

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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Special Issue Christadelphians and the World Around Us

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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"The world is too much with us." How often has that thought seemed painfully apt to the sincere disciples of Jesus Christ in all ages, as they sighed or even groaned over their private spiritual condition. "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8: 23). All who have sought to "be imitators of" the Apostle have echoed his complaint.

The charge is sometimes heard today that the poet's words are becoming increasingly true of our community, whilst the inward groaning is less often and less deeply experienced than it was. In other words, the world is winning. It has therefore seemed desirable to discuss as honestly as we may the implications of our freedom in Christ Jesus, in the hope that we may gain a clearer vision of the high standard of personal righteousness to which we are called, and greater strength, by God's grace, to press towards it.

Our aim will be practical. After laying a Scriptural foundation we shall consider our freedom in relation to such subjects as gambling, smoking, films, radio and television, newspapers and light reading, sport and politics. Here many slightly differing views are held and to attempt to discuss them in black and white is doubtless, as we have been warned, to "ask for trouble" from extremists at both ends of the scale of strictness and perhaps even at times from extremist advocates of the middle way. Some apology may therefore be acceptable and some explanation of the writer's attitude and intentions, which cannot be repeated every month but must not be forgotten.

H.A. Twelves, The Christadelphian, 1952, p 13 (60 years ago).

Introduction to the Special Edition

There's not many of us who would deny that a degree of separation from the world is important in the life of a believer. There's a plethora of Scriptures that can be used to back up this point — so there's hardly an argument. No, when looking at the issue of separation, it isn't really the idea of separation that can be confusing, but rather the extent of separation that is necessary.

When the apostle Paul quoted from the prophet Isaiah and wrote, “*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty*” (2Cor 6:17-18) — exactly how separate did he mean? Was he calling us to repudiate any possible connection to the world? Was he calling us to shun our jobs among this world's inhabitants and to live in the monasteries as the followers of the apostasy? What exactly is the separation for which the Lord Jesus and his Father are looking?

It is with this question in mind that this special edition of the magazine was written. All of the articles herein are about separation from the world — and essentially fall into four sections. **The First Section is issues of separation** that are sometimes very subtle. While no one would try to defend alcohol abuse and say that it is something that should be one of the characteristics of a believer, what about the watching of sensual movies? Or perhaps listening to explicit music? Thus, there are a number of articles in this magazine which cover topics like music, television, sports, and modesty. All of these articles have been carefully written and their points have been carefully considered — in hopes that they will present a Biblical and balanced viewpoint. May you find them to be helpful. **The Second Section, our citizenship**, concerns our attitude that we are truly not of this world: voting, politics, trade unions etc. **The Third Section is wrestling with the flesh** — the types of addictions to which we develop dependencies, such as alcohol or pornography. It is hoped that the articles relating to addictions may direct you, or someone you know, towards resources that can help them as they struggle against themselves. **Finally, the last type of articles concerns Biblical Solutions** to this issue of separation. Separation from the world is a complex task — because even if we were to remove ourselves entirely from the people around us, we would still find sin inside. This last section will seek to give practical ideas as to how a heart might be renewed.

In reading these articles, may all of us be brought closer to the Father — and further from the world. We haven't simply been called to be separate. We've been called to follow the example of the great and awe-inspiring Ruler of all that we can see and know:

“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1Pet 1:15-16).

*Jason Hensley and Steve Cheetham;
Editors of the Special Issue 2012*

Section 1 — Issues of Separation

The Noise of War — Thoughts on Music



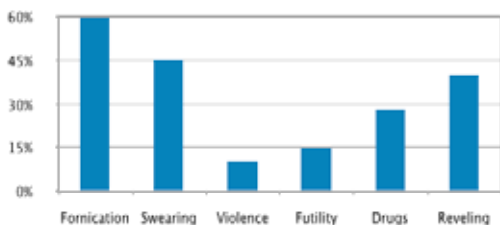
Within the storehouse of classic children's tales is the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin — the fervent flutist who first drew away the town of Hamelin's rats, and afterwards its children, with his hypnotizing music. While the tale is meant to demonstrate the values of trustworthiness and keeping one's word, it also shows that those of earlier days recognized the emotional, psychological and physiological power of music.

Music makes a wonderful servant, but a very bad master. Music was employed by the children of Israel to praise the LORD after their deliverance at the Red Sea (Exod 15), but also as an aid to immorality and idolatry shortly afterward as the people sinned before Mount Sinai (Exod 32). Solomon was aware of its power for good, when the united voice of the singers' praises caused the presence of the LORD to fill the temple (2Chron 5:13). And Nebuchadnezzar expertly manipulated music's power for evil when he employed a variety of instruments to coerce the people to bow down to his image in Dan 3.

According to experts, music is considered the single greatest factor that shapes character in a young person. Music can define a generation. And that's because, by the time a young person finishes high school, they have heard more music than they've actually spent hours in education. Some statistics from the pre-iPod era suggest that the average student has listened to well over 10,000 hours of pop music by that time. As a teacher having witnessed the rise of portable music devices in schools in the last decade, I would suggest that this number could well be significantly higher today, given that a good portion of today's students listen to music during instructional time! It's considered that the ages of 15 to 25 are the crucial years for the development of musical tastes in most of us.

The lyrics

Historically, the music industry has had greater annual revenue than the movie industry. And we can rest assured that in their drive to attract consumers, the music industry isn't going to be appealing to the spiritual man or spiritual tastes. And it's quite evident in the lyrical content of today's music, as well as the image the artists choose to portray.



The chart shows common themes in the lyrics of the top 40 songs on the Billboard Top 100 Pop Songs of 2011.

Besides the themes represented above, other common themes included: anti-religious sentiments; unrealistic

or unhealthy outlooks on relationships; anti-rules and order; and the elevation of self. Similar content is found in the lyrics of other styles of contemporary music (Country, R&B, Rock, Latin Rock, Rap, etc.).

But does listening to these songs really affect us? As long as we are committed to living godly lives, isn't there room to enjoy this kind of music, while doing our best to block out the more offensive elements? Especially since we aren't condoning or engaging in these behaviors ourselves?

The Apostle Paul warns in Rom 1:32 that those who are aware of God's perspective of ungodliness should neither participate themselves, nor *"have pleasure in them that do them"*. He is just as emphatic in Gal 6:7-8: *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."*

Each of us knows from experience that the flesh needs little feeding. Many know the annoyance of how easily lyrics and images from songs heard long ago, as well as experiences associated with them, so easily spring into our minds with the mildest of triggers. Today's musicians well understand this, and they want that access into our minds.

The music of Egypt

The children of Israel grew impatient at Sinai during Moses' long absence, and under their pressure Aaron used the gods and music of Egypt to placate the mob whose minds pulsed with memories of Egypt's "bounty". The Egyptians knew the power of music and harnessed it in the worship of their gods (e.g. Isis), to work devotees into a state of hysteria and therefore to "enhance" their religious experience — primarily, engagement in a sexual fertility rite.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves... And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount..." (Exod 32:7, 17-19)

It was after witnessing their music-driven behavior that the tables of God's law were broken, surely highlighting that the word of God and the music of Egypt are incompatible. The children of Israel used the music of Egypt as a soundtrack for their behavior — and it led to the loss of their garments, and ultimately their lives (v. 28).

"And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies.) Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him" (Exod 32:25-26).

The chart above demonstrates the manipulation of sexuality (by innuendo and explicit references) in modern music. The artists and promoters of today's music — like the Egyptians — recognize the power of music. The image that they sell meshes perfectly with the content of their lyrics and the pulsating beat and sensual style of much of their music.

Many iconic musicians of the modern era have acknowledged this connection. The term “rock and roll” was coined by Alan Freed, Cleveland disk jockey, who took the term from the street slang for fornication.

David Bowie — “Rock has always been the devil's music.” (*Rolling Stone*, Feb. 12, 1976, p. 83)

Lita Ford — “Listen, rock'n roll AIN'T CHURCH. It's nasty business. You gotta be nasty too. If you're goody, goody, you can't sing or play it. . .” (*Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 1988)

Blessed is he that keepeth his garments

Like the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, we're awaiting the return of our Deliverer, who's been separated from us, for a long duration: Jesus Christ, the great Judge. And like the children of Israel, we've come “out of Egypt” and are trying to leave the world's influences behind and retain our spiritual garments.

During Moses' absence, the people had become “*naked unto their shame among their enemies*” (*Exod 32:25*). Jesus Christ warns us that when he returns, there will be some who have laid their garments aside, who have become “spiritually naked” by adopting the behaviors of the world.

“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev 16:15).

We live in a world that tempts us to cast off our spiritual garments and commit spiritual fornication. By putting corrupt things into our heads — they're winning the battle of the mind. And that's where it all starts.

A local radio station in my area advertises itself as “107.5 Sun FM — the soundtrack of your life”. If our iPods were presented to the Lord, what would he determine to be the “soundtrack of our lives”? As one brother put it: “The mind is insensibly affected by the stream of thought passing through it”. A stream that is constantly spiritual and Biblically-focused produces the man or woman of Scripture. But if our mind is constantly listening to and being washed by another, more polluted stream, we will become a very different person.

Music in the battle against sin

One of the greatest examples of faith under trial comes to us in 2Chron 20, as King Jehoshaphat prepared to lead the army of Judah against an imposing Moabite confederacy. After offering a moving prayer on behalf of the nation, and subsequently receiving a promise of victory through Jahaziel's spirit-guided response, a most unusual tactic was adopted: they determined to send out the choir in front of the army!

“And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth forever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten” (2Chron 20:21-22).

As a military strategy it was ridiculous. As an act of faith, it was astounding. God had answered Jehoshaphat's prayer through Jahaziel the son of Asaph, so Judah chose the Asaph musicians to lead them into battle! This episode reinforces a weighty spiritual principle: that spiritual music can be a powerful weapon in the battle against sin. It wasn't until the people lifted up their voices that the enemy was slain.

Imagine, however, that on the morning of the great battle, the sons of Asaph are notably absent. Judah's army needs a soundtrack for the battle against a very imposing force. Imagine the only source of music available is your iPod. When it is plugged it in to provide the army with a song of victory... what music will they find? Would the music on the iPod have the effect of encouraging the army of God in their battle against the army of sin? Or would the music be strengthening the Moabites — the old man?

Is sin subdued, or energized as a result of our music? While not all of the music we listen to will be unequivocally spiritual, none of our music should draw our focus to ungodliness — whether that's by the style of music, the image of the artist, the content of the words, or its worldly association.

The filter

From our first waking moments each day, the world endeavors to press us into its mold. An excellent way to let this happen is to allow a steady stream of its beliefs, values, and ambitions into our lives through the airwaves and earphone wires that compose the “soundtrack of the world” on our minds.

We do well in this area of our lives, as in so many others, to pay close attention to the positive, powerful and life-changing words of the apostle Paul:

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil 4:8).

The parable of the seven spirits (Matt 12:43-45) counsels us not only to remove negative spiritual influences from our lives, but also to replace the empty space they leave with more positive alternatives — to “*overcome evil with good*” (Rom 12:21). The present generation of Christadelphians is blessed with much solid Scripturally-based spiritual music produced within the brotherhood to fill this need, to help us “*Set [our mind] on things above, not on things on the earth*” (Col 3:2).

Let us fill our minds in these last days with music that strengthens the spiritual warrior and gives honor to our Heavenly Father. May we sing with Judah and

the house of Asaph: “O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever” (1Chron 16:34).

Dan Osborn (Okanagan Central, BC)

TV in the Life of a Believer



TV is a relatively recent invention, so there are no Biblical commands that would specifically address it. It is up to believers to apply Scriptural principles to form a judgment about TV watching. Our thinking may be helped by considering the Biblical distinction between “sins” and “trespasses,” which we consider in this article. While we need to weigh carefully whether watching TV is a sin, the wisdom of Scripture indicates that we also need to ask whether it is a trespass, which is also a serious matter.

Is it a sin?

The Bible’s guidance suggests that it is sin for believers to watch certain programs, including those that contain gruesome violence, nudity or sex, or that are filled with crude language. The fact that the vile behavior displayed on TV programs is often presented as exciting, glamorous, or, by subtle implication, part of a “normal” existence that “everyone is experiencing” (shouldn’t you?) makes it all the more abhorrent to the Father who created the world to be filled with His glory.

There are many verses that could be brought to bear that warn against viewing the lewd shows that appear on TV. An identification of all of them is beyond the scope of this article. There are certain principles, however, that should be highlighted because they have application beyond the vilest of TV programs.

Three important principles

The first of these principles is that approval of wickedness is displeasing to God.

“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isa 5:20).

Instead of having “fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,” believers are supposed to reprove them. Paul told his readers not to even speak of sinful deeds (Eph 5:11-12). If we should not even talk about them, how could we justify watching them, given the greater power that visual images can have on us?¹

The second principle is that we are called upon to be spiritual warriors who win over people in the world and persuade them to follow Christ (Eph 6:11-17). It would be hypocritical to do our duty in that regard by talking to people about the Gospel during the day only to return to our houses at night and choose to watch the very behaviors on TV that we had been urging people to forsake.

“Son of man, have you seen what the responsible men of the children of Israel do in the dark, every man in his room of pictured images? for they

say, The LORD does not see us; the LORD has gone away from the land” (Ezek 8:12 BBE).

The third principle is that there are many good images that the Bible provides us to fill our heads with (e.g., Ezek 1).² But we can only fix them in our minds by studying the Bible enough to understand them, and we can only keep them in our heads by meditating on them frequently. The dramatic scenes created by the masters of the entertainment industry can endure for many years and can crowd out space on the walls of our minds, as it were. We do not want to drive the Bible’s images from our thoughts by filling them with scenes from the TV instead.

Acceptable programs?

Many believers would never watch the lowliest programs that are on TV. We might, however, watch “family” comedies, instructional programs on home improvement or cooking, or sports. These programs are less obviously harmful, but there are still dangers associated with them that we should be aware of.

“Family” comedies frequently convey subtle messages that are contrary to the teachings of the Bible. They may make disrespect to parents and other authority figures (e.g., teachers and bosses), promiscuity, and substance abuse look funny, appealing, and commonplace. The messages they convey about the conduct of relationships (e.g., physical attraction is paramount) are particularly insidious. Characters that are reluctant to engage in what we would regard as wrongdoing (e.g., having sex before marriage) are often depicted as repressed and timid. Instead of being presented as courageous individuals who boldly choose to serve God, they are shown as weak people who need to be “fixed”. Another drawback of “family” comedies is that they often convey unrealistic depictions of what life (especially life in the Truth) is like. For example, challenges in our lives are not solved in an episode of thirty minutes or an hour. Instead, the Bible shows that God works with us to address our problems over periods that can last years or even decades. Also, real people are, in general, not as wealthy or attractive as those on TV. We have responsibilities, so we cannot just lounge around and spend the day talking. Given our natural inclination towards ingratitude, we need to be wary of influences that could stir us to become less appreciative of what we have been given.

If we are not careful, lack of thankfulness can also be encouraged by shows on home improvement and cooking and other similar programs. They can fill our minds with appealing images of rooms, decks, and foods that we do not have, which can leave us feeling dissatisfied. The advertising that sponsors those shows is intended, in combination with the program, to make us want more. We need to be particularly wary of the influence of commercials. They are intended to promote covetousness, the modern-day equivalent of idolatry (Col 3:5).

As believers, we should be thankful to God for the riches that we have received in Christ, as well as for our natural blessings. Paul used the concept of thankfulness to add perspective to a controversy that occurred in the first-century ecclesias, and his judgment on that matter can help to guide our approach to TV viewing. When writing to the Romans about whether it was acceptable for believers to eat meat or

only herbs, Paul said that either choice was permissible because the person eating was thankful to God (Rom 14:1-6). We may wish to use thanksgiving to God as a criterion for evaluating whether it is acceptable to watch a certain TV program. If we can genuinely thank our Heavenly Father for a show (e.g., a program on the Six Day War that reminds us of God working among the nations), then we can feel comfortable viewing it. If we cannot thank God for it, then we are probably better off not watching it.³

Is it a trespass?

Experts on the media often say, “If the product is free, then the product is really you”. Many TV programs are available for free to viewers, who are then subjected to advertising. The viewer is the “product,” who is “sold” to the advertisers. As a result, programming on those channels is deliberately designed to encourage people to keep viewing so that they will be exposed to more advertising. The strategies that TV producers employ to keep people watching for as long as possible are numerous. Dramas and reality shows build up excitement about some revelation in plot that does not occur until the end of the show or in “next week’s episode”. News shows mention interesting upcoming segments at the beginning of a broadcast but then do not play them until the very end of the program. TV channels air tantalizing advertisements for the program coming up next so that viewers are tempted to stay in front of the TV longer.

TV is addictive by design. Its ability to steal so much of time is one of the greatest dangers that it poses to believers. Sins were not the only type of wrongdoing that the Israelites could commit under the Law. They could also commit “trespasses,” which were violations of the property of another, including God.⁴

It is noteworthy that a leper had to offer a trespass offering under the Law when he was healed (Lev 14:1-2, 10-14). The reason was that he had not been able to render service to God during the time in which he had had the disease. The requirement that a healed leper offer a trespass offering is a powerful reminder that God owns our time. He expects us to use it in service to Him.

TV can steal time that we owe to God. There are many activities that bring glory to God that we excuse ourselves from on the grounds that we are already too busy. But when we are assessing our schedule and how full it is, we should consider whether TV watching is taking away an hour, or two, or more a day. What if we reclaimed that time? How much more could we do?

A related danger of TV watching is that it can lull us into a comfortable stupor of complacency. There are Bible classes to teach, Sunday School classes to lead, preaching campaigns to join, ecclesial websites to create and update, and meeting halls to repair. Not only are there quite obvious activities that need to be done, but there are also opportunities to engage in the “house-to-house” ministry that was so essential to Paul’s preaching and ecclesia-building work (Acts 20:20). Those opportunities can go unnoticed if we are not actively looking for them. We have struggling people in our ecclesias who are in need of a call or a note, distant friends in the Truth who would love to hear from us, and interested friends that we need

to follow up with. Great men and women of faith in the Bible did not just strive to meet the obvious requirements of service to God. Instead, they thought about how they could do more. TV can distract us and blind us to the many pressing needs that are all around us.

Practical advice

Faithful individuals in the Bible recognized the importance of being careful about what they saw. Job made a covenant with his eyes (Job 31:1). David “*set no wicked thing*” before his eyes (Psa 101:3).

Some believers find the temptations associated with TV to be too great and choose not to have one in their homes. Others insist on having the Bible Readings done before the TV is turned on. Some limit their exposure to advertisements and reduce the amount of time they spend watching TV by recording programs that are worthwhile and then skipping past the commercials. Believers considering getting rid of their TV but who are reluctant to do so because of one appropriate program that they enjoy watching, may want to consider placing a stationary bike in front of the TV and resolving to only watch it while riding the bike. This approach ensures that there is some benefit associated with time spent watching TV. Since a bike can only be ridden for so long, it also places limitations on the amount of TV that can be watched. In summary, what we watch and how much of it we watch has bearing on our life in Christ. We are admonished to think on things which are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (Phil 4:8). We can have an easier time doing that if we exercise control over the scenes that we allow into our minds. Spending time in front of the TV can result in us committing sins and trespasses. We need to be thoughtful and keep the Scripture’s teachings in mind when considering whether we should have a TV and, if so, what programs are appropriate for us to watch.

Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

1. For example, which is more powerful — a description of a terrified child or a video of one?
2. Can you describe the scene in Ezekiel 1 in detail? (Don’t cheat.) Now can you name the show time, channel, and the main characters of a sitcom or the key contestants in a reality show?
3. For an elaboration on this point, see page 125 of Brother Alfred Nicholls’ book, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*.
4. The Bible provides a catalogue of trespasses in Lev 5:14-6:7. There was an offering under the Law for trespasses. Lev 5-7 provide the details of what it entailed.

Modesty — From the Mouths of Brothers



The first part of this article is an introduction to the subject of modesty, including some answers to common questions on this subject. The second part of the article is comprised of quotes from young brothers about what is modest and what isn’t, how immodesty affects them, and encouraging young women to pursue holiness in the way they dress.

Why talk about clothing?

Since the Bible so often portrays holiness as an inner quality, why should we also give attention to the way we dress? Doesn't the Bible say in 1Sam 16:7 that "*man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart*"? This subject isn't as superficial as we might think. We see throughout Scripture that although our hearts are undoubtedly important, our outward clothing can please or displease God by reflecting what is in our hearts, and by how it affects those around us.

I could write an entire article about clothing in Scripture. The Bible doesn't waste space or give useless details — and in multiple cases, it gives us information about the outward adornment of the people we read about. God looks on the heart, but He is clearly also paying attention to the outward ways in which we express our hearts! In many cases, the Bible mentions clothing because it had a significant impact on the other people in the story. Our clothes can affect those around us in multiple ways; however, I'd like to focus particularly on the way that our clothing, especially women's clothing, can affect others sexually. Here are just two examples: in Gen 38, Tamar sought to have the duty of the next of kin fulfilled, and she used clothing to trick Judah into honoring his promise; her clothing communicated to him that she was a harlot. Similarly, in Prov 7, we are told that the woman who seduced the young man was married, but she was wearing "*the attire of an harlot*" (Prov 7:10). These women each dressed like a harlot (or prostitute) for different reasons, but they were both communicating the same thing with their clothing: that they were sexually available. And in each story, the man involved takes the bait.

Not even a hint

Most girls we meet in the ecclesia, CYC, or at Bible school aren't actually trying to advertise sexual availability with their clothes. Instead, many are simply caught up in the habit of dressing the way the world says a normal young woman should dress. Instead of being holy, or separate from the world, it's all too easy to find ourselves disobeying the Bible's instructions for women to be modest.

1Tim 2:9 tells women to "*dress modestly, with decency and propriety*" (NIV). Though this verse applies to more than just sexual modesty, it shows that God cares about our clothing and the impact it can have on others. However, after reading this, we might still be wondering how much this instruction really matters to us personally. It's worth noting that the Greek verb commonly used for "sin" or "trespass" in the New Testament is *hamartano* (Strong's 264), and means "to miss the mark", with the implications of someone who has wandered from their goal or didn't hit the target they were supposed to be aiming for. When we think about what is right and wrong in God's sight, we're not trying to avoid what we might see as the "big sins" in life — we're trying to hit God's mark or target, the standard He has set for us in *every* area of our lives. He also encourages us to try our very best to help others to do the same. What is the "mark" that God has set for our clothing? Consider the following verses:

"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt 5:28).

“Do not cause anyone to stumble...” (1Cor 10:32 NIV).

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity...” (Eph 5:3 NIV).

Based on these verses, can you be living a seemingly “pure” life, but still be “missing the mark” in the area of your sexuality? Scripture says that you can, if you are causing others to stumble in any way. Prov 5:18-19 commands every Godly man to enjoy the body of only one woman: his wife. That’s the only kind of sexual fulfillment to which God gives His blessing. This means that God’s purpose for each of us, as women, is to only captivate one man with our bodies — our husbands. Anything other than that would be contrary to God’s design. So why do we sometimes dress as if we’re trying to captivate every man who sees us? We may be just trying to be pretty, or fashionable, or just dressing how we feel comfortable, but we can still “miss the mark” by showing too much of our bodies to the men around us.

Brothers are responsible for resisting the temptation to look at immodestly dressed women, because they’re trying to obey verses like *“whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt 5:28)* and *“I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman” (Job 31:1 NIV)*. But human nature makes it difficult for a man to make righteous choices when he is in the presence of temptation, and James 1:14-15 teaches us that it’s very difficult to stop the process of sin once temptation has occurred. Unfortunately, for spiritual men, this kind of visual temptation happens everywhere, every day: at high school and college; on billboards as they’re driving down the highway; while walking past stores at the mall; in the pop-up and sidebar ads on the Internet. Our brothers in Christ are being bombarded! But when they spend time with us, where they should be safer from the temptations of the world, sometimes we’re showing them all the same things because of the clothing choices we make.

What does the Bible say about this? We’ve already read 1Cor 10:32 (NIV), which tells us, *“Do not cause anyone to stumble”*. What an uncomfortable commandment for those of us who have been fooled into thinking that dressing immodestly is just fashion, or just being comfortable, or just looking feminine! Eph 5:3 (NIV) pushes us even further out of our comfort zone, telling us: *“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity”*. Our goal for purity is not just to avoid premarital sex — it’s not even a hint of any kind of impurity. Does your clothing hint at sexual immorality?

Questions and answers

Whenever this subject is discussed, certain objections almost always come up. Even if they’re not voiced out loud, it’s understandable that there be questions about an issue like this. Here are a few that might have come to your mind in the past.

“Is all this talk about modesty just about hiding the fact that we’re female? Why are we so negative about beauty?”

Although God implores us in 1Pet 3:3-4 to be more concerned with our inner characteristics than our outer beauty, He also provides a consistent Biblical theme of appreciating external beauty, *if it is connected with a godly character*. Sarah was

so beautiful that Abraham was afraid that other men would kill him to have her. We're told that Rebekah was very beautiful and chaste. Esther is the Bible character who perhaps did the most good with her beauty. There are more examples, but on top of that, God Himself is described in undeniable splendor and beauty in the Bible — in Rev 4, He is described as looking like beautiful jewels, with rainbows and fire. The ecclesia is described as a beautiful city, and Psalms 45:11 depicts us as a bride, with Christ greatly desiring our beauty! It's only fitting that we join with our Father in appreciating physical beauty. Modesty is not about looking down on beauty — it's about the sexuality of your clothing and behavior, what you're displaying and what you're keeping hidden.

How about hiding the fact that we're female — is that what modesty is about? Not at all. Modesty is about protecting people from being sexually captivated or distracted by our bodies, not about trying to look androgynous! This principle about our responsibility to protect our brethren is illustrated well in the Law of Moses, with one example shown in Deut 22:8 (NKJV), which says: *"When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it."* Why were you supposed to build a guardrail? Not to hide the fact that you have a roof, but because you were responsible for protecting people from falling off of it. Modesty is no more about hiding the fact that you're female, than building a guardrail is about hiding the fact that you have a roof. The purpose of the guardrail is so that no one falls off the roof and dies, bringing guilt upon the homeowner; and one purpose of modesty is to prevent men from "falling" on account of your uncovered body.

"But won't some men lust after me no matter what I wear?"

Yes, of course — just like some men will jump off a roof, despite the fact that the homeowner has carefully built a guardrail around it. The guardrail will not prevent someone who intends to deliberately jump off of a roof, in the same way that you cannot control the thoughts of all men, regardless of how modestly you dress. The guardrail is there to keep people that don't want to jump from falling. The reason we cover up is not only for our own purity and obedience to God's commands — it's to help the men who don't want to lust.

"It's not my problem if men are lusting after me! Isn't it their responsibility to control their minds?"

There is truth to this — we are all responsible for what we allow ourselves to think about.

However, remember the guardrail commandment in Deut 22:8. The message of this verse is that we need to look out for the spiritual safety of those around us! Also consider that we've just seen that the Bible commands us not to cause anyone to stumble into sin. James 4:17 takes this idea even further: *"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."* Not to help someone, when it is in our power to do so, is one way that we can "miss the mark" of God's standard for us. If your friend was on a special heart-healthy diet, should you bring her a bacon cheeseburger every day? When we wear clothing that accentuates,

draws attention to, or highlights the feminine parts of our bodies, it's like wearing a flashing neon sign pointed right at the very thing that godly men are trying to avoid. Guys can resist the temptation to lust, but when we dress immodestly, it makes it very difficult for them to do so.

If we're feeling uncomfortable with the standard of God's word, we need to be honest with ourselves — do we have a modesty problem, or a love problem? Because we've already seen that if we love our brothers, we will help them as much as we can. The Bible says that we are supposed to be laying down our lives for each other! The least we can do is wear a camisole under a low V-neck shirt, or a modest tank top instead of a bikini at the beach. Furthermore, when we truly love God and Jesus, we obey them. Their teachings might be hard to swallow, but we still follow them, as Jesus says:

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21).

“How can I tell what's modest and what isn't?”

This question can be likened to asking: “How tall does the guardrail around my roof need to be?” Some people judge this choice by asking, “How low can I make the rail and still fulfill the requirements?” While others ask the better question: “How tall should the rail be so that it will protect those on the roof?”

To help answer this question, I sought the counsel of CYC-aged brothers who were willing to describe for me what is helpful, and what isn't, when it comes to the clothing choices of their sisters. I hope that you find their words convicting and encouraging.

Modesty — from the mouths of Brothers

The quotes in this section were gathered from baptized Christadelphian brothers from across North America, aged 18-30, through an e-mail survey. They agreed to have their words used with the hope that it might help their sisters understand their struggle, and to encourage their sisters to godliness. Each new paragraph is a new quote.

“Modesty is an issue that is firstly between the sister and God. Nevertheless, God in His wisdom knows that modesty is important for a sister who is looking to help preserve the purity of her brothers — ‘in order to stir up love and good works,’ as opposed to stirring up lust and passion.”

“When you make the effort to dress modestly, you show love. Think of it this way — if someone has an addiction to something, like smoking, do you help them by always showing them cigarettes? It's the same with modesty. God made men to be visually stimulated, but He also calls every man to keep his eyes only for their wife. Do you think you are being loving when you parade your body like any other girl in the world?”

“I'm bombarded every day by girls in the world with their careless dress. The ecclesia and CYC should be a safe haven. A CYC night or study weekend can

be made so much better by the presence of thoughtful girls who care enough to dress modestly.”

“For obvious reasons, you don’t want to end up in a relationship with a guy who thinks first about your body. But you can invite that by how you dress — you teach people how to treat you by the way you present yourself.”

“Dress that shows too much skin and leaves little to the imagination (but as such, only prompts imagination) is very distracting to most males. I think girls should look to attract their partners by displaying their inward qualities such as humor, compassion, caring, kindness, generosity, etc. If they put that vibe out there, then young men who are seeking a lifelong partner in the Truth will find them.”

“Even though I can control my eyes, it’s hard to talk to a girl when their clothes are putting me at a disadvantage for purity — like a neon sign pointing at something I know I should avoid. It’s uncomfortable. Please don’t put your brothers in that situation!”

“The parts of your body that are private should stay that way. Don’t show too much of anything exciting! It’s the see-through / short / plunging stuff that does the damage.”

“In terms of specifics, I think spaghetti straps, visible bellies, short shorts, and V-necks that go way too low, are definitely NOT modest! I think often girls think this will attract boys to make them think they are pretty. This may bring some attention, but not positive attention... if anything, you are possibly causing us to sin, and that WILL get our attention, but not in a good way for you or us.”

“In simple practical terms I think one can look to the world to see what should be avoided — short, tight, thin, etc. styles of clothing that are designed to allure and glorify the body first and foremost. A sister will not be able to prevent the thoughts of lust and desire in a brother, but she can actively attempt to find out how best to stifle some of them in how she presents herself.”

“The typical areas that are going to cause visual distraction to guys are: legs, stomach, bust. So clothing that is tight and shows it ‘without showing it’, or clothing that is loose that can allow for glimpses, are two things that can be troublesome. The ideal thing would be if the guy can just ‘not look’. And we will try to do that, but we make mistakes. And so if we are going to slip up, it is always helpful to know that you all have our backs as well.”

“Obviously we (brothers) understand it’s not easy for the sisters to be modest (it’s probably hard to even find modest clothing to buy these days!!), but please do your best for yourselves, for us and most importantly for the honor of our Heavenly Father.”

“It is incredibly encouraging to see sisters fight what the world says is important and do what is right in God’s eyes. Plus, when sisters dress modestly, it makes the lives of brothers in an ecclesial setting a lot easier, and personally, it encourages me when I see that they are striving to be righteous.”

“It really all comes down to faith: are you going to trust the world’s method of attracting a guy? (which, admittedly, totally makes sense. You attract bees with honey right?) Or are you going to trust in God’s method of attracting a guy? (which, as oftentimes God’s way does, doesn’t seem as likely to work). The way you dress shows where your faith is. Make sure you are putting it in God.”

“What would I say to encourage sisters who are trying to be modest in an immodest world? Thank you! After the barrage of temptation that this world throws out at you, the comfort of a refuge from the things of the world is SUCH a blessing. It is possible to look attractive and presentable without being immodest. I am not talking about being frumpy... there is a lot of scope for a young sister to attract the eye of the brethren without ‘putting it out there.’ ”

“To girls who make an effort to dress modestly: thank you. Thank you, thank you! Because of who you are, and the faith it takes to sincerely flee youthful lusts, forsaking the short season of pleasure this world offers, and instead seeking a godly (and more self-sacrificing) way, you are the friends I look forward to talking to at memorial meeting, Bible schools, and youth weekends: distraction-free. Your character shines a beauty that is precious in the sight of God, and also in the sight of brethren who seek to think like Him. Thank you!”

“Be modest and then you will be beautiful.”

Tara Laben (Baltimore, MD)

The Writing is on the Wall: Facebook and the Christadelphians



Facebook had 845 million independent users by the end of December 2011. — 12% of the world’s entire population. Comparatively, only 9% of the world owns a car. 155 million Americans — over 50% of the United States’ popula-

tion — have a Facebook account. The same percentage holds true in Canada with 17 million Facebook users, ticking slightly over half their population. It is my educated estimate that we are nearing 20,000 Christadelphians on Facebook worldwide, and easily 2,500-3,000 in the US and Canada. I would not be surprised if the actual numbers far outstripped those estimates.

These are facts that have to be dealt with. As a community, our biggest mistake when it comes to Facebook is treating it as a passing fad. Facebook is here to stay. There have been other “social networking” sites that have come and gone, but not since the advent of e-mail itself has there been a larger shift in how the Internet is used and how it affects our lives, than the one Facebook has created. We need to treat this phenomenon as real and important, whether or not Facebook itself survives. The observable influence of this form of networking leads to the conclusion that Facebook is here to stay, at least for now, and therefore, we as individuals and ecclesias need to know how best to respond.

Avoiding a double life

A “double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8) is a stern warning for us on this topic. Christadelphians need to be the same people in their lives as they are on Facebook. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we should be proactively using Facebook as a personal and ecclesial in-reach and outreach tool.

Facebook has done a fascinating thing by being both a representation of yourself that you can control, and also a representation of yourself that your Facebook friends define. Tagging is what Facebook users do to their pictures or posts and, by tagging other people, it shows up on their Facebook profiles for their friends to see — effectively allowing you to see what someone is doing with their friends, when you don’t actually know their friends. This means that Facebook has become a look into how the user defines themselves, as well as how others define them. (That being said, this has already started changing as more and more people figure out how to use their privacy controls to protect some things from being public knowledge. This means that you could very well not be seeing everything on someone’s Facebook that they allow others to see.)

This voyeurism that comes out of being “Facebook friends” with so many people leads us to knowing more about that person than they would want us to know.

It’s a story you may have heard before: “Did you see the Facebook pictures of what so-and-so did last weekend?” “Can you believe the words so-and-so had on their status?”

It presents a massive challenge for a follower of God’s ways who is concerned for the individual in question, an individual who may even be a Brother or Sister. What right did we have to this information? How should we react to a seemingly sinful admission or picture on Facebook? Scriptural principle is clear, if not definitive.

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:1-5 ESV).

The hardest part is to not overstep our bounds of whatever level of relationship is already established. Seeing a person you care about on Facebook making decisions that may seem at first glance to be wrong, and even under further investigation prove indeed to be so, is incredibly disheartening. Having close relationships with some friends allows us to reach out and help and encourage them. However, this should not be via a Facebook post for the entire world to see. Facebook allows us an unusual glimpse into what our friends are thinking about and going through. It also allows us to react quickly with help and support.

But what about the Facebook friend who is not so close? What about our Christadelphian ‘friends’ who post things that are spiritually wrong? Because of the ‘faux-proximity’ of Facebook, these friends may appear closer to us than they really are.

Should we ignore the postings? The Apostle Paul never shied away from offering help no matter what the distance was between him and his friends. It seems that even with distant Facebook friends we can *gently* offer a listening ear and spiritual advice. We should keep the level of our already established relationship in mind, and contact them privately as opposed to posting publicly. As we see in the verse below from the epistle of James, Facebook helps us ‘take note’ of a problem and gives us an opportunity to help.

*“My brethren! If one among you be led to err from the truth, and one turn him back, **By ye taking note** — that, he that turneth back a sinner out of the error of his way — will save his soul out of death, and hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20 Rotherham’s).*

It’s different with our less spiritually committed friends and acquaintances. Unless you already have a close relationship with that person, what benefit will there be in attempting to correct them, and in this context? (1Cor 9:19-23). Being someone’s Facebook friend does not mean we have the relationship necessary for corrective action. However, it should serve as encouragement to find some way to grow closer to that individual.

Because of the unusual access and closeness Facebook provides, it is key to have humility and love in our perspective when trying to help an individual. After we see something on Facebook, remember the principles in Jesus’ words:

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matt 18:15-17 ESV).

It is also important to gather the context from Matt 18, as the next few verses deal with the “limitations” of forgiveness.

“Then Peter came up and said to him, ‘Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times’” (Matt 18:21-22 ESV).

Once we do have a real relationship with someone, forgiveness and love are so important to bear in mind when reacting to something we see on Facebook, just as in face-to-face interactions.

Turning the table on the conversation, maybe we are the ones going out of our way to keep something off Facebook. We’d prefer to avoid any questions of our improperly justified actions. This is also not a good place to be in. We need to have the “same mind” as Christ, referred to in Philippians. With half of the people that live in our country on Facebook, we had better be sure that our virtual lives are shining lights in the darkness.

Is your ecclesia a “place” and do you hold “Events”?

It bears repeating at this point: one of every two people you meet has a Facebook page. There are as many Facebook users in the United States as there are males. When Paul preached to the towns he went to, he entered into the synagogues (Acts 14:1, 17:1, 19:8). When he preached, he went to where the people were. Facebook is where we need to go, individually and ecclesially, to share the gospel.

There are a number of ways we can do this as ecclesias:

- It is easy to make a Page for your ecclesia; you can even attach a location. Then, when all your members “Like” the Page, they can “check-in” when they arrive at the meeting. What a witness this could become! Our ecclesias should be places that people want to come, and having a Facebook Page adds a sort of legitimacy and relevance that is valuable.
- Events are another excellent tool that is available to our ecclesias. Young people are already widely creating Events to spread the word about Bible Schools, Weekends, and CYC Events, but Facebook is not limited to young people. 43% of Facebook users are above 35, and it’s the fastest growing age group on Facebook (www.socialbaker.com). Public Lectures and Study Days lend themselves perfectly to Events, and current members can be invited and easily, unobtrusively invite their friends.
- Facebook has a very easy to use advertising program where you can advertise to users in specific zip codes and/or with specific interests. The best feature of “Ads” is they are “Pay-per-click”, which means you usually are not charged for the advertisement until someone sees it AND clicks it. A click is generally between 0.4 cents and 0.7 cents.

To give an example of how these strategies might work in a practical sense, the Simi Hills ecclesia has a Facebook Page, and we recently purchased an ad for an upcoming Event to be held at our hall. We were able to advertise to the 85,000 Facebook users in Simi Valley, California (which has a population of 110,000). We had 15 people register for the event, 200 people see our Page because of the advertisement, and 70,000 of the Facebook users in Simi Valley saw the advertisement an average of 14 times. Simi Hills’ Facebook ad was shown over 980,000 times and cost a little over \$300. This effort did not yield any attendance, even after the 15 sign-ups. But, we had a rare rainy day in California and are happy with the results of the ad campaign regardless.

Facebook, along with a standard website, should be a key component of your ecclesia’s outreach program. Having an easily accessible public presence adds credence and legitimacy that should make your ecclesia more approachable. With so many people on Facebook, it is where your ecclesias needs to have a presence that is able to be found by any who are searching.

What’s the writing on your wall?

The intrinsic problem with Facebook, social media, and the Internet is that it’s far too easy to put up a representation of ourselves that is not true. How we fill out our “Info” and the words we choose to use in our comments might be misleading.

Where a major loss could occur is when we lose appeal and/or accessibility for others. If a person who is viewing our Facebook needs help, advice, guidance, or just friendship, and we have been off-putting by harsh-words, or maybe a “false” over-spiritualization of our Facebook information, we have not done the good we intend. The goal for our individual Facebook pages should be to keep them true to who we are, and to maintain them as lampstands to show the Light of Christ.

It is too easy to slip into negativity when we are in the comfort of our own computers. There are many conversations, on individuals’ Facebook pages or in groups of believers, which can so quickly degrade to useless slander, and are not uplifting for anyone. When the consequences of face-to-face reaction are removed, it is remarkable how badly a loving brother or sister with good intentions can miss the mark in their quickly written words. James chapter three’s condemnation of the power of the tongue surely also applies to the power of the fingers on the keyboard.

Be honest and true to what you believe, and do not be deterred from showing that on your Facebook. It is a new tool, a new community, and a new place that the Gospel needs to be spread to by those who love our dear Lord.

Levi Gelineau (Simi Hills, CA)

A College Advisory for Christadelphian Young People



Introduction

A number of years ago we compiled a college advisory list to inform Christadelphian young people about the location of colleges and universities in proximity to ecclesias in the United States. Although not updated recently, the idea was and is to encourage those choosing to go to college to choose active ecclesial involvement as well.

Fellowship deprivation at any stage of life is spiritually harmful, and especially so at the crossroads of youth. Young adulthood is a time of great potential. The college years can be a time of profound personal development, propelling one into a lifetime of service to Christ. It can be a time when minds are sharpened and skills honed, equipping them to present the gospel to others with confidence. It can also be a time of crippling personal struggle, when hope falters and the fire of faith burns low.

In addition, if at all possible, choose a college where there are other Christadelphians, either staff or students. Some of the greatest joys possible in your spiritual life will be to associate with others who are like-minded in this most exciting and stimulating period of your life.¹

Parents plan for their child’s future from birth. For a Christadelphian family, preparation is made with the Kingdom in view. Our distinctive Scriptural values give our children the foundation for their future. Spiritual preparedness helps them in every way, including academic preparedness. Youth seminars and resource

websites have been developed to help young people face the challenge of living in a godless society.² Transitioning from home to the potentially toxic environment of college and the larger world is a significant watershed in a young person's life.

Back in the sixties, Bro. Alfred Nicholls wrote *Youth at the Crossroads*.³ He described a crossroads: the "Tri-via," the intersection of "three ways." The current road (childhood) ends and the journey forward goes in one of two directions. Destinations are signposted and choices must be made. At the Tri-via, as at college, people meet to exchange ideas, to enjoy the excitement and entertainment. "Triviales" describes one who lingers in pursuits of little or no value.

"The crossroads of youth," writes Bro. Nicholls, "is an exciting and dangerous place. Here are obtained the first glimpses of what life has to offer, the merchandise of goods and ideas of every kind. Here can be found the equipment and the traveling companions for the rest of the journey." College sounds much like this, a place with potential for help or harm. Coming to "linger" leads to ruin; coming with purpose, reading the signposts carefully and moving Kingdom-bound, leads to success.

Eccl 4:12 offers the image of a strong rope: an attacker might prevail against one who is alone, *"two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken"*. The message is that alone, a person can be overcome, two people may withstand an attack but with three is strength. Leaving home and facing the Tri-via of college can be difficult, but with caring adults and a supportive ecclesia, these experiences can be intellectually profitable and spiritually rewarding and even more so if you can share these experiences with other Christadelphians on campus.

To the student

Young people come "with the desire to live their lives free from adult control or nagging interference, to be real people in their own right," says Bro. Nicholls. "It is impossible not to feel the thrill and excitement at this crossroads... It is the age of resilience, when bodily knocks and fatigue are quickly thrown off and anything in the world is possible. In the best young people are mingled fierce idealism, courage, a passionate sympathy for the underdog, spontaneous generosity, quickness of imagination."⁴

If you have been raised in a Christ-centered home, you have the foundation and framework from which to build a solid life. From a child you have been taught to love God, to pray and to have J-O-Y by putting Jesus first, others next and yourself last. You have learned the first principles of faith, *"...be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"* (Rom 12:2). It is time to prove the worth of all you've learned. And if you have had a troubled family life, now is the time for God-guided change so that you can move forward. Acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths (Prov 3:6).

Be honest with yourself

Have you had a good education in the Truth? What can you do to up the ante in your spiritual life? God's Word is a light to your path and a lamp so that you

don't stumble (Psa 119:105). There is darkness in the world; if we are honest with ourselves, we admit there is darkness in ourselves. If you have subconsciously thought, "I know it's a party school but...", have you considered the downside? Living for the moment, letting morals go unchecked, and acting as if God doesn't know, can destroy idealism and, worse yet, destroy hope. That's too big a price to pay.

Honest self-examination takes discipline and is easily avoided. We often hear our inner voice saying, "*God has forgotten, He's not looking and He will never see*" (Psa 10:11). There will be times and circumstances, often influenced by the people we're with, when this inner voice is loudest. What does it take to shout down the voice of doubt? Holding yourself accountable is the first step. Talk to close friends in the Truth and your parents; seek fellowship in the ecclesia so that you remember the one who is "*the way, the truth and the life.*"

If you have not been baptized, this needs to be the subject of your most honest inner dialogue. Baptism is the anchor decision. We have "*a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place...*" (Heb 6:19 ESV). Choose to be an ambassador for Christ, the greatest career choice possible.

Talk to Your parents

Pushing for independence is natural and healthy. Parents can get in the way but remember, your independence is their goal too. Be grateful for their love and support, and avail yourself of the benefits of their experience. Having parents who want to support your education is a blessing. Talk to them about your activities, your classes and your grades. It's a smart move since increased accountability will probably boost your efforts!

"*Honor your father and mother*" is now an exercise of free will. It's the one commandment with the promise of inheritance. God is our Father in heaven offering us His kingdom. As you honor God by trusting His promise, so you honor your parents by trusting them. Up until now they have initiated those dreaded "talks" but to really be in the driver's seat, you need to broach subjects like friends, plans, and similar items. What are their expectations and fears? Ask them. Reassure them and give them a chance to tell you how much they love and trust you!

Develop your gifts

College is about increasing your ability to serve God and your neighbor. True? Can developing the power to reason give glory to God? Yes, when developed with humility! "*As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God...that God in all things may be glorified*" (1Pet 4:10-11).

Encountering different viewpoints is not to be feared. Critical thinking can train us to "*rightly divide the word of truth*" (2Tim 2:15). At the age of about 22, Brother Harry Whittaker confessed to "a short period of uncertainty". He began a "reinvestigation of what we rightly call First Principles". The encouraging outcome was that his uncertainty "was effectively laid to rest by (a) much college encounter

with unbelief, and (b) a rigorous re-read of *Christendom Astray*”. Bro. Harry wrote that “As the years have gone by, the solid truth of the Christadelphian faith has become the sheet anchor of my Bible understanding. Lots of encounters with other points of view have left me in no doubt about this. Our Christadelphian faith is the best in the world.”⁵

In a similar fashion, Brother and Sister Styles wrote:

“University can be time-consuming and normally presents to the student a powerful temptation to temporarily slight Bible study and ecclesial activities. This can be spiritual suicide. Study of the Word and ecclesial support must be a part of our lives at all times for when we lost momentum in the Truth, the inertia of fleshly habits is nearly impossible to overcome. In fact, if the young person has difficulty passing exams, he would be well advised to forget about advanced schooling. Such a person can easily be swamped by school studies and have little time left for the far greater benefits of Bible study.”⁶

The fight begins with “flying the flag.” Let your faith be known early. Preaching in college has transformed lives. Hundreds of people have come into the truth because a classmate spoke up! The message of the Gospel is powerful. Speak about it and you will be blessed with stronger faith! Make college the time when your mind is sharpened and your skills honed to preach the word with confidence in season and out of season (2Tim 4:2).

Be part of the ecclesia

The ecclesia will welcome you when you relocate for school. You’ll get invitations to lunch after meeting and rides, maybe even the offer of room and board. Let this receptiveness and generosity flow in both directions. You have decided that a college near an ecclesia is your number one priority; take the plunge and be involved.

Working in the ecclesia means working with people of all ages. Try being a Sunday School teacher and visiting the elderly. The onus is on you to ensure that no generational barriers arise. From your Biblical upbringing you know the importance of giving respect to and learning from the older generation. A media-driven youth culture and the segregation of dorm life can desensitize the appreciation of these first principles; yes, first principles (Lev 19:32).

Living on campus is sometimes regarded as necessary for getting the “whole college experience”. But there are parts of that “whole experience” to be avoided. The greatest danger is “free time” and weekends. These are the periods of greatest temptation. Who will we associate with, what will we do? Would we be better off living off campus? Could we rent a place with other young people who are also committed to living faithfully?

Conclusion

You are equipped to do what is right, to be valiant for the Truth! As you approach the “Tri-via” of college, follow the signpost for the Kingdom and be ready to give

an answer for the hope that is in you (1Pet 3:15). With loving adults and an ecclesia nearby, make the three strand cord strong.

Bill and Carol Link (Baltimore, MD)

Notes:

1. The editor added this paragraph: his time at University stimulated his growth in the Truth enormously, as he was associated with a most spiritual group of young Christadelphians.
2. <http://cycresource.com/index.html>.
3. *Youth at the Crossroads*, A. Nicholls p. 6.
4. *Youth at the Crossroads*, A. Nicholls p. 13.
5. *Five minutes to Twelve*, Harry A. Whittaker.
6. Don and Ellen Styles; *Family Life in the Lord*; P. 226

A Lesson Learned — from a Father and a Son



Introduction

This article is a little bit different than most — rather than a thorough Bible exposition, it is more of a personal testimony. It is the testimony of me and my father, both looking back at my experience in youth sports. Your experience may have been different to mine — but this story is offered in the hope that it might encourage you to look within and to continue to devote your time and energy to God's household. Thus, as you read through these words, may our God bless both you and my father and me as we

together seek to serve Him in sincerity.

The father, Gordon's, thoughts:

Until the day I'm called to the judgment, an August evening in 1987 will stand out as the most memorable day of my life. I had looked forward to being a father for so long and now my dream was coming true. In the days, months, and years that followed I found that being a parent lived up to everything I had imagined it would. I also discovered that my burning desire to be a good father and do the right thing for my child would unfortunately take a wrong turn.

One thing I had always planned for my children was to give them the best opportunities in life that I could possibly provide. Now that my son was here I was even more passionate about giving him every opportunity to have a successful life. Of course I planned to share the Bible with him and pray with him, but in addition I wanted to buy him the best educational toys and enroll him in as many growth-producing activities as I could afford. I was intent on giving him a wonderful spiritual background just as my family had given me, but I also longed to ensure that he had many other positive experiences that I felt I had missed by being born into a poor family.

In the back of my mind there was one thing that seemed to me to be crucial to achieving this goal: I needed to give Jason the chance to experience as many organized sports activities as possible. My obsession with exposing my boy to the world of organized sports really came to life when I signed him up for a youth

soccer league when he was five years old. While I was thrilled with his uniform, organized practices and the excitement of the weekly game, he was bored by everything about it.

But my fixation on providing Jason with athletic opportunities didn't stop with soccer. Next it was Little League baseball. When he wasn't interested in that either, I decided it must be because I hadn't found the right sport yet. So I enrolled him in basketball, karate, tennis, ice skating, and skiing. To give myself the opportunity to share with him in this "wonderful experience," I coached baseball, refereed soccer, and learned to ski.

At the time my "logic" in doing this seemed to me to make a lot of sense. But then several things occurred that began to change my mind. First of all I was shocked by the "win at all costs" attitude of many of the other parents. Next I discovered that the other children were often discouraging to the players who weren't as good. Finally, I was appalled when I realized that some parents were not above cheating to help their child's team win.

Eventually I realized that what I had attempted to do with the best of motives was actually not good for Jason or for me. I had very good intentions to help my son, but I was trying to do it on my terms instead of God's. I slowly realized that what I really needed to do for Jason, to help him be the person God wanted him to be, was to surround him with spiritual things, not sports. But the biggest revelation came when I finally woke up to the fact that I had been trying to live my own life through my child. He didn't care about any of the sports nearly as much as I did. Looking back now I can truthfully say that missing out on all those sports experiences would not have made any difference in his life at all. What had begun as a dream to give my son what I didn't have had turned into a disappointment instead.

One reason I had this dream for my son was because I had convinced myself that being involved in sports would teach him many valuable lessons, have a good influence on him, and make him a better person. But my mistake was in thinking that he needed something beyond what God could give him. Sports could teach him some things that were positive, but they couldn't come close to what was available to Jason by being involved in ecclesial activities. When I finally figured this out, a Christadelphian Boy's Club and CYC replaced the teams he had been on. Instead of wearing a sports uniform, he had a T-shirt that said "Under Construction: Future Man of God". That's what I really wanted him to be all along — a man of God, not an athlete.

Now that I was able to see what was really crucial in helping my child become the kind of man I had wanted him to be, I made getting Jason involved in ecclesial activities my focus. Where I had once planned my Saturdays around soccer games, I now looked forward to the Christadelphian Boy's Club, even though it meant an hour and a half drive to get there. Instead of friends from school spending the night, my wife and I set up sleepovers with boys his age from nearby ecclesias. In place of the crack of the bat against a baseball, there was the rustling of pages in a Bible. These were the experiences that could change a life in a way organized sports never could!

From these good times centered on God, Jason learned all the things I hoped he would learn from sports, and much more. Looking back it seems so odd that I didn't realize sooner that giving my child the best meant putting God in his life as much as possible. When we do that to the level that we really should, there probably won't be much time left for sports. If we expose our children to every ecclesial opportunity available, especially if we live in an area with multiple ecclesias within driving range, we will be hard pressed to keep up with all the items on our schedule even without sports.

When young parents are as motivated as I was to give their child the best they can offer, it's easy to get caught up in what turns out in reality to be the world's ideas of what's important, not God's. Sports are fun and that's all they should be. I've learned that God doesn't care if we're athletic or not. He wants us to be godly, not fast or powerful or agile. He wants the same thing for our children. And when it comes down to it, isn't that what we really want, too?

Gordon Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

Jason's thoughts:

From the time that I entered elementary school to the time when I graduated from sixth grade, my life had been heavily involved in sports. Even today, it's almost shocking to think about all of the different organized sports in which I participated during those six years — I took roller-blading lessons, waterskiing lessons, basketball lessons, tennis lessons, bowling lessons, swimming lessons, archery lessons, and volleyball lessons. I played on a soccer team, joined little league, snow-skied, learned karate, became a gymnast, and was at the top of my class in ice-skating. On Saturdays my family was typically going to one of my games — usually soccer or baseball — but if we weren't doing that, oftentimes my dad would take me to a local school or park in order to help me practice my various skills. *(To be continued)*

Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

And the rest of the thoughts of Bro. Jason Hensley, the son, can be found on *The Tidings* Web site: <http://www.tidings.org/2012/08/a-lesson-learned/>

Though there are numerous allusions, the New Testament has little direct teaching about active participation in sports. The one direct statement comes, appropriately, in the first letter to the young man, Timothy. Its exact meaning is uncertain, but the context is helpful. Timothy seems to have been a not very robust man (1 Tim. 5 : 23),... By no means inclined to thrust himself forward, he seems even at times to have hid his light for fear of giving offence (1 Tim. 4 : 14). With all his gentleness and proneness to shrink from the duty of reproving (2 Tim. 4 : 2),... he was neglectful of his own physical well-being. The Apostle therefore gives him direct advice: "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (1 Tim. 5 : 23). In view of this advice one can hardly think that he was devoting himself too much to "bodily exercise": the Apostle is not, we feel, deprecating it when he says: "Bodily exercise profiteth little" (1 Tim. 4 : 8).

H.A. Twleves, The Christadelphian, P 1952, p 323 .

Section 2 — Our Citizenship is not of this World

And Why Shouldn't I Vote?



A Christian's (or, in this case, a Christadelphian's) relationship to this present world is not an easy subject to consider. Our convictions run in many contradictory directions, from those few who feel it is our obligation to be involved in the democratic process of the country in which we live (and boast openly of their involvement through voting and political action), to those who feel strongly that ecclesial discipline should be applied to those who violate ecclesial rules about participating with

the world around them (whether it is voting, education at worldly institutions, dating, or similar involvement). Most brothers and sisters find themselves somewhere in-between: they would not vote in a national election, but are not quite so sure about local elections. They would not become a criminal lawyer, but they are sometimes unsure whether to serve as a juror. They would not serve in the military, but what about civilian employment with the FBI or some other federal agency fighting crime? They would not join a political or social activist organization to pressure political or social change, but they wonder whether being part of a union might be problem, especially when the union confronts their employer to fight for their rights and wages.

Why do these dilemmas arise for those seeking to faithfully follow the Lord Jesus Christ?

The Bible – A guidebook, not a rule book

As much as we may wish God gave us clear, black-and-white rules to direct our lives, He hasn't. Instead, He has given us a guidebook of principles for our direction. Principles by their very nature are not as easy to follow as rules, because the application of these principles to the circumstances of our particular life and age must be worked out by us. There is plenty of room for rationalization and human thinking.

Consider Daniel: he was not the only young Jewish man brought to Babylon for a special education in the ways and learning of the Chaldeans. Yet, as far as we know, it was only Daniel and his three friends who sought exemption from the defilement inherent in the foods provided. How easily he could have rationalized his position: Nobody will know. And does it really matter if I eat unclean food? After all, I am in a foreign land and I can't expect them to respect my Jewish upbringing. Apparently, many other Jewish youths followed this thinking. Why didn't Daniel? Perhaps the answer has something to do with the course such rationalization sets one on: If eating defiling foods is not a problem, then, perhaps, dropping for a month the habit of praying to God three times a day won't be such a big deal. After

all, we do need to show a loving spirit and not antagonize the other administrators? But where does this stop? When our faith towards God is the final casualty?

Perhaps this is why God also provided in His guidebook many examples how these principles were once worked out in the lives of others, both of those who were faithful and of those who thought they knew a better way. We have the advantage, then, of seeing the results, and, often, of being spared their pain, if we are willing to learn from these examples.

Principles bearing on a disciple's relationship to the world

There would seem to be two sets of principles that have the strongest and most direct bearing on a disciple's relationship to the nation of their birth and to the world in general:

- 1) Principles regarding our relationship to God and His Kingdom; and
- 2) Principles underlying the life of Christ.

Historically, it was these two principles that guided the Christians of the first and second centuries. Gibbon, a historian of repute, in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," had this to say of the early Christians:

"The defense of our persons and property they knew not how to reconcile with the patient doctrine which enjoined an unlimited forgiveness of past injuries... Their simplicity was offended by the use of oaths, by the pomp of magistracy, and by the active contention of public life; nor could their humane ignorance be convinced that it was lawful on any occasion to shed the blood of our fellow-creatures, either by the sword of injustice or that of war, even though their criminal or hostile attempts should threaten the peace and safety of the whole community. It was acknowledged that, under a less perfect law, the powers of the Jewish constitution had been exercised, with the approbation of Heaven... The Christians felt and confessed that such institutions might be necessary for the present system of the world, and they cheerfully submitted to the authority of their Pagan governors. But while they inculcated the maxims of passive obedience, they refused to take any active part in the civil administration or the military defense of the empire... it was impossible that the Christians, without renouncing a more sacred duty, could assume the character of soldiers, of magistrates, or of princes. This indolent, or even criminal disregard to the public welfare, exposed them to the contempt and reproaches of the Pagans, who very frequently asked, what must be the fate of the empire, attacked on every side by the barbarians, if all mankind should adopt the pusillanimous sentiments of the new sect?"¹

We will only look at the first of these principles in this article and the next, as it is felt this is the dominant principle at work, though brethren often use the second as the basis of their arguments. Space does not allow a thorough contemplation of the passages that provide guidance on this subject. The reader is encouraged to follow up their study using the link provided at the end of this article.² This link will lead to a fuller consideration of the Bible passages that address these issues.

A Christian's dilemma

The successful functioning of any nation-state depends on four things — some kind of governance structure, a system to administer and enforce the laws, provision for protection and defense, and a system to support and maintain the State. In a democracy, where the functioning of the state depends on the people, duties within each of these areas must be undertaken by the citizens; they are, in reality, extensions of the State.

A Christian believer, then, is not only confronted with the expected conflicts of living within a political structure, he is also confronted with the requirement to participate in that structure. Consider the following difficulties or conflicts that may arise for a follower of Christ:

Governance of the State (governing & law-making structures to create order and purpose)

- voting
- political action/political involvement
- public service or government work

Enforcement of the Laws of the State (administration of justice, maintenance of order)

- law enforcement work (e.g. police, FBI)
- judicial work (e.g. magistrates, judges, lawyers)
- jury service

Protection & Defense of the State

- military service
- non-combatant service

Support and Maintenance of the State

- taxes

Living in a State

- use of the legal systems
- giving testimony in court, taking an oath, pledge of allegiance, loyalty oaths
- insurance
- union membership

Those seeking to follow Christ ought to have no argument about the obligation of all citizens to participate in the support and maintenance of their state, for will not this be the privilege of all the saints in the Kingdom? The question that must be answered then is this: Ought followers of Christ to consider themselves *now* to be citizens of the states in which they were born, with all the obligations this entails? Or does the teaching of Christ require a different path be taken?

The critical principle

"I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom you have given me... Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world..."

While I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name... But now I come to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (John 17:9-16 NJKV).

This is the vital principle (v.16): The disciples of Jesus must be *in* the world, but they are not to be *of* the world. Daniel’s behavior illustrates powerfully what this means in tangible, human terms. Loyalty to God — to the One to whom we belong, and to His ways — *must* take precedent over the commands of the world in which we find ourselves.

In Abraham’s day this principle went by another name:

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God... These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb 11:8-10,13).

That’s the principle’s other name: “strangers and pilgrims” or sojourners; living in the world, but claiming no part of it as their own. Rather, passionately and faithfully looking forward to the place, to the city, to the country, to the world God would establish — to the kingdom of God on this earth!

Compromise would have been so easy for Abraham too. He could easily have settled in to this new country, found a nice home and raised his family. He didn’t need to wander around, living in a tent all his life. But Abraham didn’t see it that way. His decision to live the way he did became *the Statement of his Faith*.

It is on the basis of *this* principle that we do not participate in politics or voting, in serving on juries or in the military. It is not a Christadelphian rule; it is literally the statement of *our* faith! As Heb 13:14 says: “*for here we have (like Abraham) no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.*”

Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

Notes:

1. Ch. 15, end of section 4 of his discussion on the progress of Christian Religion.
2. See on *The Tidings* Web site : <http://www.tidings.org/2012/08/relation-to-the-world/>

Our interest in world affairs in relation to God’s purpose is a natural and proper one, but it exposes us to peculiar dangers. If we see a nation engaged in persecution of the Jews, say, or in repudiation of religion as a whole, we may be tempted to arrogate to it some part in prophecy which might be difficult to prove, and we are entitled to make reference to the warning, “Him that curseth thee I will curse.”

A.D. Norris The Christadelphian, p 1963, p 313.

Christadelphians and Politics

BASF Clause 35



As a child growing up in a Christadelphian household, I always had trouble understanding the Christadelphian view of politics. Not that I didn't understand what the Christadelphians taught about politics: that's always been fairly clear. The Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith's 35th clause in the "Doctrines to be rejected" sums it up rather nicely:

"That we are at liberty to serve in the army, or as police constables, take part in politics, or recover debts by legal coercion."

But, what I didn't understand was *why* we had this view of politics. It certainly didn't seem to agree with what I was reading in the Old Testament. Most of my Bible heroes were my Bible heroes because they did exactly those things forbidden in this clause. I admired Joshua because he led Israel's army in battle against the Caananites. I admired Solomon because he brought wicked people like Adonijah and Shimei to justice. King David didn't only take part in politics; he was the king of the entire nation. If politics were so bad, why were all these Bible characters heavily involved in it?

I really didn't have a good answer for this question that was bouncing around in my head until I decided I wanted to be part of Truth Corps in the summer of 2007. For those of you who don't know, Truth Corps is a program put on by the CBMA, where a team of roughly 6-10 people devote 7 weeks of their summer to preaching God's word throughout the Americas. However, to actually get a spot on this team, you have to do a fair bit of homework, including one-page papers on a variety of subjects, such as "The Olivet Prophecy", "Who Am I", or "The Kingdom of God on Earth".

I figured that last one ("The Kingdom of God on Earth") would probably be the easiest, since while I was growing up, I'd heard class after class on the Kingdom of God. I knew that it would be established on earth when Jesus returned, that it would have Jerusalem as its capital, that it would be full of peace and righteousness, and basically, was a really good thing to look forward to in the future. So, one Saturday, I decided to sit down and get it done. Since, of course, I wanted to this to actually be a Bible-based paper rather than just a compilation of "stuff I'd heard", I pulled up a computer Bible program, searched for every instance of the word "kingdom", and ended up with some passages like this:

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:1-2).

That sounded good. Based on my previous beliefs, I interpreted that to mean that John the Baptist's main message was that the Kingdom of God was coming soon. Of course, "soon" for him was evidently more than 2000 years in the future, but to God, that's only like a couple of days.

“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, ‘Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’ ” (Matt 4:17).

Same idea, except Jesus was preaching the same thing. Evidently, this was an important message.

“Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matt 11:11-12 ESV).

What in the world?

Considering my understanding of the Kingdom of God as a future coming kingdom of peace and righteousness, this made no sense whatsoever. Clearly, Jesus was saying that the Kingdom of God had existed at the very least from the days of John the Baptist until then. And, even more stunningly, he was saying that it was suffering violence, and the violent were taking it by force. That doesn't sound particularly peaceful.

So, I did some more study. And some more study. By the end of the day, despite hours of Bible study, I still hadn't gotten the paper done, although I'd rewritten the first sentence about 20 times. Over the next few weeks, I kept thinking about it, because I still felt I didn't fully understand the Kingdom of God, but I needed to get that paper done to go on Truth Corps. Eventually, things started to coalesce into a clearer picture. As I read more passages about the Kingdom, I came to a great realization: the Kingdom of God that John the Baptist and Jesus were preaching about wasn't just something that was coming in the future. It was also something that existed right then. When they said *“the kingdom of heaven is at hand”*, they didn't mean that it was coming soon. They meant that it was now accessible. Which is why, when Paul wrote to the Colossians, he could say that they were already in the kingdom:

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col 1:12-13).

The way a kingdom works is this: A king gives the orders, and his subjects follow them. So, since anyone who's living a sinful life is following their own sinful desires, in a way, they're living in a kingdom ruled by “Sin”. That's the “power of darkness” that Paul is referring to in Colossians. But, when you become a Christian, you stop following the orders of “Sin”, and start following the orders of Jesus Christ. You've switched kingdoms! Now you're part of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, because you follow his orders, rather than Sin's orders.

If this is sounding familiar, that's because I'm quoting practically every baptism talk I've ever heard. That was my second great realization. What I thought was a “new” understanding of the kingdom of heaven wasn't new at all: it was something that had been implicitly assumed in a lot of Christadelphian teaching, and

I'd just missed it. In fact, as I started to understand the concept more, it started to answer a lot of other worrying questions I'd had about Christadelphian doctrine, including our view of politics.

Despite this point about how your king is the person whose orders you follow, in real life, it's not quite that easy, as anyone who has tried to change their citizenship will tell you. Simply stating that you're going to start following the laws of the United States of America doesn't make you an American citizen. If a Canadian wants to become an American citizen, he'll have to go through a complicated immigration process, which may or may not succeed. Suffice to say, switching citizenships is not a trivial matter.

However, there is one method of gaining American citizenship that works, every single time: If you are born into it. And, coincidentally, this is also the method of gaining citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven. In practically every Christadelphian baptism talk you'll ever hear, at some point the speaker will quote Romans 6:4 to explain what baptism symbolically represents:

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4).

As that verse states, baptism represents a death and a rebirth. By being baptized, you are symbolically saying that you have died to your old life, and are born again into a new one, where you will follow Jesus Christ, rather than your own fleshly desires. In other words, you're giving up your previous citizenship in the world, and becoming a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. A baptized Christadelphian is no longer primarily a citizen of any worldly kingdom; he's firstly a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven.

However, there's an issue. The Kingdom of Heaven is still in heaven, and we're on earth. The kingdom that we're living in is not our true home. As Hebrews 11 points out, we Christians, and in fact, all the faithful throughout time, have lived as *"strangers and pilgrims on the earth"*, since we're citizens of a heavenly country, not an earthly one.

Permanent resident

But, what does that mean? Well, if you were a Canadian citizen, but happened to be living in the United States for an indefinite period of time, we'd call you a "permanent resident", or a "green carder". If you look up "Permanent Residency" on Wikipedia, you'll find out that permanent residents are people who live in a country, and can work in country, and in many ways have all the rights of a citizen of the country, except for the following:

- They may not vote
- They may not stand for public office
- They may not apply for public sector employment
- They may not apply for employment involving national security
- They do not have access to their country's consular protection

So, a permanent resident is just like a citizen, except they can't vote, they can't be politicians, they can't be policemen, and they can't be soldiers. Oh, and in case you haven't ever gotten one, any jury summons you get will have a variety of boxes you need to check to determine your eligibility. And the very first one will almost always be "I am a citizen of the United States of America". So a permanent resident can't be a juror either. In other words, being a permanent resident of a country is an awful lot like being a Christadelphian.

Suddenly, BASF Doctrine to be Rejected #35 doesn't sound so strange after all.

Even though we Christadelphians may live in the United States, or Canada, or Great Britain, we're not actually citizens of those worldly nations. We're citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. So, while we live here in the world, we live as permanent residents. We obey the laws of the land. We pay our taxes. But:

- We don't vote
- We don't serve on the jury
- We don't get involved in politics
- We don't join the army.

We're permanent residents, *but not citizens*. And when you understand it like that, everything starts to make sense.

For instance, I always thought Christadelphians showed a total double standard by refusing to vote in national elections, but having no issue with voting in ecclesial elections. But, once I realized *why* we didn't vote in national elections, it made perfect sense: there's nothing wrong with voting, it's just that permanent residents aren't allowed to vote. We're all members of the ecclesia, so it's perfectly fine to vote in an ecclesial election. But, we're not citizens of the nation, so we wouldn't vote in their elections, just like we wouldn't let strangers vote in our ecclesial elections. It wasn't a double standard. I just didn't understand why we refused to vote.

So, to answer my original question, yes, in the Old Testament, Joshua and Solomon and David did things Christadelphians are not allowed to do now. They were soldiers and policemen and politicians. But, that was because they were all citizens of the Kingdom of Israel, not just permanent residents. And, at that time, the Kingdom of Israel was the Kingdom of God on earth (1Chron 28:5). As a result, the people of God could behave like citizens, and they did.

But now, God's kingdom is not the Kingdom of Israel on earth, but the Kingdom of Heaven. As such, while we live on the earth, we act like permanent residents, because we're not living in our country of citizenship.

Fortunately though, it's not going to stay that way forever. I've been saying we're "permanent residents", but in one sense, we're not permanent at all. We only plan on living in the kingdom of men temporarily, while we wait for Jesus Christ to come down from heaven, and establish the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth. That's why, when Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he taught them to pray for that Kingdom of Heaven to come down to earth.

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:9-10).

We don't want to stay as strangers and pilgrims forever, separated from our true homeland. We joined the kingdom of heaven because we want to live there, and we can't wait until Jesus comes and establishes it. And when he does, we'll no longer be permanent residents. We'll be full citizens, living in our homeland, and reigning on the earth. May that time come soon.

James Robinson (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

Trade Unions and the Disciple



Introduction

If you look on the Internet for "Christadelphian" and "Trade Unions", you will find many statements like "Christadelphians do not join such associations". Is this true? Ought it to be true?

There has been much written in our community on whether (or in general, whether not) to join a trade union.¹ The principle arguments adduced against joining such organizations are:

- Be content with your wages, based primarily on such Biblical principles as: the getting of gain and success is not a mark of divine favor nor evidence of godliness. On the contrary, *"godliness with contentment is great gain"* (1Tim 6:6).
- *"Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate"* (2Cor 6:17): this is taken to imply we cannot associate with our fellow workers in any collective activities without violating the commandment to separate ourselves from worldly pursuit.
- The belief that unions exist primarily to seek increased wages, and do so largely by using the weapon of a strike.
- Unions have become so politicized that their focus has shifted from negotiating wages and benefits to influencing governments.

It must also be pointed out that, despite the strong advice often given, there is not unanimity on the subject. For example, Bro. Alan Hayward, who by virtue of his employment was a member of the British Civil Service Union, wrote:

*"There has always been an agreed Christadelphian position about military service, but there has never been any comparable agreement about trade union activities. The issue has generally been regarded in the brotherhood as one where there should be freedom of individual conscience. This has to be so, because there is no unambiguous Scripture teaching on the subject. Everything depends on inference, and different people come to different conclusions from the same basic facts."*²

Present day situation

Most that have written on the subject were not members of Trade Unions, and very few have written from a North American perspective. No-one doubts our opposition to military service: but when it comes to unions, we must also remember the command of Paul “... *this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat*” (2Thess 3:10). We have a command to provide for ourselves and our family as best we can. This leads into a whole different area, that of “suitable” professions for a disciple, but in reality many avenues of employment require membership of some sort of union. For example, teachers, and many government employees, including postal workers, are required to join a union. And although not a union in the normal sense, most health care professionals are required to be licensed to practice their profession, with the entry to the profession controlled and what they can do specified. Some object to joining a union, because their dues might subsidize actions they disagree with, but at least in North America this is not true.³

In these controls, professions reflect the practices of the first century, for Paul was a tentmaker, and thus almost certainly a member of the tentmaker’s guild. He was thus enabled to obtain work wherever he travelled, and indeed spread the gospel among his fellow tradespeople (think Aquila and Priscilla: Acts 18:1-3). This guild controlled the way its members operated, much the same way professional associations operate, and modern trade unions operate (with the exception of the ability of some modern trade unions to strike.)

As to the command to “be ye separate”, the context is clearly one of idol worship. We cannot share the goals of those not of the Truth, whether it is the pursuit of false religion or materialism. Our command is to maintain our separate goals — but not to “go out of the world” and decline to associate with the idolaters of this world (1Cor 5:9-10). The balance between these two recommendations is always a dilemma, but we cannot fulfill it by becoming completely separate, or how can we spread the gospel?

Union membership varies widely in North America. In some areas, it is very difficult to obtain gainful employment without union membership, so in those areas such membership is quite common and unremarked among Christadelphians. In other areas, such as the “right to work” states in the USA, such membership is almost unknown. If you talk to Christadelphians who are Union Members, they recognize the problems that result: they themselves remain uninvolved in all union activities, and regard the dues as simply the cost of obtaining a decent livelihood. In North America, union strikes are now rare, and becoming rarer, particularly in the USA. Recent statistics show days lost to strikes in the USA are less than 0.005% of days worked, and in Canada, with a much more unionized workforce, around 0.02%. Even in the “militant” Detroit area, it is quite possible to go a whole working career in a union without any involvement in a strike. Thus the dilemma of what to do if a strike occurs is quite rare, but whether to cross the picket line depends on the situation. Some Christadelphians so involved have decided to make a stand and cross the picket line:⁴ others have made their

opposition to striking clear, refused to picket (thereby forfeiting strike pay), but have chosen not to incite violence by crossing the picket line. One experience I have of this area is of one who, while not a Christadelphian, was a quietly but deeply convinced Christian, who shared with us many of our attitudes to politics and trade unions. An engineer, he was forced to pay union dues, but did so while making clear he only did so under compulsion. His opinions were well known and respected, and he always crossed the picket line — but without any comments by strikers or subsequent repercussions. If any union situation, both our convictions and our reasons for them should be made clear well before any talk of a strike or other action takes place.

Conclusions

I find it hard to equate our objection to military service to Trade Union membership. In the former we have to declare allegiance to a power which has goals that differ from those of a disciple: in the latter, in order to obtain employment, we have to join a group that is involved in the same occupation, and negotiates for wages and benefits on behalf of the group. There is no doubt that such unions have eliminated many of the management abuses that were common in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is arguable that during the period of 1970-1990 the pendulum might have swung in favor of the labor unions, but certainly the situation these days is that the power of the unions has greatly decreased. In my own experience, the chance of being involved in an industrial dispute because of being a union member is very small, and legislative remedies are available for those uncomfortable with having their union dues supporting dubious activities. Those in a trade union need be no more involved with their fellow workers than if a union is not present.

If we counsel all Christadelphians to avoid union membership, whatever the circumstances, in many circumstances we are depriving members of any realistic prospect of supporting their families. However, we need to counsel those considering entering heavily unionized professions of the dangers. Being a part, even a reluctant part, of the sort of violent activities that do occur is not part of being a disciple of Christ.

Like many modern aspects of being a disciple of Christ, the question of trade unions has no simple answer. To say that Christadelphians do not join trade unions is incorrect: but to say that those joining do so with reluctance, and will not take part in the organization or union elections, is also correct.

It is a matter of individual conscience in our community, and it always has been.

Peter Hemingray (Royal Oak, MI)

Notes:

1. Apart from much discussion in our magazines, “The Disciple of Christ and Trade Unions” by C. T. Butler and “The Gospel and Strife” by A.D. Norris are available.
2. *The Christadelphian*: Volume 129.1992 p 29
3. In both the USA (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act) and Canada (Rand Formula), union members who have religious objection to membership can designate their dues to go to charity.
4. A Sister declines to strike: *The Tidings* 1992: p 171.

Section 3 — Wrestling with the Flesh

Poor Impulse-Control Addictions

“... to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey” (Rom 6:16).



Statistics first

Statistics, gathering in 83 studies on addictions, tell us the problem overall with addictions is much more than anyone imagined. Frankly it's this: almost half of the US adult population (47% to be exact) in a given year will suffer from a severe addiction.

For the Christadelphian world we would expect to beat those statistics, and yet, in the few somewhat casually administered surveys I've seen from our youth groups and adults, our wonderful fellowship of believers does not improve on these negative statistics very much. So, even wishing to think we are exemplary believers successfully fighting the flesh, addictions find their way into the body of Christ — and I would suggest at an alarming rate. This is perhaps because the addictions that are on the poor impulse-control side are highly secretive. Take away the secretive part and we all would be alarmed! And being secretive has never been easier. In the area of pornography in which the author has given counseling, these addictions are hidden in so many layers, that there is no way to break into the world that these brethren, and yes sisters too, live in without their very brave permission. With the Internet, these poor impulse-disorders are more secret than ever. The one that amazes me is gambling, which previously always necessitated a visit to a basement gathering or a trip to a casino, has become easier and private with the Internet. This goes without saying for pornography: in the old days men would slink into some shady theater in the bad end of town if they dared. No more!

A definition with ramifications

Let's quickly grab a definition. *An addiction is to surrender oneself to something obsessively or habitually.* It's easier to believe the almost 50% rate mentioned earlier with that definition. And if you look at this simple definition, isn't our Walk in Christ to be passionate and habitual? Paul says: *“I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)” (1Cor 16:15).* Ministering to the saints can be surrendering oneself to something. To many, it would seem obsessive.

This fits exactly with recent research. This is what they have discovered: that there is no separate pathology for this kind of addiction — it's bound up in who we are, as creations of the Creator. We are all born with systems of addictions. And when used incorrectly its basis becomes decision-making with bad choices. Put even more simply, impulse-control addictions are the failure to learn from mistakes of application!

Here is one more overall observation that fits with how we are created. Essentially these addictions are the compulsive pursuit of pleasure; meaning, we are wired to want to feel good, as we all have discovered. It fits into the role of man over the rest of creation, the urge to procreate, the self-preservation of caring for our basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter. But this God-given wiring also allows that what was meant to be a creative feature becomes a destructive feature in an addictive personality, thereby not helping in their growth towards grace and peace but in their destruction.

And here is one more observation before we get into actions, it is that we are addicted to sin, and even if you are feeling pretty smug that you have managed to “stay out of trouble” here, you still have that flesh to deal with until you take your last breath. Until then you are failing daily with your impulse control.

What can we do?

Now, to the Bible. Basically this is a microcosm of fighting off sin. Those who have dealt with pornography issues, gambling, obsessive eating, shopping, working, video games, hobbying, etc. have the same fight. And it's not about destroying the flesh, it's to use the addiction to draw us back to the Creator. Essentially mistakes are meant to draw us back to God, not pull ourselves farther away.

So let's take the following simple passage:

“All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:3-7 NIV).

It is taking the addictive wiring, learning from it and making a better decision to live in these “big picture” verses and shorten the impulses of seeking pleasure.

That is the Bible teaching.

The problem of patterns

But once we enter the obsessing and habitual world of addictions we build patterns that are gripping and unyielding to all manner of fighting them off.

There are two verses that particularly tell of this God-given manner of dealing with this pathology. The most famous is Rom 12:2, *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

Another is Ephesians 4:22-23, *“that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (NKJV).*

The world uses the term Cognitive Therapy, but the basis is these verses. You **can** change your mind. The first is the will to do so. This can come from here:

Look at this chart comparing the flow downward in each column:

GUILT

Enticement

Triggering Lustful Thinking

Acting on that

Guilt

Repentance / Asking for Forgiveness

Getting Back to God

SHAME

Enticement

Triggering Lustful Thinking

Acting on that

Shame

Shame stops at shame and there is nowhere to go. It is so secretive! And the notion has unfortunately been taught from the platform, that it can't be genuine if you keep asking forgiveness for the same thing over and over. This is a damaging teaching. I suppose then we shouldn't keep asking for forgiveness for sin? Our God is so much better than man, and the limitations we may think to put on His forgiveness are not valid. The book of Judges has the guilt cycle ad-nauseum, but God is ready to forgive at all times. To renew your mind is to allow the motivation of guilt to bring us to repentance, and the amazing forgiveness that follows. Staying in shame kills the whole thing.

Twelve step programs and secrecy

Secrecy is a huge part of the shame cycle. The next article in this issue ("Alcoholism/Substance Abuse") will talk of 12 step programs and how they bring you into fellowship with others in a safe environment. A 12 step program can be found for any impulse-control addiction, and the 12 steps will lead you from confession to repentance to the place God wishes for you. Taking your situation out of secrecy is a huge step as well. Shame stagnates you into secrecy.

Where's the love?

The energy comes from the guilt and the love. Love? Where is that? It's with the Ephesians reading we read before: *"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved"* (Eph 2:4-5).

It is adapting the addictive personality we have misused and turning it to God and becoming "addicted" to the aliveness we have in Christ. In any counseling I have done, this is a big part of it — reconnecting with God in a life-grip, which becomes greater than the death-grip of the impulse that is controlling us. It is your great opportunity to find the love of God in the most real way possible. Whether you like it or not, this poor impulse-addiction is your pathway back to God too. Your fall into addiction is also your invitation into a real life in Christ.

Substituting one piece of clothing at a time

So how do we change our minds now that we wish to? We are going to step out of shame to where we can act. See it as taking off old clothes and putting on new.

This is exactly Biblical, coming from our earlier quoted verse about putting off the old man. So you take off a piece of old clothing, you put on a new one. Then you take off a piece of old clothing and you put on a new one. In pornography issues it's changing the habit, blocking access to what has become normal and replacing it with something else. Each person is different, but, as easy as it sounds, it usually isn't. To change these patterns, literally now embedded in your mind, takes energy: prayer energy, faith energy, love of God energy and times it by ten. But this is life in the Truth. And you may think you are the only one, but quietly, the person next to you could well be in the same predicament.

Here's just a little statistic: if you can go 30 days without a relapse in whatever you are dealing with, you have done an amazing thing by the grace of God. If at all possible, call someone and share the news. But don't think you are done: the negative neural pathway in your brain has now found a redirection that can build from there.

Where to begin?

I recommend you find someone to share your struggle with who will help you. My criteria comes from James 5:16: "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*" The person who fits these criteria will pray for you and will seek the best for you. If they keep you in shame or they blab around about your struggle, you have the wrong person.

A positive conclusion

Paraphrasing Rom 11:32, through the example of Israel, we are reminded we are made to experience unbelief and disobedience so that God can show us His Way and open that door welcoming us out of the darkness. All of us have benefited from entering into this door. Addictions make this door all the more obvious.

The conclusion then is not to trivialize what such addictions are, or what it takes to crawl out of the hole. But this article is saying you are not alone, by a long shot, and there are people out there who can help. Whatever you can do you will find it is not by your cleverness or your intelligence that these things are handled. It will be by the grace of God that you become alive in Christ and He will do a marvelous work in your life. Take the door! Isn't that what you want?

David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA)

Notes:

1. Steve Sussman, "Prevalence of the Addictions: A Problem of the Majority or the Minority?," *Evaluation & the Health Professions* 34 (March 2011)

A poll was taken, in strictest confidence, at a recent Christadelphian youth weekend where the average age was 26. Of those present, 43% indicated participation in drugs at some point, 52% acknowledged some form of present addiction to food, drink, drugs, etc., and 100% replied such issues should be dealt with at Christadelphian events.

Michael Woodcock, The Tidings, 1998 p 99.

Alcoholism and Other Substance Abuse



“I can’t let Sister J. drive my kids to ecclesial functions anymore. We never know when she’s going to be under the influence.”

“Bro. and Sister X. are getting divorced. She can’t deal any longer with his behavior while drinking. He continues to drink, and becomes abusive to her and the kids when he does.”

These are paraphrases of real comments made by real members in Christadelphian ecclesias in North America. They are representative of comments regarding the problem of alcoholism and other substance abuse addictions world-wide.

The purpose of this article is to bring some light to bear on this challenging and devastating disease, to raise the level of awareness of the nature of the problem, awareness of resources available to help individual members and ecclesias to deal with the problem in the afflicted individual and/or their close family members.

This article reflects a professional interest on my part as a physician in the disease of alcoholism and substance abuse and the recovery from these diseases. There has naturally been a growing personal interest as well.

Though most of these comments will be directed towards alcoholism, other substance addictions (narcotics, nicotine, food, etc.) will have a similar pattern of compulsive behavior and have similar 12 step based support group recovery available.

First, just a few statistics that clarify the magnitude and nature of the problem:

Of those adults who drink more than occasionally, it’s estimated that 5-10% of them will become dependent on alcohol. This is in concert with the estimate by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) that currently there are approximately 13.8 million in the US who can be classified as dependent on alcohol.

Approximately 85% of current inmates of prisons could benefit from alcoholism treatment, according to The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University. There are 75,000 preventable deaths yearly which are directly attributable to alcohol abuse.

Nationally, our young people are at risk: Some studies done by NIAAA have shown the following:

Prevalence in 8th graders:

- 51.7% have tried alcohol
- 43.1% have had an alcoholic drink in the past year
- 25.1% have been drunk

Prevalence in 10th graders:

- 70.6% have tried alcohol
- 63.7% have had an alcoholic drink in the past year
- 48.9% have been drunk
- 1.9% have been daily drinking for at least 1 month at some point in their lives

Prevalence in 12th graders:

- 80% have tried alcohol
- 73.8% have had an alcoholic drink in the past year
- 62.3% have been drunk
- 3.6% use alcohol daily

Alcohol and substance abuse are real problems for our members and our young people. Current statistics support this. A recent study in one of the journals devoted to alcoholism research showed that a religious environment does diminish the likelihood of alcohol abuse for those teenagers genetically inclined to its development. However, we know that these problems are present in the household. The reduced likelihood notwithstanding, virtually every arranging board has had to deal with the fallout of substance abuse. Although positive, the increasing number of brethren and sisters in our midst who are recovering is also evidence of this disease in our household.

Our understanding is helped by consideration of the definition of alcoholism written by the leading US physicians in the field of alcoholism.

“Alcoholism is a **primary**, chronic disease with genetic, psychosocial, and environmental **factors** influencing its development and manifestations. The disease is often progressive and **fatal**. It is characterized by impaired control over drinking, preoccupation with the drug alcohol, use of alcohol despite adverse consequences, and distortions in thinking, most notably **denial**. Each of these symptoms may be continuous **or** periodic.”

Thoughtful consideration of this definition and especially of each of the **bolded** words can be edifying and of aid in recognizing and helping those among us so afflicted. While alcoholism may lead to morally deficient behavior, the alcoholic him or herself is best considered as ill. Here is it most productive once again if we can ‘hate the sin, but love the sinner’.

It is important to reemphasize that this discussion relates to those who are unable to stop drinking in spite of interpersonal, financial, legal, physical, or emotional alcohol-related problems, in spite of a strong personal desire and repeated attempts to modify or abstain from drinking.

The fatal aspect of this disease if left untreated is also commonly recognized. The only possible endpoints are death, incarceration, or mental illness and institutionalization. For those in covenant relationship, the eternal consequences are overwhelming; *“they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” (1Cor 6:10, Gal 5:21, Rom 13:13).*

These are not “scare points.” They are simply the facts which can encourage us to

do the right things and to make the difficult and sometimes unpopular choices of actions to take. Ignoring the problem cannot be our response.

The non-fatal behaviors of the alcoholic are protean,² ranging from failure to complete vital family and ecclesial obligations to angry outbursts, to physical and emotional abuse of one's family, to sexual misadventures, to poor school or work performance and job loss, to health problems including hypertension leading to stroke or heart attack, pancreatitis, cirrhosis, etc. These are grim and often late manifestations. But even early on in the disease, there is severe distortion in the family. The continuing unpredictability in the behavior of our loved one, the marked self-centeredness, and the violent outbursts most often lead to behavior in the rest of the family members reflective of their great pain. There may be an obsession to "manage" the unmanageable alcoholic, anxiety for bills and the other family members, anger towards the 'loved one', denial (excuse-making, hiding the real behavior), feeling guilty as having caused the alcoholic behavior, and perhaps suffering the insanity of doing the same thing over and over again, expecting different results.

With this brief description of the disease and its impact, you may wonder "What can I do? I'm a lay person, not a professional or an expert here."

You are taking the first step now as you read this article. We must educate ourselves, because help is available. Overcoming chemical dependency is possible, and you can direct someone to the help available. For problems with alcohol, the most effective method for recovery is by regularly attending Alcoholics Anonymous. While AA claims no monopoly on therapy for the alcoholic, it remains, in the most recent and most scientifically rigorous studies to date, the premier treatment modality for this disease. Apart from AA, results have been meager. Experience of many brethren and sisters now in recovery in AA reveals that AA participation is fully compatible with their walk in the Truth. They also note that AA's 12 steps have a basis in Scriptural principles.

It's easy to learn about this resource. There is a web site which will not only give you much additional info on the disease and recovery. It will let you find a meeting in your local area, no matter what part of the world you are in. Here is the hyperlink: <http://www.aa.org>

If you explore this link, you will find contact data for local AA in 60 countries in the world, including most of our outreach counties. There you will find meeting locations, literature resources, and, if necessary, a way for someone to arrange personal contact with a recovering person.

Read the first 164 pages of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. This book is inexpensive and widely available your local AA office, which may be found on the web or in the white pages. In reading this book you will find out much more about the disease and the program of recovery. Since you are part of the person's ecclesial family, you may find the chapter entitled "The Family Afterward" especially interesting.

There are many brethren and sisters now who are recovering in AA. Get to know them if possible. Most of them are more than willing to help another recover if

they are asked. If you find no one, call the Christadelphian Caring Network for a referral for a brother or sister in AA to talk to. This is available through the following toll-free number: **1 866 823 1039**.

For recovery from other forms of chemical dependency, there are other recovery groups available, e.g. Narcotics Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, Nicotine Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, and others. These all have websites which can be researched or consulted. Many are addicted to multiple substances including alcohol, so a start in AA, the most established recovery group that is available to them almost always greatly helps in this area.

For those family members (including young people as well as spouses) living with an alcoholic and suffering with it, a referral to Al-Anon can be especially helpful. They *can* regain some normalcy in their lives, whether or not the alcoholic recovers. The web link to Al-Anon follows: <http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/>

Problems with alcohol?

If you are sick and tired of being sick and tired, you may be an alcoholic and you may need help. The purpose of this message is to tell you that there *is* hope, that help *is* available, that it doesn't *have* to be this way anymore, and that you do *not* have to do this alone. Here is a link to a questionnaire you can use to help decide if you really have a problem with alcohol: <http://www.lakeweb1.com/mrp/literature/20quest.htm>.

So, please look at AA's website, learn what it is and what it does and where the meetings are in your local area. If you decide, in all self-honesty, that you are powerless over alcohol and that you want to give up drinking, then make the first step. Call your local central AA office, find a meeting close by, and go to it. You'll find others there like yourself, who are more than willing and able to help you begin your walk in sobriety. "You don't have to do this alone, but you alone must do the work involved."

Bob Korbelaak (San Diego County, CA)

Notes:

1. Morse RM, Flavin DK. The definition of alcoholism. JAMA. 1992;268(8):1012-1014. (free article)
2. Term meaning: "tending or able to change frequently or easily".

There is a further resource on *The Tidings* web site with FAQ's about Addictions: See <http://www.tidings.org/2012/08/faq-addictions>

Why You Need to Believe in the Devil



In the past when someone would ask me if I believe in the devil, I would say 'No.' I would explain that the Scripture personifies sin as a person. Then I would go on to say personification gives an abstract idea human form. I then showed other examples where Scripture personifies 'wisdom' as a beautiful women to be sought after or how believers in Christ are

personified as a bride, etc. If pressed, I would explain how the devil could not be a fallen angel because immortal angels cannot sin and then go into all the different wrested Scriptures on the devil and Satan.

Now, when asked the same question, I say ‘Yes’.

Then I go on and tell them: “Every time I look in the mirror I see a side of me that does not want to serve God.” I tell them: “my biggest struggle every day is trying to please God and not myself.” I tell them: “I’m my own worst enemy.” By saying “Yes” we frame the issue the way Scripture intended it to be. And personally, picturing a part of me that is always trying to pull me from godly influences is helpful. Every decision I make can be examined in this light: am I helping myself or God? Which side of me am I feeding? Thinking of sin this way makes it easier to visualize the real source of our problems — ourselves! Personification of sin is a weapon in our arsenal to fight the flesh.

“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man” (Matt 15:19-20).

The Apostle Paul was keenly aware of this adversary within! *“I see another law inside my members warring against me.”* The battle is fought from within. By personifying sin, it makes us conscious of our split personality. Seeing and feeling this battle within makes it easier to imagine and fight. Every decision can be weighed with the simple question, “Which combatant does this help?”

*“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he” (i.e. **so he becomes**) (Prov 23:7).*

Our minds lead us. Thinking about our own thoughts helps us discern the battle lines. Peter Watkins, writes;

“The parable of the devil fulfills a double purpose. It reveals, and it conceals. To the discerning it provides vital information concerning the sinfulness of sin. It enables them to see themselves as they really are. It is one thing to tell men that they are sinners; it is quite another to get them to understand the stark reality of their own wretched condition. Shock treatment is necessary. We see this hideous monster placarded before us, and we shudder at its deceitfulness, cruelty and wickedness. And then the dread truth comes home to us. This is a picture of me!”¹

When Paul says: *“I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind” (Rom 7:23)*, we should focus on the only law that should be inside us: *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment” (Matt 22:37-38)*. This is a commandment requiring unwavering dedication to God only. This ‘law’ should be pushing out all impulses to think contrary to it.

Thinking of sin as another person within ourselves, helps us to fight it. This “parable,” as Peter Watkins calls it, goes to the very heart of the problem. At the end of the day we say, “I’m a pretty good person”. And if we have fallen that day, we make allowances for it. We still will say to ourselves, “I’m still a good person”. We

easily deceive ourselves and brush our failings away without a thought. Visualizing a very real enemy within ourselves helps us control it. This is a battle we are expected to fight daily. But if we view this battle as external, we never really fight the one that matters!

“For if men are controlled by their earthly natures, they give their minds earthly things. If they are controlled by their spiritual natures, they give their minds spiritual things” (Rom 8:5 Weymouth).

One additional distinction is necessary. Our desires can be immoral, our desires can be towards substances, etc. Or our desires can be perfectly normal and humdrum. What we conveniently forget is that any desire that pulls us from the Father is wrong. It's not just 'bad' things that we have to worry about. This is why our enemy is so insidious. Every misdirected thought needs to be fought. Jesus suppressed every thought that pulled him away from his Father. Too often we heed the voice that says “take thine ease”, “there's nothing wrong with that”, and we give up ground to the enemy. We need to be careful not to surrender spiritually on the small things. Instead, the key is to replace our own inclinations away from the Father with a stronger desire to serve him.

Bro. Sargent, writing in the Christadelphian said, “How can a man literally deny himself? Life and personality are centered in the proposition, ‘I am I.’ How can a man say, ‘I am not I.’ and mean it? It is Paul who gives the answer, linking that ultimate negative with a glorious affirmation, ‘I live — yet not I, but Christ, that liveth in me’ (Gal 2:20).”² This is how Christ can “live” in us and help us fight the wrong inclinations.

“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil 3:21).

One meaning of the word “subdue” is: “A Greek military term meaning ‘to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader’ (Online Bible Greek Lexicon)”. This is Christ working, battling to save us. But it can only happen when we consciously decide to live for him.

Consider how many times controlling sin is described in terms of warfare:

- “let us put on the **armour of light**” (Rom 13:12).
- “**So fight I**, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” (1Cor 9:26-27).
- “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not **war after the flesh**” (2Cor 10:3).
- “The **weapons of our warfare** are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds” (2Cor 10:4).
- “Put on the whole **armour of God**, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph 6:11,13).
- “... take the **helmet of salvation**, and the **sword of the Spirit**” (Eph 6:17).
- “Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and **fellowsoldier**” (Phil 2:25).

- "... that thou by them mightest **war a good warfare**" (1Tim 1:18).
- "**Fight the good fight** of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1Tim 6:12).
- "Thou therefore endure hardness, **as a good soldier** of Jesus Christ" (2Tim 2:3).
- "**No man that warreth** entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2Tim 2:4).
- "**I have fought a good fight**" (2Tim 4:7).
- "... to make the **captain** of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb 2:10).

The objective of our warfare is "*bringing every thought into captivity*" (2Cor 10:4-5 Phillips). It's a constant battle. Sometimes over the littlest thought! Perhaps King David had seen Bathsheba washing before, each time controlling, crushing any wrong thoughts... except once!

So how does personification of an enemy within help us? Why does God want us to think this way towards sin within us? Because we naturally love ourselves. It's difficult for us to imagine "*this hideous monster*" as Bro. Watkins describes it, in us.

"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it" (Eph 5:29).

This is why, even the greatest sinners can justify themselves. This is why every sinner, no matter how rotten a person they are, can say to themselves "I'm still a good person."

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes" (Prov 21:2).

The answer needs to be the visualization/personification of our real enemy. Because we can't "hate ourselves", God has personified sin so we can better imagine and see this enemy.

The strongest mechanism people have is self-preservation... sometimes at any cost. The last battle fought by Jesus was against this most basic, fundamental desire, "save thyself". We can appreciate what a terrible, constant struggle it must have been for Jesus to fight this desire to save himself from death. Based on his sharp rebuke of Peter, we can see how this temptation hit home. Peter had said "**Be kind to thyself**" and avoid your death at Jerusalem (Matt 16:22 YLT). To this Jesus put Peter **and that desire** in it's proper place; "*Get thee behind me Satan*"! (v. 23). This strong response shows what a struggle defeating this desire must have been.

In Death, Jesus demonstrated his complete mastery over his enemy. And by death, he condemned sinful flesh and destroyed it. He defeated the strongest desire we all share — to save ourselves, instead allowing his body to be crucified.

The world creeps into every aspect of our lives. The world will consume us if we let it. The only way we can truly "be kind to ourselves" is by denying ourselves, taking up our crosses and following our Lord's footsteps in our spiritual warfare.

Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ)

Notes:

1. Peter Watkins, "*The Devil, the Great Deceiver*," 1971, The Christadelphian, UK, p. 82.
2. *The Christadelphian*, 1938, p. 99.

Section 4 — Biblical Solutions

Your Word I have Hidden in My Heart: Thinking Like Christ



Many of the articles in this special edition of the magazine have been focused on the importance of being different from the majority of the people around us. Many of them have looked at things that are extrinsic — or on the outside. In order to be separate from the world, we can change a number of the things that we do and a number of the things that we say. However, even if we are able to implement all of these things — even if we are able to wear modest clothing, put aside the music of the world, and stay out of politics — we will still struggle with sin because the world isn't only outside of us, it is inside as well! The Lord himself taught that evil proceeds from the heart of man (Mark 7:21-23). The battle which we fight isn't simply one in which we change the way that we act, but it is a battle which is fought on two fronts — our actions, and our thoughts.

This article is going to focus on changing our thoughts — and the main way to effect a change in the way that we think is to fill our minds with the things that are good. The counsel of the apostle Paul was that the only things that enter into our minds should be those things which are righteous:

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil 4:8).

These were the types of things upon which we are to set our minds. We are to seek for the things that are true, for the things that are honest, for the things that are virtuous. If we are able to fill our minds with these types of things, then it is much more likely that those same types of thoughts will come out. Again, the apostle not only wrote this to the Philippians, but he wrote a similar thing to the Colossians:

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:1-2).

The calling of the Colossians was to lift their thoughts above the vain thoughts of the world and to think on heavenly things. Such is our calling as well. Just like the saints in Colossae, we are to lift up our minds to God and our thoughts are to transcend the naturally selfish and naturally anxious thoughts of the day. In doing so, we become like the Lord Jesus Christ — whose thoughts were constantly on the things of the Father. He was the perfect representative of God Himself — a man who was able to say, *“he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9)*, and later, *“the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me” (John*

14:24). His every word and his every action were the words and actions of God. His mind was lifted up and was focused on the things which are above — and this is what we long to do! But how did he do it? How did the Lord Jesus keep his mind so focused and keep his thoughts on the things that are good? Surely he put aside things of the world — but what else?

The answer to this question can be found in one of the prophecies about the Lord:

“The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned” (Isa 50:4).

This prophecy makes it sound as though each day, the Lord Jesus had a constant flow of God’s word into his mind — morning by morning this word was poured into his ears. This was the foundation of his focus. He spoke the words of God and he thought the words of God because the words of God were constantly being put into his mind. At one point in his ministry, he even explained that he didn’t say anything unless it was something which God had told him to speak:

“And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak” (John 12:50).

The Lord spoke the words which God had given him to speak — his mind was always full of the words of God. If we desire to think on things above and if we desire to think like the Lord Jesus, then we need to put God’s word into our mind in the same way that he did. We need to study that word and we need to seek to understand the things that we read.

In addition, we often refer to ourselves as “*People of the Book*”. With this in mind we should always have a study on which we are working. We should always be looking into things and learning. Having an ongoing study of a subject is for everyone, young and old, male and female. We are the worse if we think “organized study” is just for exhorters, teachers, etc. Study and reading is for everyone. And as a body, we are fortunate to have outlets to share our studies with others, like *The Tidings* and other magazines. Another outlet is teaching a Sunday School or CYC class. It’s important that “*People of the Book*” should know the book — and in doing so, we will be more like the Lord Jesus.

With that goal in mind, this article will touch on a few important aspects of Bible study. It will first look at the importance of being organized about study and setting goals. The second portion of the article will demonstrate the value of asking questions when studying.

Organized study

While organization may be difficult, it is something which can be extremely useful when trying to do Bible study. Without organization and goals, the study really has no direction — it can continue on indefinitely and we will never actually know if we’ve have accomplished what we’ve set out to accomplish. Thus, in this section of the article, it is hoped that some suggestions can be given which are useful for organizing the way in which we do Bible study.

One of the first and most useful things in study is setting goals — really try to define the purpose of the study. If you are doing a study of Elijah, try to define what it is that you are going to look learn about Elijah. Do you want to study his life? Do you want to study prophecies that relate to his second coming? Do you want to compare him with John the Baptist? Unless some of these questions are answered, when you begin your study, you may simply find yourself amassing information, and the study will become so large that it becomes overwhelming. The idea behind having a goal is to help you focus your study on exactly what you want to learn.

Let's say, then, that you have decided that you want to study Elijah's life. The next step is making the goal even more specific. About what part of Elijah's life do you want to learn? Do you want to look at his adventures on Mount Carmel? Do you want to see his interactions with Ahab? There are so many different pieces of his life that - again - if you don't narrow down what you want to learn, it will soon become overwhelming. You may find yourself collecting information from his experiences with the widow of Zarephath, then learning about Naboth's vineyard, and then learning about the letter which he wrote to the king of Judah. Scripture is so full of information about Elijah that you can soon become lost if you don't focus your study.

So, perhaps you decided that you specifically wanted to look at Elijah's adventures on Mount Carmel. Now that your study is focused, you know exactly what you want to learn. Your time studying won't be focused on the Psalms. It won't be focused on the life of Saul. It won't be focused on First or Second Corinthians. Instead, now you know that when you sit down to study, you're going to want to look at 1Kgs 18 and anything related to it. You know that you want to read Christadelphian books that have a section on this piece of Scripture and you are going to want to listen to Bible classes that relate to Elijah on Mount Carmel. Once your study has a focused goal — to learn more about Elijah on Mount Carmel — then it is much easier for you to know when you have met it. However, while this goal is fairly specific, it could still use a little more work regarding when it is complete.

How will you know when you have finished the study? Will you simply be done when you've studied this one chapter for over a year and you're tired of thinking about Elijah on Mount Carmel? This is why it is extremely important to make sure that the goal is specific and achievable — otherwise, you'll have your plan, and again, you won't ever know if it has been fulfilled. So, it's important to develop a way in which you will know that you are finished. Some different ideas are as follows:

- Study the subject for a month and then move on to a different topic.
- Study the subject until you have gone through all the details of each verse in that chapter.
- Study the subject until you feel as though you could write a Bible class on it.

These are simply a few suggestions of ways to know when a study is over — there are certainly other options. The important idea is that the goal for the study must be measurable. You must know when you have fulfilled your goal — don't simply say: "I am going to study this chapter until I understand it." How will you know

when that has been reached? If it doesn't have a definite end point, you may find yourself studying it for months on end until you just get frustrated because you don't think there is anything else to learn about it. Then, even though you are more or less done with the study, your study has ended on an unpleasant note. Rather, it is better to choose a measurable end point — perhaps you will study through each verse of 1Kgs 18 until you reach the end of the chapter. Then, as you go from verse to verse, you will be able to see how far away you are from your goal and it will be clear when you have met it.

Thus, focused and measurable goals are extremely helpful when organizing study.

The importance of questions

Another helpful strategy for Bible study is asking questions — whenever we read, whether we are doing the daily readings or reading for our own personal study, it is imperative that we ask questions. Questions are the tools that we can use to get deeper into the text. For instance, when reading through the story of David and Goliath, there is a verse which seems fairly inconspicuous — but when it is thought about further, it reveals an interesting question:

“And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a script; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine” (1Sam 17:40).

When David was preparing to fight against the Philistine, he took five smooth stones from the brook. This is a fairly familiar verse to a number of us — when remembering the story of David and Goliath, this picture of David going to gather up five stones comes to mind. Yet have you ever asked yourself why it was that David took five stones? Was it because he thought that perhaps he would miss four times and he wanted to make sure that his stone found its mark? This may seem to be the most obvious answer — but upon reading further, this doesn't actually seem to fit. When speaking to Goliath, David was sure that he would win — and not only did he say that he would kill the giant, but he specified how he would kill him and who else he was planning on killing:

*“This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and **I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines** this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel” (1Sam 17:46).*

When David went up to fight against the giant, he was filled with confidence in his God. He knew that God would win the battle. In fact, he was so confident that he would win, that he proclaimed to Goliath that he was going to cut off his head — even when David didn't have a sword (v. 50)! Not only so, but he also stated that he was going to defeat the entire army of the Philistines. David was so confident in his victory that he didn't merely plan on fighting Goliath and chopping off his head — but he said that he would single handedly destroy the whole troop of the Philistines. This doesn't seem to be the David who would take five stones from the brook, just in case he happened to miss.

Rather, perhaps there was another reason. Later in the record it is revealed that Goliath wasn't the only Philistine giant - in fact there were four of them, including Goliath's brother (2Sam 21:15-22). Isn't that intriguing? Here was David, a man who was prepared to fight against the entire army of the Philistines by himself — and he brought five stones, because there just so happened to be five giants, including two in Goliath's family. Could that have been David's reasoning? Was David hoping to not only destroy Goliath, but also all of the other giants?

It is through asking simple questions — such as, “Why did David choose five smooth stones?” that the stories of Scripture can really start to come alive. Questions can really jump-start Bible study — and keep in mind that they do not always need to be answered immediately. With the question above, it might not have been answered until a month or so later, when you came to 2Sam 21 in the readings. Nevertheless, if there is a question, make a quick note of it somewhere — in the margin of your Bible, in a notepad for questions, or on your computer — so that you don't forget the questions for which you are trying to find answers.

Conclusion

There are many different helps for studying the Bible — and these are simply two which I have found to be immensely useful. Making goals has helped me to get my study organized and helped keep me from getting overwhelmed at the vastness of things to learn in Scripture. Asking questions has really provoked me to search for answers and has helped to create a picture in my mind of the way that different characters in Scripture might have thought or what might have caused them to act in the way that they did. All in all, may these two suggestions help you as you try to fill your mind with the Word of God. By constantly reading and studying Scripture, we can elevate our thinking and not only be separate from the world in our actions, but also in our thoughts. In so doing, we can follow in the steps of the Lord Jesus Christ — which, truly, is the ultimate goal.

Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

Keep Yourself From Idols



Even today we can find people around the world bowing down to images made of wood, stone and metal. And while we don't worship idols like this or like the ancient Israelites did, we are not immune to idolatry. Many exhortations have been given about the man on a bended knee, polishing his boat or car until his own image is reflected back.

The problem of picturing idols as physical things misses the mark. In our minds, idols are things we touch and handle. This is the reason Josiah and others failed. They could destroy idols by smashing them to pieces, yet that NEVER destroyed the source of idolatry, the heart.

Idle Thoughts lead to Idol Thoughts. Idols are things we choose to let live in our hearts.

“Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?” (Ezek 14:3).

Getting serious with idolatry means getting serious with ourselves and the way we think.

Consider all the wrong thoughts we let meander through our minds. Rarely do we interfere with them, we just let them run their course until our attention is finally diverted to something else. This is why idolatry is so persistent! We don't think about what we are thinking about. Then to make it worse, we store up our favorite wrong thoughts for some later time to be conjured up again and again.

Paul says:

“Put to death your earthward inclinations — fornication, impurity, sensual passion, unholy desire, and all greed, for that is a form of idolatry... and you also were once addicted to them, while you were living under their power. But now you must rid yourselves of every kind of sin” (Col 3:5,7-8 Weymouth).

Idolatry results when we don't control our wrong thoughts and desires! The cost of idolatry is turmoil. We will not experience inner peace unless our thoughts are directed towards our Father. Isaiah confirms this: *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee” (Isa 26:3).*

The word “mind” that Isaiah uses means “Imaginations,” i.e. the desires of our heart! What do you imagine? What do you replay in your mind over and over? This simple question is a good spiritual barometer of our health.

What's especially evil about idolatry is more than just evil desires. The most insidious effect of idolatry is that it causes us to suspend our belief in the Father.

Think about this; if we believe in God, and believe that he sees us, cares for us, walks with us, and knows our thoughts, then when we sin we push all these beliefs out of our mind. And while we are sinning God is nowhere to be found! While sinning, we don't believe God is with us or sees us. We don't think of God until our sins are complete. We have displaced God out of our Heart!

We see an example of this in the record of the Kings. King Ahaz journeyed to Damascus where he saw an altar. He commanded it be copied and built in Jerusalem. The context of this passage in Kings indicates that this new altar was placed in the temple courtyard displacing the real altar of God made by Solomon.

“The bronze altar that stood before the LORD he brought from the front of the temple — from between the new altar and the temple of the LORD — and put it on the north side of the new altar” (2Kgs 16:14 NIV).

In the center of God's house, this evil king displaced God's own altar with another one of his own design.

Are we any different? “*Ye are the temple of the living God?*” (2 Cor 6:16). When we were baptized, we became God’s house, and when we sin, we not only displace God from his house within us, we also momentarily suspend our belief in him, pushing him out of our consciousness.

Stagnant in spirit

The Prophet Zephaniah lived at the same time as Ezekiel and saw the same problems. He witnessed Josiah searching through Jerusalem for idols to destroy. But Josiah missed the real source of idolatry, the hearts.

“It will come about at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, I will punish the men who are stagnant in spirit, who say in their hearts the Lord will not do good or evil” (Zeph 1:12 NASB).

These were men who did not think God saw or cared what they thought about.

Solomon, standing in front of God’s temple refers to this stagnation as “the plague of the heart”. When we find the wrong things in our hearts Solomon says the cure begins with prayer.

“any prayer, any supplication from any man of all Your people Israel, who shall each know the plague of his own heart, and shall spread forth his hands toward this house, then hear in Heaven Your dwelling-place, and forgive,” (1Kgs 8:38-39 NKJV).

When we find a desire that doesn’t belong, removal begins with prayer to a faithful God who will forgive. In proverbs, Solomon gives another clue:

“More than all else keep a watch over your heart since here are the well springs of life” (Prov 4:23 Jerusalem Bible).

In Proverbs 4 you will see that what flows from the “well springs of life” are God’s words. If the living waters of God’s word are flowing in our heart, how could it become stagnant?

Solomon continues in vs. 25: “*Let thine eyes look right on and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.*” This is echoed in Heb 12:2: “*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.*” The word “looking” in Greek only occurs here. It means to stare, to have your eyes fixed fully on it, to have your eyes locked on to something. In this case our focus is completely on our Lord Jesus. And the reason our gaze must be fixed on Jesus is because “*the sin which doth so easily beset us*” (Heb 12:1).

Think on these things

We really can control what we think about. There are thoughts and ideas we can NEVER think about. If they were to enter our minds, we would be repulsed and crush them! We all have done this. Now we need to train ourselves to be repulsed by sinful thoughts. One strategy is shared with the Philippians when Paul stresses the need to think Godly thoughts.

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things

are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil 4:8).

And when you think of the verse in the opposite it isn’t so hard to follow. i.e. don’t think of false, dishonest things. Don’t think of unjust, impure, ugly things. If we think about what we are thinking about, these thoughts are easy to spot and crush. We can easily replace them with something better. Even if it’s just a verse we repeat by rote until the thought has passed. “It is written...” was Jesus’ reaction to wrong thoughts entering his own mind. We should have similar verses in our arsenal ready for our trials.

When we allow wrong thinking in our hearts, we’re hardening it. We’re taking a living, moving, beating soft tissue organ and we’re making it hard because we’re engraving in it, scarring it with things that shouldn’t be there. The Psalmist comments on idolatry:

“Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat” (Psa 115:4-7).

And the key to this passage is verse 8, *“They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.”* In the end, we become just as dead and lifeless as the Idol in our heart.

The prophet Isaiah said:

“Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not” (Isa 8:2-9).

The Apostle John summarizes all this with the simple words, *“Little children keep your selves from Idols” (1John 5:21).*

Commenting on this verse, Brother Dennis Gillett writes:

“Faithful Bible readers will know that when the conflict between good and evil is distilled to its very essence, it is the conflict between the true God and idols. John says that the problem is ‘the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.’ It is a perpetual contest for the disciple in this period of probation.”¹

This special issue of The Tidings was written to help all of us during our period of probation. It is the prayer of everyone contributing to this issue that all the various idols of the flesh that pull us from God might be destroyed, one by one. Until that day, let us have hearts fixed upon our Lord and do our best to *“keep yourselves from idols”*.

Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ)

Notes:

1. *The Christadelphian*: 1991, p. 417.

Holiness

Holiness

Introduction

It is difficult to think of a word that is more out of touch with modern society than *Holiness*. The word seems to belong to another age. Holiness is related to ideas like purity, virtue, righteousness, and other qualities the world is happy to abandon to antiquity. The reason our society finds Holi-

ness so objectionable is because by its very definition, it implicates everything that stands in contrast to it. It is no surprise, then, that today's world associates Holiness with intolerance, prejudice, and arrogance.

Simply put, being holy is being different. And in a certain way, the world loves those who are different, by idolizing those who are broad minded enough to justify almost every path along the broad road to destruction. As disciples of Christ, we are bombarded every day with worldly advice to follow our heart and find our own way, while the Scripture warns us of the deceptiveness of our hearts and our natural inability to navigate our lives for our own good. Holiness **unto God**, is the true less-travelled road. The Lord Jesus said so himself: *"Narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it"* (Matt 7:14).

But we believe in the Living God, who has revealed Himself in the pages of the Bible. We believe that whoever comes to God must believe that He exists, and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him (Heb 11:6). And to those who seek Him He says, *"...ye shall be **holy unto me**: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine"* (Lev 20:26). Holiness, then, flows from God. *"Ye shall be holy **unto me**."* He is the source of all Holiness, and so it is His right to define it. But today's world obsesses over the rights of its inhabitants while ignoring the demands of God on His creation.

Uzziah

About 2700 years ago, there was a man who thought he was holy. He saw himself different from, better than, his brethren; and his self-estimation led him to believe that he knew better than God. The man's name was Uzziah. He ruled over a prosperous Judah for over five decades, sincerely seeking Him at the beginning of his reign (2Chron 26:5). After many blessed years, he apparently made up his mind that he was worthy to enter into the temple to offer incense, which was the exclusive privilege of the high priest of Levi. Perhaps his transgression grew from a distorted desire to be like the great king-priest, after Melchizedek's order in Psalm 110. Whatever the reason, Uzziah received an immediate response from the High and Lofty One, who rejected his arrogant incense. What the king had hoped to be his inaugural day as high priest became the setting for one of the most ironic judgments in all of Scripture. There, upon his forehead, the king's leprosy declared his sin to the whole nation. The high priest under Moses' law also wore a sign upon his forehead which read — *"Holiness unto Yahweh"*. It was Yahweh's Holiness that Uzziah had defamed.

That very year, the same year king Uzziah died, Isaiah had a vision of the glory of God. There, upon His throne, He reigned uncontested as a striking contrast to the king that had sat on David's throne for so long.

Isaiah's call to prophetic office stands as a clear contrast to Uzziah's sin, and reminds us how necessary it is for us to be humble before our Heavenly Father. This is exactly why Isaiah's vision in chapter six is said to have taken place "*in the year king Uzziah died*".

Uzziah inherited the kingdom from his father Amaziah when he was sixteen years old. His country had been humiliated from an Israelite invasion from the north, and we might assume from Uzziah's military zeal that he was determined to protect Judah from future invasions. Looking at the Chronicles narrative, the king's strength and industry cannot be missed. Consider the following outline of Uzziah's reign in 2Chron 26:

- verses 1-5 *Summary*
- verses 6-8 *Breaking down the walls of his enemies*
- verses 9-10 *Building up the land of Judah*
- verses 11-15 *Judah's military strength*
- verses 16-21 *Uzziah's arrogance and punishment*
- verses 22-23 *Uzziah's death and burial*

He began so well with admirable intentions, seeking his God during Zechariah's days. He found amazing success in his seeking because he was helped and strengthened by God. It seems that no corner of the land lacked the benefits of his wonderful industry. The land flowed with water, milk, and fruit of every kind, and the name of Uzziah echoed around the whole region as Judah's enemies humbly brought tribute. The land was filled with the king's glory. For the first time since the days of Solomon, the finery of Tarshish flowed once again into the kingdom. Surrounded with peace and filled with plenty, Judah's new generation would probably have had no firsthand memory of the war their nation suffered through years before. Judah was different than the nations around him, and its king was different, too. In his younger days, Uzziah recognized Yahweh's Holiness by humbly seeking Him, and He answered him in mercy. But now, after years of God-given success, the king on Judah's throne grew confident in his own strength. He believed that he was entitled to transcend the law of God.

This was the setting for Uzziah's arrogant transgression. "*But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction*" (2Chron 26:16 NKJV). The king's heart was lifted up and soared so high above his brothers' that their rebukes could not reach him. So the famous king marched arrogantly into the temple, in a land that reflected his glory to approach his God Who had so graciously blessed him. It was a dramatically ironic moment. Uzziah had certainly offered many prayers as a young man when he sought God, but now he was looking to offer a different kind of incense. We know that incense is explicitly used in Scripture as a symbol for prayer (Psa 141:2; Rev 8:3-4). This time, Uzziah's approach was all wrong. His prayer would not be heard. There were no priests that stood at his side to encourage him in his work and sing his praises. Instead, the king stood face to face with

the priest, and eighty other priests collectively warned Uzziah that what he was about to do would not bring him the glory he now desired. Adding to this sad irony, were the names of the king and the priest. They shared a name — Azariah. Azariah was Uzziah's other name (according to the King's account) and Azariah was also the name of the chief priest who let the opposition against the king. For the king, Azariah spoke to what God had done in his life in the past; but for the priest, Azariah spoke to what God was about to do in response to his faithful fight against a rebellious king. Uzziah directed his anger to priests, but especially to Azariah who held the position he coveted. Upon that man's head, as upon every high priest's head, was the mitre with a golden inscription that read: "Holiness to Yahweh." How the king must have coveted that symbol of the priesthood! But the writing on his forehead was both completely different and completely appropriate.

Leprosy!

He was not the king-priest after Melchizedek's order. By God's direct judgment upon him, he was manifested as the high priest of apostasy. His thinking was corrupt, having forgotten a simple truth that is found throughout the Word but is expressed in the proverb — *"By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life"* (Prov 22:4). He once revered Yahweh and His Holiness, but he blinded himself in his pride. Though we cannot be sure when the earthquake struck during his reign (Amos 1:2; Zech 14:5), it would certainly be fitting if it took place when Josephus recorded it did — during the moment the leprosy struck him. The king who sought his own Holiness, received it. He was given his own house and separated from his people. He sowed and reaped his own corruption.

Isaiah's vision

Could there be a more striking contrast than Isaiah's call in chapter 6? There, sitting upon his throne, high and lifted up sat the King — Yahweh of hosts. How unlike Judah's recent tenant this King is! He sits on His throne in the highest heaven with His attendants — the flaming servants, the seraphim. They sing in call and response that Yahweh's glory fills the earth, and shake the earth with their cries as the King's train fills the temple. And before this amazing display stands the prophet.

If you saw the glory of Yahweh, what would you do? How would you feel if you saw a vision of the High and Lofty One sitting on His throne in awesome beauty? What would you say as you heard the cries of the seraphim, singing with such power as to make the posts of the door of the temple tremble at the sound? This was the vision of the prophet Isaiah, and he remembered it for the rest of his life. The seraphim were singing, *"Holy, holy, holy, the LORD of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory"* (Isa 6:3) — and Isaiah never forgot that song. It echoes throughout his entire prophecy. In the presence of such glorious majesty, it is worth considering his humble response.

It is important to notice what the prophet did not do — he did not take the song into his lips. He did not count himself worthy to sing it, confessing instead: *"I am*

a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips” (Isa 6:5). It was not that he could not understand it, because Yahweh had long prophesied about a time when the whole earth would be filled with His glory (Num 14:21). The glory of God is not limited to breathtaking displays of His visible hand; it is much more often connected with the quieter and sometimes unnoticed qualities of His character, which are lived out in the lives of His children. When Moses asked to see the glory of Yahweh, He declared to him His Name which cannot be separated from His mercy, grace, patience, goodness, and truth. Isaiah’s vision left him nearly breathless, and His brief reaction is very telling. His first words were, “*Woe is me, for I am **undone**,*” or *cut-off* as the margin has it. He expected to die in the presence of such glory. But there is grace and truth in the Father’s glory, and Isaiah never forgot it.

To those who have ears to hear, there is a song that echoes throughout the pages of Isaiah’s prophecy. It is a continuation of the song of the seraphim in praise to Yahweh for His Holiness. For the rest of his life, Isaiah never forgot what his God had done for him. And to celebrate Him as the Holy God that makes His children holy, Isaiah called him by a very special name. So important is this name that Isaiah uses it more than anyone else in Scripture. Even though he could not sing the seraphim’s holy song in the beginning, Isaiah could sing His praises in his own life after receiving the blessing of forgiveness, and called His God *The Holy One of Israel*.

“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 spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa 57:15).

His children are called by His holy name. If we are to bear His name in the future around His throne, when we sing to Him in newness of life, we must reflect the glory of His holy character now. What a fitting picture we are given, then, in Rev 14. Its details remind us that the same writer who inspired the ancient prophecy of Isaiah and record of the Kings and Chronicles, inspired this remarkable prophecy, too. Here is the true King with his attendants. Here they stand as priests before the throne, singing with all their beings to the glory of the Father, no longer humiliated by unclean lips — but who sing without guile.

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.... These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God” (Rev 14:1-5).

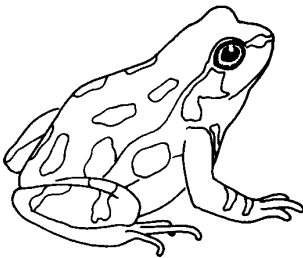
Brothers and sisters, let us never forget the Holiness of our Heavenly Father. In our prayers, our aspirations, our successes and failures, as future king-priests around his throne, let us all live in the Holiness of Yahweh.

*So shalt Thou, LORD, from me, e'en me,
Receive the glory due;
And even now shall I begin
The song for ever new. (Hymn 82)*

Contrasts

- The King on His Throne : 2Chron 26:1 cp. Isa 6:1,5
 - The Priest after Melchizedek's Order: 2Chron 26:16 cp. Isa 6:1
 - High and Lifted Up: 2Chron 26:16,19 cp. Isa 6:1
 - In the Temple: 2Chron 26:16,21 cp. Isa 6:1
 - With His Attendants: 2Chron 26:17 cp. Isa 6:2
 - Full of His Glory: 2Chron 26:8,15 cp. Isa 6:3
 - A Great Shaking: 2Chron 26:20; Amos 1:1; Zech 14:5 cp. Isa 6:4
 - Approaching before Yahweh: 2Chron 26:16 cp. Isa 6:5
 - Burning Incense: 2Chron 26:16-19 cp. Isa 6:6
 - Answering Prayers: 2Chron 26:19,21 cp. Isa 6:7
 - Judgment on the People: 2 Kgs 15:37; cp. 2Chron 26:6-15 cp. Isa 6:9-13
- Jay Mayock (Hamilton Book Rd, ON)*

A Minute Meditation — Boiling Frogs



The story goes that if you put a live frog into boiling water that it will immediately spring out to escape the heat. If, on the other hand, you put a live frog into cooler water where it is comfortable, and then add heat slowly, the frog will not notice the change until it is too late and too tired to jump out of the boiling water. The spiritual lesson we learn from this simple story is that the world and its thinking can creep into our minds so gradually and insidiously that we are not aware of the dangers of its

thinking until it has successfully corrupted our minds from the Truth.

Not possible? Compare a sheltered elderly sister to a young brother who has to work in the rough and tumble world of construction. If the elderly sister hears someone swear, she is shocked beyond belief. If the young brother hears someone take the Lord's name in vain, or some other profanity, he is so used to it that it does not shock him at all, because he hears it every day at work.

It is too easy to become hardened to all the sins that surround us out in the world these days, so that the sins do not seem so exceedingly sinful to us anymore. God's ways are completely different from man's ways. The world is surprised that we have a problem with practices such as profanity, or drunkenness, or folks living together before marriage and other lifestyle choices they make. Sadly, the next step after becoming accustomed to the ways of those we rub shoulders with in the world, is to become less judgmental of them. We may even find ourselves, or some of our young people, accepting their standards as normal rather than resisting them.

After all, those in the world are often very “nice” people who are kind, truthful, and hard working. Practices can enter our community, perhaps our families, and we feel less critical, more accepting, of what we previously might have considered unthinkable. Let us pray that when our Lord comes to call us that he may be able to see that, while we have been in the world, we have not become part of the world.

We must never get so used to the sins of the world that they no longer seem so bad. Our situation can be compared to that of Lot who was living in Sodom. Peter tells us that God “delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:”

Are we vexed every day? Do we stand up for godly standards even when it is unpopular and considered harsh or rigid thinking? Do we impress upon our young people the importance of chastity, separateness from the world, daily Bible readings, attendance at ecclesial functions, and keeping the commandments?

In spite of the fact that Lot was vexed everyday by the terrible conditions that existed in Sodom, sadly his married children did not share his concerns and refused to leave when Lot begged them to flee with him. Had his children become tolerant of their sinning neighbors? Did they think that Lot was a bit fanatic? Certainly his grown children did not take him seriously and refused to leave with him. Growing up they had been part of Abraham’s family and been taught the ways of righteousness, but after leaving Abraham and living in Sodom they had become accustomed to the sins of that awful place and were complacent when the moment of decision arrived. Lot lost most of his family, including some of his children and perhaps grandchildren. We don’t want to lose our family.

We need to be constantly on guard that the sinful way of life of those around us does not change our godly thinking. We are to come out from the world and be separate. Just how separate are we? Paul gives us good advice when he says, “I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people — not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. Do not even eat with such people.”

Our policy should be to not become involved with our worldly neighbors, except by our good example and our attempt to show them the beauties of the Truth. We are in the world, and we can’t help that, but we are not to take part in their worldly activities, and certainly we are not to get so used to their way of life that we are not vexed by the way they live and begin to accept it. Just because “everyone is doing it” does not make it right. We need to keep ourselves pure and strive to help our brothers and sisters to remain faithful to godly standards. We must work to make sure the standards of the world do not become acceptable to those who are striving to be servants of God.

We are not everyone. We have been given a high and holy calling, and we are thankful for this calling and must never take it for granted. We must never let down our guard to those that surround us, and who are not journeying in the way of life towards the Kingdom. If we want to be the called out ones of the Lord we must seek those things that are above, not those from beneath. We cannot sit in the tepid water of the world and allow it to heat us until it kills us. Let us remove ourselves from its influence. We need to stand out from the world just as Noah did and as did Lot, who never accepted the way of life that his neighbors had. We need to keep ourselves, our families, and fellow believers separate from the world around us.

The Lord Jesus prayed to his Heavenly Father just before he was crucified and said: “I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name — the name you gave me — so that they may be one as we are one.”

Robert J. Lloyd

HOLINESS AMONG THE BRETHREN

Jesus had to say to his disciples on one occasion, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,” — that is, the manner of spirit appertaining to the family to which they belonged. It is to be feared the same remark is true of many who embrace the truth in our day — though under a different heading. They would not in words deny that holiness becomes — belongs to — characterizes the house of God. They would admit that it is true that they are called to be holy: but they nullify their admission by the restricted interpretation they put upon it. It would be hard to put into words their idea of holiness; but it is practically limited to our abstract relation in Christ — i.e., the light in which God regards us in Christ. It is not in their treatment of the subject allowed to include personal habit or condition.

It requires but a small degree of familiarity with the Scriptures to see the narrowness — the dangerous deficiency — of such a conception of the subject. It is true that holiness in its Scriptural definition begins and has its foundation in what has been accomplished in Christ; and that we are holy and without blame in the justification we have by faith in him; but that it goes much further is the lesson of every epistle of Paul, and of every indication contained in that “form of the knowledge and of the truth” which God has given us in the law. We are to be holy in ourselves, as well as in Christ; holy in “all manner of conversation” (behavior) (1 Peter 1:15; Eph. 1:7; 5:24; 2 Peter 3:11): “holy both in body and spirit” (1 Cor. 7:34) “clean from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit” (2 Cor. 7:1). It is the express command of Christ. The command is reiterated by the apostles, as above, and in many other places.

Robert Roberts, The Christadelphian, 1893, p 386.