whether you realize that one day you may be called upon to explain or defend the Bible's teaching about men and women, I hope that the following thoughts will give you a good springboard. I should probably start with a disclaimer: writing a full description of God's roles for men and women in the Bible, including all of the examples we're given of the many ways we can serve Him, would take an entire book. This article isn't about the role of brothers and sisters in general, and I won't be detailing all of the facets of what it means to be a sister in the Truth. Instead, I'll be showing from the Bible why we believe that the formal roles of teaching and leading the ecclesia are reserved for brothers.

Even though I was raised in the Truth, I'm still amazed every time I realize in a new way how that our ecclesial practices fit with the example set in the New Testament. For example, a listener's knee-jerk reaction to the phrase "the Truth", could be that it sounds too dogmatic and exclusive... before seeing that it happens to be a direct imitation the words of Jesus and Paul (John 8:32, Col 1:5). The "*right hand of fellowship*" mirrors the first century ecclesias' way of welcoming someone into the Body of Christ (Gal 2:9), and our use of arranging boards and committees mimics the New Testament way groups of believers were specially delegated for decision-making. The older I get, the more examples I notice: phrases used during prayers that sound archaic to modern ears, but are actually direct quotes from God's Word; our singing of hymns on Sunday morning before leaving to bear

our cross throughout the week, echoing the night when Jesus and his disciples sang a hymn before he left to bear his cross. Perhaps the most intricate of all is the way our Sunday morning service tries to reflect the Last Supper, with individual brothers acting in the role of Christ as he taught, prayed, and gave the bread and wine to his disciples.

Bible history versus human history

As with the examples above, I have come to appreciate the differences between brothers' and sisters' roles more over time, as I observe how deeply we try to root our practices in God's Word. In contrast, human societies throughout history have either treated women with cruel oppression or, conversely, sought to downplay or erase any differences between the genders. In the Western world today, many churches have swayed toward the latter approach by promoting men and women to the same positions of leadership, using credentials such as level of education, leadership experience, and public speaking skills to decide who should teach and shepherd the congregation. The result is an almost political environment, where religious leaders and teachers maintain their positions through their human skills and talents, and their popularity with their congregations. In an environment like this, to freely admit that my church has different roles for men and women — and that, truth be told, I like it that way — takes some courage! The very idea that God has chosen different job descriptions for men and women in the church could sound offensive in today's culture. However, this is nothing new; God's way has always been offensive to some, and it has always taken courage to uphold God's word against human culture. Here's a quote showing an example of that courage:

“Being a sister... only precludes her from the act of public speaking and involves subjection to her husband. It does not shut her up to babies, pots and pans... She is a partner, a helper, a fellow-heir in all things pertaining to Christ, and the man who would degrade her from this position is not fit for a place in the body of Christ”¹

These words, spoken by our Brother Robert Roberts, sound a bit traditional and old-fashioned today. But how would they have sounded in 1879? Compare this with an older quote taken from Thomas Aquinas, who is often considered the Catholic Church's greatest theologian:

“As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active power of the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of a woman comes from a defect in the active power”²

This quote shows the Church's historical view of women: in other words, men are a perfect likeness of God, and women are the defects of creation! In a world that taught female inferiority in most things, for Robert Roberts to suggest that men could lose their salvation for not regarding women as their spiritual fellow-heirs would have sounded radically progressive. However, since then our world has swung to the other extreme, Robert Roberts' words now sound unusual for

a different reason: because he suggests that there are some limits on what jobs a sister can perform in the ecclesia. Even though the times change, our practices and teachings shouldn't change with them; regardless of how radical or conservative it may appear to the current culture, the Bible's message hasn't changed.

This unchanging message was shown in the way God organized the community of Israel. Those who aren't well acquainted with the Law of Moses and the history of the surrounding nations might assume that the Law was oppressive toward women, but in fact the opposite is true. One historian, Charles Ryrie, writes that "Judaism . . . guarantees women a standing before God which they did not have in any heathen religious relationship."³ The Law of Moses was a haven for women, a place of refuge from the ill-treatment they were afforded in the pagan religions of the time. For example, the entire nation of Israel was in a covenant relationship with God. Men and women alike were involved in offering sacrifices, attending religious feasts and festivals, and taking the Nazirite vow in a gesture of special devotion to God (Exod 34:27, Num 6:1-2, Lev 5:4, 6:3-6, 12:5-8, Deut 17:2). Hand-in-hand with these benefits came the teaching that both men and women could be guilty of breaking the covenant; men and women are both naturally sinful and responsible to God for repentance and sacrifice. The Law made it clear that in terms of spiritual value, devotion to God, and responsibility for sin, men and women are "one".

One, but not the same

I prefer to say that men and women are "one" before God, rather than using the word "equal" — after all, the Bible doesn't speak of men and women using this term! The world understands equality to mean "alike" or "the same"; as in, receiving the same treatment, opportunities, payment, jobs, and so on; but this isn't the Bible's perspective on men and women. Instead, the Bible explains the ways in which men and women are "one":

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:26-29).

No matter what gender, nationality, or social class we are born into, once we have been baptized, we are "*all one in Christ Jesus*", referring to our state as God's children, our covenant relationship through baptism, our connection to Abraham, and our place as heirs of God's promises. We are one in the salvation we have in Christ. The flying leap in reasoning made by some people is that men and women should therefore do exactly the same things in the ecclesia, even though this passage doesn't say a single thing about ecclesial roles! To say that there should be no gender distinction among believers because of this verse is inconsistent with the rest of Scripture. "Oneness" does not mean that men and women are always permitted by God to do the same functional jobs. If this were not true, we would expect to look through the Bible and see Him commanding men and women to take on the exact same spiritual roles; however, in both the Old Testament Law

and in the New Testament ecclesia, God's own design included some very different job descriptions for men and women.

The very idea that God would limit the roles of Sisters might be enough to ignite a sense of unfairness in some of us. After all, God didn't make any difference whatsoever in His teaching toward Jews and Gentiles, or free men and slaves... did He? Taking a look through the New Testament, I was surprised to find that women aren't the only ones limited by God's teaching: everyone in the ecclesia is under some kind of limitation! Here are just a few New Testament examples of differing spiritual "roles" and instructions for different groups of people:

- Children are told to obey their parents (Col 3:20).
- Fathers are commanded not to provoke their children to wrath (Eph 6:4).
- Servants are to *"be subject"* to their masters, *"with all fear"* (1Pet 2:18).
- Masters are to provide for their servants what is right and fair (Col 4:1).
- For those who were *"called"* to Christ while uncircumcised (Gentiles): *"let him not be circumcised"* (1Cor 7:18).
- For those who were *"called"* to Christ while circumcised (Jews): *"let him not become uncircumcised"* (1Cor 7:18).
- For single brethren, *"It is good for a man not to touch a woman"* (1Cor 7:1).
- Within marriage, each spouse has power over the other's body (1Cor 7:3-4).
- A new believer or "novice" may not be a bishop or ecclesial leader (1Tim 3:6).
- A man who is not the husband of one wife may not be a bishop or an ecclesial leader (1Tim 3:2).
- Older women had the specific instruction to teach the younger women. (Titus 2:3-4).
- Older widows (over 60 years old) could be counted for ecclesial support, but younger widows should remarry (1Tim 5:9-14).
- Elders who *"rule well"*, especially those *"who labor in the word and doctrine"*, should be doubly honored (1Tim 5:17).
- Those who are "masters", or teachers, will be judged more strictly (James 3:1).

God gave different spiritual instructions to different groups of people, sometimes based on factors they themselves had no control over – such as whether they had been born a slave or free, how long ago they had become a believer, or the age of a woman when she was widowed. Some of these differing instructions applied only in personal life, and some applied to the functioning of the ecclesia. Despite all of the various roles or instructions given, Gal 3:26-29 still teaches us that there is a oneness of standing before God, and the availability of salvation for everyone in the ecclesia. However, as we can see, this doesn't mean that everyone in the ecclesia is commanded to serve God in the exact same way. For those who may feel it is unjust that a sister's role seems limited, take note — everyone in the ecclesia is limited in some way! The service of both brothers and sisters in the ecclesia is limited by the Bible's commandments, and while some of these limitations apply to everyone, others apply only to certain groups of people. Biblical oneness does not mean that we are all the same.

Yet, when it comes to sisters' roles, there is a tendency to question whether the Bible really means what it says; we are tempted not to take the clear teaching of the Bible at face value, or we doubt whether those instructions are relevant to us today. I'm not saying that asking these questions is wrong in itself; however, it's possible that many of us will approach this subject with a bias from the start. The world points us in the direction of sameness for men and women, teaching that a woman is not truly equal with men unless she is doing all the same things as a man. Equality is measured by the kinds of activities men and women are doing; their jobs, their acceptance into school programs, their pay grade. In contrast, oneness in the ecclesia is an amazing, lofty concept that exists independently of whether brothers and sisters have the same roles; instead, it hinges on God's love and His covenant with us through baptism. To suggest that we are not truly one unless we are serving the ecclesia in the exact same ways, greatly devalues the concept of Biblical oneness.

The first man and woman

The Bible doesn't just give us a set of arbitrary instructions for brothers' and sisters' roles, it explains them. Paul tells us where to start looking for an explanation:

"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1Tim 2:11-14).

Paul states that the God's teaching on this subject goes all the way back to Genesis — so if we hope to understand the first part of his statement (about sisters' roles), we have to understand the second part (about Adam and Eve). We can see from the outset that the reasoning behind Paul's inspired instructions doesn't hinge upon a particular quirk of a certain ecclesia, or a pressing issue of his day; instead, the reasoning goes all the way back to creation.

Adam was God's first-created human, his firstborn. Biblically, being the firstborn never made a general statement about an individual's spiritual fitness, but it almost always came with some sort of leadership job in the family (Gen 27:29, Deut 21:17). We are reminded of this firstborn status in 1Cor 11:9, which says that *"Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man"*. However, so we don't mistakenly think that Adam was somehow more valuable than Eve, we are reminded that *"Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1Cor 11:11)*. We find one particular responsibility of Adam's firstborn status:

"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen 2:16-17).

It was Adam who first received God's commandment. Now, as soon as Eve had heard of this commandment from God, she was equally responsible for following it — this is why both Adam's and Eve's sins were given the same ultimate punish-

ment of death. But the Bible record clearly distinguishes between the nature of their sins, with one of them being deceived and the other, not. Paul not only points this out, he tells us that this is part of the reason why God makes a distinction between brothers' and sisters' roles.

We know how the story ends: Adam did a flawed job of communicating God's commandment to Eve, as she somehow understood the original command to include the phrase "*neither shall ye touch it*" (Gen 3:3), which God did not say to Adam. We later see Adam fail at his role as firstborn once again, when Eve "*took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her*" (Gen 3:6). This adds the possibility that Adam was "with her" at the time of temptation, was not deceived by the serpent's lie, but didn't intervene to help keep Eve from sinning. Whether he was physically with her or not, he certainly fell into sin at Eve's suggestion rather than rebuking her or seeking God's mercy for her. Eve also failed at being a "help meet" or a "fitting helper" for Adam, by encouraging their sin and being the first to lead the couple into disobedience, rather than submitting to the commandment given by God.

Historically, many churches have interpreted Paul's words about Adam and Eve to mean that women are more easily deceived than men, and thus unfit to teach — but note that Paul does not draw this conclusion. Adam and Eve's sin resulted partly from a role reversal, in which Adam did not intervene to lead and teach in the role that God had given him, and Eve took the lead in sin and brought her husband along with her.

So, we might say, Adam and Eve were married — don't these lessons only apply to husbands and wives? Not so — Paul uses creation as a motivation for the behavior of all men and women in the ecclesia in 1Cor 11 and 1Tim 2. After all, Adam and Eve's family was the ecclesia of their time, and their family later expanded naturally to include the whole nation of Israel, and then expanded again spiritually to include Gentiles in the family of God. In case we're thinking that these long-ago events aren't relevant to us today, both Old and New Testament teachings consistently challenge men to take on leadership roles, particularly in teaching, and for women to act as helpers in the congregation. The Hebrew word used for "help" in Gen 2:18, "*ezer*" (Strong's #5828), is most often used in the Old Testament to refer to the help given by God (as in Psa 121:1), showing that women have the ability to bring Godly, powerful help to their brothers. It's as if God is challenging brothers and sisters in His family to face the same challenges as the original man and woman, but to get it right this time.

Tara Laben (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

1. Roberts, Robert, *Seasons of Comfort*.
2. Aquinas, Thomas, *The Summa Theologica*, Question 92, Article 1.
3. Ryrie, Charles Caldwell, *The Role of Women in the Church*.

In his greetings of Romans 16, Paul speaks of four believers who "worked hard". Is it a coincidence that they were all women (vv 6, 12)?

Letters

Dear Editor:

In the Tidings issue for December 2011, on the subject of “God Manifestation”, Bro. Jim in paragraph three in the last two sentences mentioned:

“Everyone is **responsible** to God’s judgment. However not all are individually **accountable**.”

I shall be grateful if he can elaborate on the point he is trying to make in view of the words I have in bold.

*Your Brother in Christ,
Joe Badlu (South Ozone Park, NY)*

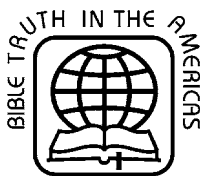
Reply:

Thank you for this question. I was hoping someone would pick up on this distinction. Our community has used the term “responsible” for over 125 years in connection with those whose presence will be required at the judgment of Christ. Using the term “responsible” to define who will attend the judgment suggests that everyone else has no responsibility to their Creator and will bear no divine judgment whatsoever. That would be a very inappropriate understanding. The *unenlightened* still suffer the divine judgment of suffering that ‘2nd’ death (perishing forever), along with the judgments of hard work, pain, disease, suffering, frustration, birthing pain, etc. Their first and only death is permanent, unlike the temporary death of those who must attend the resurrection to judgment. Paul testifies that there can be no legitimate claim of innocence, or illegitimacy, to suffering these divine judgments due to the profound and extensive evidence of creation (see Rom 1:19-20 and also testified by David in Psa 19:1-4).

That basic responsibility to the One who made our environment and us is not defeated through ignorance. However, enlightenment raises that responsibility to a new level. Those who have had the opportunity to accept the Creator’s seed of the gospel offered to them, and develop it within them, become accountable to Him. Their presence will be demanded at the judgment, unlike those with a lower degree of responsibility whose exposure to enlightenment is limited to the significantly veiled but substantial evidence of creation. The danger in referring to the divinely accountable as simply the “responsible” encourages the understanding that the *unenlightened* are not responsible to the Creator, completely escaping His attention and judgments.

I agree completely with our community’s historic and completely defensible understanding of the terms for participation in Christ’s judgment. I simply believe that using the term “responsible” without clarification offers the human heart an advantage in its relentless pursuit of undermining divine truths and principles.

*Your Brother in Christ,
Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)*



Bible Mission News

La Paz, Bolivia Have You Tried This?



Prior to the visit of Bro. Don and Sis. Miriam Luff in November to La Paz, the Osborns (our resident Missionary family) arranged for a billboard with the attached display. Pretty impressive! It was placed right at a main intersection in La Paz. It cost about \$570 USD per month, plus a one-time printing and installation cost. It has drawn a lot of attention and visitors attended the special lecture when they were there because of it (34 visitors in total).

Malaysian Bible School

The Australasian Bible Mission (New Zealand) would like to invite you to attend the inaugural Malaysian Bible School to be held, God willing, in Penang on 22-29 September 2012. We are planning two series of studies, Bro. Dev Ramcharan (ON) on "The Lord Jesus Christ — a life in Ministry" and Bro. Clem Wigzell (Adelaide, AUS) on "The Resurrection — Arise, Shine Forth". The school will have a strong emphasis on Gospel proclamation. The studies, Gospel proclamation campaign and fellowship will be of great benefit to our brothers and sisters in Malaysia who are few in number and have had little experience of ecclesial life. For you who have not engaged in this kind of work before, it will be a great introduction to Mission Work. The accommodations will be of a high standard and the costs very reasonable. Malaysia is a safe, exciting and inexpensive place to visit.

Contact Bro. Peter Osborne peteosborne@webshield.net.au or Bro. Kah Fook Tham kftham@xtra.co.nz for registration information.

Kahfook Tham, ACBM New Zealand

Experiences in Mexico, September-November 2011

Due to the violence that is reported in some areas of Mexico, the country's image is severely marred. However during our two months living with brothers and sisters in two centers, Campeche and Mérida, we were presented with a completely different picture.

The principle objective of our visit was to assess the interest of those Bible students who have requested the correspondence course through Google advertising on the Internet. We did this by renting a house in downtown Campeche, offering an "open house" each day for passers-by and inviting the correspondence contacts to come and read Matthew's gospel with us at 3 PM, chapter by chapter. In Merida we hired a hotel conference room one Saturday afternoon and invited the local postal students to a series of talks. The rest of our visit was taken up by holding classes with students in their homes and distributing leaflets.



Bro. Bill and Sis. Carol Rawson in the home of Bro. Jorge Garcia and his wife Sis. Damaris Cuevas with their two daughters in their home in Campeche, Mexico.

Sis. Katie Routledge of Knowle and Dorridge Ecclesia in the UK joined us for three weeks and was a great help, particularly with the children who accompanied their parents. With an energetic 2-year-old, a bubbly 5-year-old and a girl preparing for her first communion but reluctant to read the Bible, Sis. Katie had a real challenge! She was also a great help in teaching Carol the intricacies of the computer to reproduce the student's workbook in Spanish for the 'From Beginning to End' CSSU lessons.

Our visit fell at the time of the national holiday of the "Day of the Dead." This festival focuses on gatherings of family and friends to remember and pray for loved ones who have died. The celebration takes place on November 1–2, in connection with the Catholic holidays of All Saints' Day (November 1) and All Souls' Day (November 2). Traditions connected with the holiday include building private altars honoring the deceased, leaving favorite foods and beverages as gifts on their graves and opening the tombs to clean their bones. You can imagine that Bible discussion and questions featured "soul", "purgatory", "mortality" and "hell fire." These took precedence over the usual question of "tithing."

We can treasure so many experiences that overseas visits such as these offer and acknowledge that they are blessings from our Heavenly Father. There is one that we would like to highlight. Over the years we have had the privilege of writing to students via the Internet. These initially respond to the CBMA's Spanish-language website and are passed to various members of the community to take a personal

interest in their Bible studies. Bro. Jim and Sis. Jean Hunter passed “Javier” along to us some 18 months ago. While based in Mérida we took the opportunity of travelling to a small town hidden in a vast area of tropical forest famous for its many Mayan ruins. There we were greeted by Javier and six members of his Mayan family, all keen Bible students who meet regularly with Javier so that he may guide them through their studies using the correspondence course. An absolutely wonderful three hours were spent in concentrated study followed by a tasty meal of chicken and rice. It’s hard to explain how one feels being able, at last, to meet face to face with such sincere searchers after truth. What joy it brings to be privileged to serve our Lord in this work.

Bill and Carol Rawson



Home of contact Javier Dzib and family near Merida, Yucatan, Mexico.

San Salvador, El Salvador

“Here is water. What prevents me from being baptized?”



Bro. Carlos Santana

When we heard that a fellow named Carlos Santana, from the Canary Islands (Spain), would be coming to El Salvador, it stuck us as rather strange. Carlos had previously sent an extensive e-mail in which he set forth the reasons for his trip and his firm desire to meet the Christadelphians here in order to be baptized. As soon as he arrived in San Salvador a formal meeting was arranged with the elders of the meeting to interview him.

We learned that Carlos was raised as a Catholic until he was 18, that being the religion of his parents. Later he became a Jehovah’s Witness and was a member for 13 years, becoming an elder in the congregation in his area.

Beginning in 2010 he began investigating Bible studies published on labiblia.com and from what he learned he decided to look for an ecclesia in Spain. At this time he made e-mail contact with Bro. Paul Ward (Valencia, Spain) and later with Bro. Bill Rawson (England). He exchanged extensive correspondence with Bro. Bill on a number of doctrinal points and on the life of a believer, and expressed his desire to be baptized.

Carlos thought there was an ecclesia in Valencia, so one day he decided to fly there from the Canaries with the intention of meeting the brethren and sisters. The trip ended sadly, as he never found an ecclesia, just a PO Box, so he returned home disappointed.

At the beginning of 2011, feeling the need to contact native Spanish-speaking brethren and sisters, Carlos did an Internet search for the word “cristadelphianos”. In this way, he came in contact with a number of Christadelphians, particularly one family in the Sonsonate Ecclesia in El Salvador, with whom he exchanged emails for about eight months. The brethren sent him copies of Bible classes and public lectures and tried to answer all the questions that Carlos had, which were many.

Carlos said that in recent years he had begun to see that some of the Jehovah’s Witness’ teachings lacked Bible support, so he started to examine the basic doctrines of different churches, evaluating all possibilities, but he never found a convincing understanding of the fundamentals of the Bible. Finally he decided to search for groups that rejected the Trinity and questioned the personal pre-existence of Jesus.

Carlos says that it was with the Christadelphians that the concept he had of the Kingdom of God was enriched and began to make sense. He also learned a number of new things, such as the awareness that there was no personal devil and the falseness of the doctrine of atonement by substitution. It was these themes which led to his extensive correspondence with Bro. Bill and the brethren here. Then an opportunity presented itself to travel to El Salvador. Putting together a bit of money, he bought his ticket and arrived in San Salvador on Oct. 13. He rented a room here and began attending meetings. He met the brethren and sisters he had been writing to for so long, and expressed his desire to be baptized.

When Carlos began to give long, complete answers to the questions posed during his interview, the brethren were left with no doubt of his understanding of the Truth and felt the fervor of his confession of faith. At the end of the interview Carlos said, “Here is water. What prevents me from being baptized?” echoing the words of the eunuch to Philip in Acts 8.

Finally, Carlos was baptized in San Salvador on November 27, 2011. His long trip to another continent had accomplished its purpose — to become part of the community he had only heard about and at last be able to share in the promises made to Abraham, become part of the holy nation and begin a new life in Christ.

The Christadelphians of El Salvador welcome our new brother Carlos and commend him to God and his word of grace, which is able to build us up and give us the inheritance among all those who are sanctified (Acts 20:32).

The brothers and sister of El Salvador

News & Notices

(Please send in news and notices by the 5th of the preceding month;
please include full name of ecclesia and recording brother.)

HAMILTON GREENAWAY, ON

We would like to make a correction to our news published last month. We welcomed as members Bro. Jim and Sis. Eileen Scott, it should have been Bro. Brad and Sis. Karen Baker who have transferred from the MacNab Ecclesia. Sorry for the mix-up.

Tom Thorp

LONDON, ON

Our thoughts and prayers go out to our Sis. Judy Winter in the death of her father.

The following members have recently transferred and we pray that their respective new ecclesias will benefit from their dedication and faithful service: Bro. Caleb and Sis. Amanda Meaker to the North Battleford, SK Ecclesia; Bro. Nathanael and Sis. Nicole Massey, to the Prince George, BC Ecclesia; and Bro. Kevin and Sis. Sarah Leadbetter to Hamilton Book Road, ON Ecclesia. We will surely miss these young people and thank them for their labours of love in our Lord's service. They all helped tremendously over the years and we are grateful to our heavenly Father for being able to share fellowship with them.

Dave Birchall

MISSISSAUGA WEST, ON

Over the past year we have much to be thankful for in our ecclesial life. We thank Bre. Jonathan Bowen, Paul Billington (Brantford, ON) and Don Pearce (Rugby, UK) for leading the Prophecy Day held in Mississauga in October. We were strengthened by their efforts and reminded of the mighty hand of our Father in shaping world events unto the coming of His son.

We rejoice with the angels in heaven over the baptism of our new brother and two new sisters. DREW ALLEN was baptised after being introduced to the Truth by personal contact and subsequently following up with instructional classes. Since being baptised, we are pleased to announce that Bro. Drew was united in marriage with our Sis. Nancy Ellyson and pray for God's richest blessing as they walk united in purpose and hope of the coming kingdom. More recently, we rejoiced in witnessing the baptism of CAITLIN ROSE and NICOLE ROSE, the daughters of our Bro. Jeff and Sis. Karen. Both of our new sisters grew up as active participants in the many youth circle activities and are a wonderful example to the young people in our ecclesia. We pray that our heavenly Father will bless these sisters as they begin their walk in Christ.

We welcome by way of transfer Bro. Neil and Sis. Sarah Buxton-Carr (Hamilton MacNab, ON); Bro. Lloyd and Sis. Janice Cooper (Manitoulin Island, ON); Bro. Jason and Sis. Jessica Fish (San Francisco Peninsula, CA); Bro. Luke Groothuis and Bro. John and Sis. Eleanor Mannell (Toronto West, ON).

We also welcomed two new additions to our ecclesial family in November with the birth of Hannah to Bro. Craig and Sis. Holly McAnuff, and Jonah to the undersigned and Sis. Sarah Baldock.

We commend our Bro. Tim Baines to the Peterborough, ON Ecclesia. Bro. Tim and his family relocated to that area and we pray that they will be encouraged in God's ways as we await our Lord's return.

Bro. Doug Jackson has faithfully served the ecclesia in the capacity of Recording Brother for the past five years and is stepping down from this role. Ecclesial correspondence should be directed to the undersigned who has been appointed to serve as Recording Brother for the coming year.

Graham Baldock

NEW WESTMINSTER, BC

All are invited to our Easter weekend Fraternal Gathering, to held God willing on April 7-8, 2012, with the theme, "The Empty Chair, 2 Corinthians". Bro. Horace MacPherson (Victoria, BC) is to lead the sessions.

Bro. Art and Sis. Bev and Bro. Isaac Bull have transferred to the Vancouver, BC Ecclesia. Our new Recording Brother is Bro. James Prasad. Address all correspondence to prasads@telus.net or #25-8277, 11th Avenue, Burnaby, BC, V3N 2P3.

Art Bull

PARIS AVENUE, OH

Our ecclesia has enjoyed fellowship with brothers and sisters from other ecclesias during the second semester of 2011. Words of exhortation were given by several of these brethren including: Bill Perry (Milford Road, MI); Henry Ternent (Pittsburgh, PA); Paul Billington (Brantford, ON); and Frank Abel (Book Road, ON). Bro. Peter Hemingray (Royal Oak, MI) exhorted to our Columbus brothers and sisters.

Sadly we experienced the passing and entrance into sleep awaiting the resurrection of our Sis. Wilma Stevens on December 17, 2011, at the age of ninety. Sis. Wilma spoke the truth to innumerable people and was a humble servant who passionately looked forward to the return of Christ. She was baptized in 1935 at the age of 14, and her positive and nurturing spirit will be missed by all including her daughter and son in law, Sis. Malinda and Bro. Joichim Bromet (Sacramento, CA) and son and daughter in law, Bro. David and Sis. Norma Stevens (Los Angeles, CA).

We have gained two new brothers by way of transfer: Mike Narjes (Toronto Church Street, ON) and Caleb Folkerts (Troy, IL).

On July 30, 2011, we rejoiced in the marriage of Sis. Aubrey Walker to Bro. Scott Scheiner. We wish them God speed in their walk together to the kingdom.

We had an exciting summer this year with our first ever Vacation Bible School. This was a one day event with twenty-three participants from Pittsburgh and Atwood Lake Ecclesias joining our own young scholars. We held our second Open House on August 20, 2011, with about 100 visitors coming from the community to enjoy a petting zoo, recreational activities, a picnic supper and activities related to witnessing for the truth. Our annual picnic was held again at Snyder Lake on August 13, 2011, with people attending from Atwood Lake (OH), Pittsburgh, Illinois and Ontario ecclesias.

Our Fall Study Weekend speaker this year was Bro. Nathan Lewis (Christchurch North, NZ) who spoke on the topic, "Esther, Queen of Destiny". He also presented three cottage classes at the hall during the week following the study weekend.

We rejoice that we will begin the first semester of 2012 with the baptism of a new brother in Christ. JARRED WALKER, son of Bro. Dan and Sis. Barb Walker, was baptized on New Year's Day into the saving name of Jesus Christ. We wish him well in his walk toward the kingdom.

Upcoming events this year will be our Spring Study Weekend on March 10-11, 2012, with Bro. Nathan Badger (Hamilton Book Road, ON) speaking on the topic "Nehemiah — Building God's Walls, Building Godly Characters." Our speaker for the September 15-16, 2012, Fall Study Weekend will be Bro. Matt Norton (Lismore, NSW, Aust.). The topic of that study will be announced later.

For further information on either of these study weekends, please contact Bro. Everett Muniz at 330-497-2811, or at everettmuniz@gmail.com.

Jack Vogelgesang

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CA

2011 was a year of many blessings with a sad note. In January, our Sis. Janie Nagel fell asleep in the Lord at age 37. Her ready smile and faithful attendance will be missed by us all. She now awaits the resurrection.

We were uplifted by a spiritual birth on July 16, 2011, with the baptism of JESSICA STEWART, daughter of Bro. Steve and Sis. Susie Stewart, following a solid confession of her faith. We look forward to her journey with us as we await the Lord's return.

Early in the year, Sis. Laurie Butts (Simi Hills, CA) became a regular visitor following a job relocation and in July, we said farewell when she returned to her native Colorado to continue further education. We also enjoyed the company of Amanda Richardson and Brian Hurst while they were attending college in our area. Bro. David Schlottman and Sis. Alyssa Szymanski were married in January, and Bro. Ryan Eustis and Sis. Sophie Johnson were married in May.

Several members participated in mission work. Bro. Norm and Sis. Sylvia Duke visited the Guadalajara Ecclesia in August to help with follow up work following the preaching campaign. In October, Sis. Rhonda Vaughan spent time in Jamaica helping the Freehill Ecclesia.

We were blessed with many visitors during the year, and are thankful for those brethren who shared the word of exhortation and classes. We especially appreciate the efforts of Bro. Arne Roberts (Cardiff, UK) who led our annual study day in January and for Bro. Dennis Bevans (Reseda, CA) who led the Huasna youth studies in May.

Nick Parrino

WICHITA FALLS, TX

Since last reporting our ecclesial news we have welcomed around the table of our absent Lord and Saviour the following brothers and sisters: Garth and Kerri and Sarah Maier (East TX); Matt and Ruth Bittinger (Joplin/Tulsa, OK); Kathie Atwood (Pomona, CA); Jeanna McLaughlin (Dallas, TX); David Phillips, Pearce and Holly Prater, Ralph and Elizabeth Hollenbeck, Jordan Daniels, and Nathan Daniels (North Houston, TX); Levi Wolfe, Wendy Hicks, and Seba Wolfe (Abilene, TX); Ed and Donna Newton (Verdugo Hills, CA); Jeremiah Hefner, Andrea Banta and Amanda Buck (Austin/Leander, TX); Andrew and Kelly Lawrence (San Diego County, CA). We thank Bre. Hollenbeck and Newton for their words of exhortation.

Over the weekend of September 3, 2011, Bro. Garth Maier lead a series of talks for

the young people entitled, “How to study the Bible”. We thank our brother for helping young minds develop skills which lead to a better understanding of God’s Word.

In October 2011, we welcomed Bro. Colin and Sis. Kris Hollamby (Glenlock, South Aust.). Bro Colin lead Bible studies over three nights on various topics including the Olivet prophecy. We thank them both for including our ecclesia in their very busy travel schedule!

We are very happy to share that after a couple of years of learning the truth, MEGAN HOLMES put on Christ’s saving name on November 17, 2011. We pray that our heavenly Father will continue to bless Sis. Megan in her walk with us to God’s kingdom.

John A. Clubb

CHRISTADELPHIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION — NORTH AMERICA

For details of CSSA materials and services please contact Bro. David and Sis. Jen Waye at na_rep@cssa.asn.au; or at 905-891-7647. We are now accepting orders for Stage 5, “The Acts of the Apostles,” for the Sunday school year commencing September 2012.

Dave and Jen Waye

Minute Meditation

What is it that God cannot do?

Jesus tells us, “With God all things are possible.” Scriptures confirm that our God created all things, is all-powerful and “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” Yet there is something that our all-powerful God cannot do, for Paul tells Titus that God cannot lie. This limitation is a great comfort to us, for the verse that tells us that God that cannot lie contains the promise of eternal life for us.

The wonderful hope of living forever is what God wants to give to us, as Peter assures us: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” How thankful we are that our Heavenly Father is willing to cast all our sins behind His back and remember them no more if only we confess them to Him and ask Him to forgive us.

Thinking about what God cannot do, have we ever considered what else He cannot do? He is not able to remember the good things that we have not done. For example, God cannot remember our baptism if we are not yet baptized.

God remembers those who are faithful to him. Nehemiah worked diligently in the Lord’s service, rebuilding the wall around God’s holy city, Jerusalem, and looking out for the welfare of God’s people. Nehemiah asked God over and over again to remember him for good, and certainly God will remember him for all the good that he did. God remembered Noah while he was in the ark floating on the waters that had destroyed everything on the earth. Noah had built the ark while

witnessing to a world that would perish because they did not want to listen to the word of God. God remembered Noah and saved his life and that of his family.

The good that we hope God remembers about us need not be great heroic deeds. Jesus tells us simple loving acts are important to him: “whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

Jesus describes the kind of things he will remember about us at his judgment seat. “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” When those hearing these words do not remember having done these things for Jesus, he explains, “The King will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

The lesson to learn from this example is to fill each day with activities the Lord will remember about us at his judgment seat, such as being kind to some of God’s other children. When we wake up in the morning we should start planning what we can do to help others today. Before we climb into bed at night we hope that we can remember having done something for others to make their life easier. If we have not done anything good, it is a sobering thought to realize also that the Lord will not be able to remember that we did something good this day.

Is a wasted day, any day that we do not do good things for the Lord to remember about us? Dare we go through our life wasting days? These are critical questions that each of us should be asking ourselves every day.

“Truly this is the day which the Lord has made,” so let us dedicate each day to doing kind and thoughtful things for others. If we are faithfully serving our Lord, then we are told that the Lord will remember us and will say to us at his judgment seat. “Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

Robert J. Lloyd

Special Invitation

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

You, your family and friends are invited to the

*37th annual Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith Gathering
at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, July 23-29, 2012.*

*Main Speakers are Bro. Mark Whittaker (UK) — “Getting to Know Ezekiel”;
Bro. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD) — “Let This Mind Be in You: A Study of
Paul’s letter to the Philippians”; and Bro. Roger Titman (Cleveland, OH) —
“James, Paul and the Jerusalem Council”;*

Special week-long evening series by Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

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

Visit our website <http://abrahamicfaithgathering.org>

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

FEBRUARY 2012

3-5 Camp Ladore in Waymart, Pennsylvania. Young people 13 and older are welcome to attend. Bro. Mike Robinson leading classes on "Getting into the Psalms". Register online at www.cyccamp.org or contact Bro. Ryan Mutter at themutterteam@cyccamp.org

18-19 Calgary, AB Study day at Rolling Hills, Alberta. Bro. Stephen Bartholomew (Okanagan, BC) topic "Fathers and Sons". Children's classes provided. Contact Bro. Dana Kohlman dana.kohlman@grasslands.ab.ca or Sis. Cherri-lynn Kohlman 403-964-2562.

26-March 2 Palm Springs Bible School. The speakers will be Bro. Joni Mannell (Birmingham, UK) and Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Valley, CA). The School offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God's Word. Contact Jeff Gelineau at Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or website www.californiabibleschool.org

MARCH 2012

3 Brantford, ON Senior CYC Gathering and basketball challenge with Bro. Daniel Cadieux (Mississauga West, ON): "Elisha: Power is Salvation." See www.brantfordcyc.com.

10-11 Echo Lake, NJ Spring Study Weekend. Speaker: Bro Ron Kidd (London, ON). The theme will be "As it was in the days of Noah".

10-11 Paris Avenue, OH Study Weekend. Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON) speaking on the topic "Nehemiah — Building God's Wall, Building Godly Character."

24 Victoria, BC Spring Study Weekend. Bro. Shawn Snobelen (Hamilton Book Road, ON) on "Lessons From The Sower." Contact Clyde Snobelen at csnobelen@csll.ca.

30-April 1 Men in the Truth Camping Weekend at Lake Cachuma, CA. "How to be a Man of Courage" Leading your wife, disciplining your children, strengthening the brotherhood, and preaching to the world, when you'd really rather sit back and let someone else do it. Contact: Bro. David Lloyd davidrlloyd@earthlink.net 818-352-6486.

31-April 1 Boston, MA 21st Annual Spring Study Weekend. Boston Ecclesia, 48 Freeman Street, Stoughton, MA. Bro. Jason Cicero (Meriden, CT): "Stand Fast in the Liberty of the Gospel" — A Study of Paul's letter to the Galatians. Registration and coffee at 1:30PM Saturday. Classes begin at 2:00PM with three classes in the afternoon followed by dinner (provided), then one class on Sunday morning at 9:30AM followed by Memorial Service. Contact Bro. Jim Sullivan at 781-837-8865 or jimsulliv@aol.com.

APRIL 2012

6-8 Pacific Northwest CYC Easter Conference at Camp Pringle, Shawnigan Lake BC. Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Rd, ON) will lead the classes. Contact Bro. Dave Higgs daveandkess@gmail.com.

7 New England Little Disciples Gathering at Barton Center, N. Oxford, MA. A day of Bible study and activities for children Pre-K to 7th Grade. See our website www.nelittledisciples.com or contact Sis. Tammy Rundle nelittledisciples@hotmail.com or 781-829-4410.

- 7-8 New Westminster, BC** Fraternal Gathering. Theme: "The Empty Chair — 2 Corinthians". Bro. Horace ("Mac") MacPherson (Victoria, BC) is to lead the sessions.
- 8-15 Australian Christadelphian Conference**, Adelaide, Australia. Theme: "Lift Up Your Heads". Speakers Bro. Tec Morgan (Washwood Heath, UK): *The Exodus Deliverance* (adults) and *Ecclesiastes – Making Sense of Life* (youth); and Bro Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): *Pictures of Redemption* (adult) and *Parables from Luke* (youth). Full details and on-line registration are available at the website www.adelaide2012.com.
- 21-22 Baltimore/Washington Gathering and Study day** at Washington Christadelphian Ecclesia, 9240 Riggs Road, Adelphi, MD. Speaker Bro. Nigel Small (Echo Lake, NJ): "Joseph — Saviour of the World". Study day, Sat. begins at 1pm. Gathering, Sun. begins at 10:30am. Contact Bro. Bob Kling 301-498-5245 or rkling@acm.org.
- 21-22 Sussex, NB**, Spring study weekend. Bro. Tim Young (Cambridge, ON) will lead us in a study of Hosea.
- 21 The Canadian Christadelphian Caring Network's** Annual Seminar "Faith Challenges: Caring Strategies for our Spiritual Life". Speaker: Bro Jeff Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA). Site: Copetown Community Centre, Copetown, Ontario.

MAY 2012

- 11-13 Vancouver Island Sisters' Weekend**, endorsed by the Nanaimo Ecclesia. The location is Beach Acres Resort, near Parksville, B.C. on Vancouver Island. The study leader is Sis. Jane Tunnell (San Diego, CA): "You Faithful Women of the Last Days". (Non refundable deposit required by April 1, 2012.) Further details contact Sis. Yvonne Rosenau, 6274 Dover Road, Nanaimo, BC V9V 1A8, or email yvonne2001@shaw.ca.
- 26 Ottawa, ON** Eastern Ontario Study Day. Bro. David Levin (Baltimore, MD): "Early Genesis: the Forest, the Trees, the Weeds, the Deeds". Contact Sis. Ethel Archard elpis@sympatico.ca.

JUNE 2012

- 24-30 California Christadelphian Kids Camp**. Children 9-16. Teachers are Bro. Jim Cowie (AUS) and Bro. Dev Ramcharran (CA). Our theme is "Elisha". Cost is \$125 before Feb. 29, and \$150 afterwards. Register at www.kidscampcalifornia.com. Contact Bro. Tom Graham at tom@bigbrand.com.
- 30-July 8 Mid-Atlantic Christadelphian Bible School** at Shippensburg University in Shippensburg, PA. Theme "Search me, O God, and know my heart" (Psa 139:23). Youth theme "I will Praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made". Bro. Andrew Bramhill (Bracknell, UK): "The Lord Raised up Judges" (adults) and "Paul's Powerful Preaching" (teens); Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT): "Meditations on the Ministry of Our Lord" (adults) and "What would you do?" (teens); Br. Carl Parry (Salisbury Adelaide, South Australia): "Epistle to James – Be Ye Doers of the Word" (adults) and "How judge ye? – Case studies based on Law of Moses" (teens). Information on website www.christadelphians.net/MACBS.

JULY 2012

- 8-14 Southwest Christadelphian Bible School** at Schreiner University, Kerrville, Texas. The teachers are Bro. David Jennings (Pomona, CA, USA): "Scriptural Discipline" adults and "The Fundamentals of Bible Prophecy" teens; Bro. Stephen Mansfield (Golden Grove, Adelaide, AU): "1 Corinthians" adults, and "Ephesians" teens; Bro. Carl Parry

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(Salisbury, Adelaide, AU): "The Power of Prayer" adults, and "How Judge Ye" teens. Contact Bro. Shannon Strickland Shannonjejh@att.net.

14-22 Eastern Bible School. Connecticut College, New London CT; Theme: "Thy Kingdom Come". Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilston, Brisbane, AUS) – "Events Subsequent to the Return of Christ" (adults) and "Cameos of the Kingdom" (teens); Bro. Jeff Gelineau (Simi Hills CA): "A Journey with Purpose" (adults) and "The Road Ahead" (teens); Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON): "Micah: To Do Justly, To Love Mercy, and to Walk Humbly Before Your God" (adults) and "Is He Not The God of Gentiles also?" (teens). Contact Sis. Cindy Nevers at P.O. Box 296, Auburn, MA 01501 or cindy.nevers@tecbs.org or visit our website at www.tecbs.org.

14-21 Manitoulin Family Bible Camp on Manitoulin Island. The speakers for 2012 are Bro. Simon O'Grady (Tawa, New Zealand) and Bro. James Flint (Cambridge, ON). Speaker topics will be posted to our website later, www.manitoulinfamilycamp.com.

21-29 Midwest Bible School will be held at Hanover College, Hanover, IN. Speakers and their topics are Bro. Mark Vincent (UK): "Things Done Twice — God's Hand in the Life of Joseph"; Bro. Ryan Mutter (MD): "The Life of Timothy"; Bro. Jim Cowie (AUS): "The King's Manifesto for Life". For registration information, contact Bro. Mike Livermore, 24970 Woodridge Drive, Apt. 108, Farmington Hills, MI 48335, 248.462.5740, email: mike.live@gmail.com or visit www.midwestbibleschool.com.

22-28 Pacific Coast Christadelphian Bible School, Idyllwild, California. Speakers Bro. Joe Miles (UK): "Lessons of Elijah"; Bro. Stephen Mansfield (AUS): "Esther: A Time to Speak"; Bro. Chris Sales (CA); "Parables Unique to the Gospel of Luke". Contact Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065 Email: mail@gelineau.org. Register at www.californiabibleschool.org.

29-4 August Western Christadelphian Bible School at Menucha Camp near Portland, OR. Speakers are Bro. Darren Guy (Halifax, UK): "Wrestling with Jacob"; Bro. Duncan Kenzie (N. Saanich, BC): "Twenty-First Century Discipleship"; Bro. Marco Dondero (San Mateo, CA): "The Prism of Judgement and Wisdom's Rainbow". Website www.menuchabibleschool.org, contact Sis. Jane Szabo, registrar, 541-563-4726.

AUGUST 2012

18-24 Winfield Bible School the Easter Seal Camp in Winfield. The Theme: "That we may know him and the power of his resurrection". The Speakers Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Rd, ON): "The Temptations of Christ"; Bro. Steve Hornhardt (AUS): "Come and See! Witnessing for Christ"; Bro. Tim Osborn (BC): "Blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus".