

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

of the Kingdom of God

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The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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THE TAKING OF OATHS

S. P. W. The state of the law is now such that there need be no difficulty in connection with the question whether the law of Christ allows his brethren to take oaths in a court of justice or elsewhere. If a brother has a doubt, he need not take the oath, the law now allowing of simple affirmation in case of conscientious scruple. On the general question itself, and also in answer to a question by J. R., on the meaning of the commandment not to take the name of the Lord in vain, we introduce to notice the following communication from brother Hayes, setting forth an article on the subject by the father of Dr. Thomas.

Torquay, Feb. 9th, 1872.

Dear Brother Roberts. The enclosed ms. on the subject of oaths is an exact copy of an article written more than twenty years ago by Dr. Thomas' father, and sent to me with a letter of which I have also enclosed a copy. My refusal to take an oath in a court of justice on conscientious ground, was the occasion of its being written. It satisfied me that I had been in error on the point, and it has struck me that it is worthy of a place in The Christadelphian; and if you are, after perusing it, of the same opinion, you will perhaps find room for it in your next issue. It might be the means perchance of saving some from falling into the same dilemma that I did, and from which I escaped not without a reprimand and the loss of a fee.

Samuel George Hayes (Christadelphian 1872 p. 279)

Editorial

Swear Not

"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all:... But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matt 5:33-34, 37)

Swear not at all

The background to this commandment by Jesus is quite relevant today. The command by Moses: *"Thou shalt...swear by His Name"* (Deut 10:20) was ruthlessly interpreted by the Jews of Jesus' time as meaning that any oath not addressed directly to the Almighty - *"thine oaths unto the Lord"* (v. 33) - need not be regarded as binding. It provided a splendid device for deceit in any sort of deal, or indeed any commitment. The answer to this subterfuge was a rigorous embargo on all misuse of holy language, and indeed on all forms of swearing in speech: *"I say unto you, Swear not at all"*

It was all part of a way of life which had become so familiar as to be taken for granted, sanctioned and even encouraged by the Pharisees (Matt 23:16-22). The simple statement of truth was deemed inadequate. It must be reinforced with the strongest possible oath and with the most flamboyant language available. Thus they diluted the power of words and tampered with men's sense of truthfulness. If you must emphasize your point, Jesus said to simply say it twice: say "yes, yes". (Note I disagree with the vast majority of the modern translations, who all have something very similar to *"All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil [one]"* (Matt 5:37 NIV).)¹

This reflects a common problem: down through the ages people have sought to find some way of ensuring the statements or commitments are "guaranteed" — at least in view of those making the declaration. There was a time when it simply served, in certain circles, to say "I give my word of honor". No-one would doubt such a declaration, and it was virtually unknown for anyone to doubt the sincerity, or retract such a commitment, once made. To do so would be to be cast out of society — a terrible penalty.

And even in our time, in most circumstances "oral"² agreements are enforceable at law, at least in the USA. There was a famous "handshake" agreement between two oil companies, one of which subsequently received a better offer and reneged — which cost them \$10 Billion US. And in many local areas significant contracts are made by a handshake, because no local businessman would dream of breaking such a contract, less he lose the respect and trust of the local community.

But why am I telling such stories? I am not going to recount how we observe the commandment of Jesus in our interaction with the local authorities and legal profession: we normally never "swear", but affirm rather. (It is a sad commentary

on our times that the witness in court who for religious reasons chooses to affirm probably carries more weight in his testimony than the one who takes the oath.) It is rather the increasing modern tendency, even within our own community, to doubt the statements of our fellows, even brethren or sisters. How many times have I heard doubts expressed whether or not a certain statement was in fact a true expression of a person's belief, or heard the statement twisted into a meaning that was clearly not intended. Or have heard "sound bites" used, again out of context, to cast doubt on the veracity of the speaker.

It is clear we need to be careful in all our statements in public. But, it is also clear that when we want to make a point, and ensure we are prepared to stand behind it, here in the verse from Matthew we have a clear guidance. The use of a double emphasis is intended to make sure the hearer understands the import of the statement, and that the speaker will stand behind it. Use with care. But when used, as disciples we should trust that the statement is a true expression of someone's belief, and neither doubt it, nor cast doubt that it is really meant.

However, this is not the only Scriptural example of emphasis. Time and again in his epistles the apostle Paul expressed himself by an oath of the most impassioned kind:

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 9:1).

"For God is my witness, ... , that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers" (Rom 1:9).

"Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth" (2Cor. 1:23).

"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,... knoweth that I lie not" (2Cor. 11:31).

"Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not" (Gal. 1:20).

It must be evident from examples such as these, that what Jesus would have his disciples avoid is the frivolous misuse of language. He was not forbidding solemn declarations, which are a proper expression of deep emotion. But to follow the example of Paul in present-day circumstances is perhaps unwise, as such language can be seen to be overly emotional in most contexts.

Misinterpreted statements

But there is another aspect of the words of Jesus that is significant. The words of Jesus seem to imply that any serious statement should be doubled for emphasis, or at least emphasized in some way. A simple statement, or idle comment as it were, is not treated with the same seriousness, and perhaps does not imply that it is the considered opinion of the utterer. And this also has significant consequences in our walk towards the Kingdom. How many times has a comment, perhaps not particularly well thought out, been used against a disciple — or even a group of disciples. There have indeed been occasions such as this. Two brethren are having a conversation. A bystander overhears, and claims he has heard one of them make

a statement, and immediately accuses him of some sort of heresy, and refuses to accept any denials made. And the other brother even declares that they must have been misunderstood: no such statement was made. But this too is refused, and the turmoil spreads.

It is somewhat incomprehensible that such situations arise: but they do, and probably will. If we would ignore any statements made without any special emphasis, much trouble would be avoided.

As Paul says:

“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col 4:6).

Perhaps we can paraphrase: Let your speech at all times be pleasant, not antagonistic. Let it be seasoned with the salt of wisdom, and let you know how you ought to answer anyone, for the Hope and the Faith that is in you. Let you use words with care, speak plainly and without using circumlocutions or obscure terms. Let your words, if necessary, be emphasized if you want to be able to truly stand behind your words.

Conclusions

Verbal communications, especially when conducted face to face, is the bedrock of human communication. Written words are so often capable of more than one interpretation, and it is human nature, unfortunately, to use the worst possible interpretation in case of doubt. Without the opportunity to ensure you truly understand a declaration, and perhaps restate in your own words, many misunderstandings have arisen and will so continue. There is a need for written communication, but this should be preceded by ensuring there is no way the written words can be understood, perhaps by ensuring those initially in disagreement at least can express what is their understanding.

And words should never be quoted if out of context. As those in America watch examples of all sorts of statements in the current presidential race, we in our community should be repulsed by the very idea of using such techniques as we all too often see and hear. A word misheard is a very dangerous thing, and the person makes the statement should always be given the benefit of any doubt.

On the other hand, a statement made with special emphasis should always be considered a true statement of a person's opinion or belief. There tends to be in many circumstances an opinion expressed that “they do not really believe that.” And there is the other side: if you have any doubts, do not say it with emphasis. Many assurances have been given, only to be later retracted: “I did not really mean that.”

“Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one of another (Eph 4:25).

Peter Hemingway

Notes:

1. Some of this material is derived from “Studies in the Gospels” by Harry Whittaker.
2. Legally, in the USA “verbal” agreements can in fact be either spoken or written!

Exhortation

My Generic Exhortation: A Different Time and Place

Have any of you ever apologized for giving the same exhortation a second time? My wife tells me this may be the case with “The Generic Exhortation”. If that is so, then my defense is this: One of the main points of this exhortation is that it’s okay — and in fact quite useful sometimes — to repeat themes and ideas, and the Bible passages that support them. So I say: If you can’t repeat an exhortation about repeating exhortations, what exhortation *can* you repeat?

When my brother and I were growing up, back in the last century, we attended Sunday school and meetings in Lampasas, Texas, a small ecclesia not too far from where I now reside. Our attitudes about the Bible and its teachings were shaped considerably by that time and place, and the brothers and sisters who lived there.

It’s sad to say that, while we could visit some quite exotic and extraordinary places today — *if* we had the time and money — there are some places we can no longer visit. The circumstances no longer exist, many of the people have passed on, and we ourselves are different. Thomas Wolfe, the novelist, said, “You can’t go home again.” For nearly all of us grown-ups, that’s very true in the most meaningful way. That “home”, and how it felt when we were young, doesn’t exist anymore, except insofar as we carry it with us in our memories.

Speaking for myself, when I hear the word “patriarch”, or the phrase “our fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”, my mind shifts back about 50 years and I see the face of “old brother Sammy Wolfe”, and then the faces of others from the same time and place.

In the early days, the ecclesial meeting was a very informal affair; it was mainly family. People sat in a circle and brothers knelt for prayers. Often the patriarch, “old brother Sammy”, presided — calling on the others, often his sons, to do readings and prayers. Sometimes exhortations consisted of each brother in turn making a comment on the daily Bible readings, or else saying, “I have nothing this week.”

My grandmother, Sister Jessie Hatcher, attended the Lampasas meeting. “Grandma” had a great influence upon me, in my formative years. For one thing, she was always determined to attend all Christadelphian meetings. Although she was a Berean Christadelphian, she made a point of attending all Central and Unamended gatherings within driving distance. (After all, she had known many of the brothers and sisters, in the different fellowships, before the divisions had ever happened, and she still considered them all her brothers and sisters.) Later on, when I had a driver’s license, she enlisted me to drive her to all the gatherings; there I met some interesting folks, some of whom I see around me today.

Grandma was a voracious reader, a fierce defender of the faith, and outspoken in all her opinions. I remember as a child, being somewhat embarrassed dur-

ing exhortations, because Grandma would recite aloud, impromptu, along with the speaker, many of the Bible verses as he read or quoted them. And for good measure, she would sometimes toss in a loud “Amen!” to express wholehearted agreement. I still have some of her Christadelphian books, with her name in the front, and her notes in the margins, and various passages boldly underlined. (She never underlined anything *lightly* in her whole life! She always *underlined boldly*! A psychologist could probably make something of that.)

In Lampasas, there were only a couple of sisters who played the piano (including our mother). Their repertoires were limited — so there was a lot of repetition of the same favorite hymns (including “Brethren, let us walk together”). And there was a lot of mixing and matching of hymn tunes to fit more of the available hymns. One of the favorite hymn tunes was “What a friend we have in Jesus”, and this music matched up with various lyrics, including (notably) “Come, thou long-expected Jesus”. Here we still sing those words to the music for “What a friend we have in Jesus”.

Over the years, from the earlier hymnbook to the latest one, the tune for one particular hymn was modified ever so slightly, while the words remained the same. This means that, even today, when that hymn is sung, you can listen closely and hear a few of the old-timers (if they happen to be around) hitting the higher note at a critical point in each stanza. That hymn was the one we sang just before the exhortation (#265), and you may have noticed that too. When I hear someone singing the old, higher, note instead of the new one, I feel a tingling and I’m immediately taken back a half century or so, to that place which is impossible to visit any more.

In Lampasas, there were only six or eight exhorting brothers, aside from an occasional visiting brother. This meant that Wesley and I heard each brother many times over the years, and invariably there was a lot of repetition, of ideas and even of favorite Bible verses. Some of those old standby verses were so well-known that they no longer required any explanation or exposition. Sometimes the exhorting brother just read them or quoted them, and kept on going.

Wesley and I heard some verses so many times that, even though we weren’t always listening, we could still quote them verbatim (from the King James Version, of course). At the time, they seemed almost boring, but the simple fact is: We still remember those verses just as we heard them, perhaps hundreds of times.

There is Bible precedent for this repetition of ideas. In the commandments concerning the Passover, in Exodus where God tells Moses:

*“And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians’... On that day tell your son, ‘I do this because of what the LORD did for **me** when I came out of Egypt.’ In days to come, when your son asks you, ‘What does this mean? say to him, ‘With a mighty hand the LORD brought **us** out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery’ “ (Exod 12:26,27; 13:8,14).*

What a wonderful picture: “I do this because of what the LORD did for *me* when I came out of Egypt.” Even if it was 10 generations earlier, or 100 generations, the Jewish father was to tell his son how the LORD brought *him*, and “*us*”, out of Egypt! It was a miracle of redemption to be repeated and experienced anew with each successive generation. Each Jew — no matter when or where he lived — was to think of *himself* as having been delivered out of slavery into freedom.

That’s the picture we get from these verses. Repeating Bible lessons makes fathers and mothers, and grandparents, and uncles and aunts, into “patriarchs” — like “old brother Sammy” — reminding us of what Abraham, or Moses, or David, or Paul can tell us, from the pages of the Bible, about the gospel and our hope. It may be repetitious, but when we truly believe, it can never really be boring or tiresome. It is our life!

So Wesley and I developed our own list of “favorite” Bible verses, “favorites” because we heard them so often that, even today, we can scarcely forget them, and “favorites” because they simply reminded us of key points of that faith we learned as we grew up, and hold to this very day. And because they were “favorites”, there was almost never a Sunday morning that we didn’t hear one or two of them — and some mornings we seemed to hear them all, maybe more than once!

All-star Bible verses

So, here is our “generic exhortation”, made up of five samples, “generic Bible verses”. Call it the Lampasas lineup of all-star Bible verses.

- 1) *Romans 15:4: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”*

The NIV translates “patience and comfort” as “endurance and encouragement”. The development of patience (or endurance) in the day-to-day living of our lives is what an exhortation is all about, and the only true exhortations come from the examples and teachings of Scriptures. We don’t read the Bible just to learn facts; we especially read the Bible to be comforted with our hope, and to be encouraged to shun bad examples and to follow good ones. And for this purpose, the Old Testament is equally useful as the New Testament.

For me, this verse points out how abundantly meaningful and helpful is all the Bible. It is not just old history; it is not just about events that happened thousands of years ago. It is as alive as today’s news, and tomorrow’s expectations. The Word of God is living and powerful, but *only* if we see it as such, and spend time reading and thinking about it.

- 2) *Galatians 3:16, 27-29: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ... For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

Like the first generic exhortation verse, this also looks back to the beginning,

and the gospel preached to Abraham. It reminds us of some fundamental Bible principles:

- that Jesus Christ was and is the “seed” or descendant of Abraham,
 - that the promises to our spiritual father Abraham were also promised to his special seed Christ himself, and
 - that those same promises are also given to us, *if we are baptized “into Christ”*.
- 3) *1 Corinthians 13:13: “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”*

“Charity” (KJV) is, we all know, “love”, or “agape”, the love that is modeled after the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, our Passover lamb who laid down his life for us. But *why* is “love” the greatest of these?

I think it is because of this:

- “Faith” looks back, to the past (it is about what God has *already* done, in and through Christ).
- “Hope” looks forward, to the future (it is about what God *will* do through Christ).
- But “love” is for *right now*, and that’s why it’s so important.

Past love no longer matters. Promises of future love are essentially useless until we act upon them. Love is an action, not an emotion. We need to *show* love (not just *feel* love) each day. Love is practical. It shows itself (or *should* show itself) in all the simple virtues: patience, kindness, care for those who are sick, protection of those who are weak. It avoids all mean-spirited things like boasting, pride and anger. It encourages good in others, while overlooking (and forgiving) their faults.

Showing love doesn’t require great intellectual attainments, or great wealth, or great physical strength. It does not need to be extravagant; it simply means doing the best with what we have, where we are — but it means doing it every day, for those who are near us. Giving a cup of cold water to someone who is thirsty. A helping hand, just for a moment, to someone who is struggling. A word of comfort to someone who is troubled.

We can’t *be* Jesus Christ, but then we don’t *need* to be him. We just need to *try* to be *like* him. To be the best George, or the best Jim, or the best Joe. To be the best Marti, or the best Inga, or the best Sarah... In short, to be the best “whoever” we can manage to be, *right now*.

But we do need to be the best we can be... *right now* — not next week, or next year, not “when I get a job”, or “when I graduate”, or “when I retire” — but the best we can be, right now. We need to show love today.

- 4) *Luke 12:32: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”*

Do we remember that it is a *command* to “fear not”? What are we afraid of? Are we afraid *because* we are nothing but a “little flock”? Are we afraid of sickness, or financial loss, or hunger, or death? Are we afraid that we will miss out on something in this life that we ought to have?

This verse tells us that our heavenly Father finds pleasure in giving us the greatest gift imaginable — the Kingdom of God! He *wants* to give us eternal life in His family, in a wonderful regenerated world. More than anything else, He wants to *save* us. Even when we have troubles in this life (which the Bible tells us are inevitable), we must remember that they are nothing but light and momentary afflictions. Sooner than we think, all our troubles will disappear in a full and eternal joy when His Son returns.

5) *Matthew 25:34: “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”*

When the king returns, he will say to those on his right hand (the hand of acceptance and honor): “Come!” It will be the most wonderful invitation. The world has never received an invitation like it, in all its history.

We have a glorious heritage, and a glorious inheritance. The Almighty Father has prepared a place for His children, and He is holding the door open to welcome us. If we truly believe this, then anything and everything else in this whole crazy world is beside the point. Everything else is like the morning mist before the sun rises. Everything else is no more than the paper in which our special gift is wrapped, waiting for the right moment to be opened.

“Come, ye blessed of my Father... inherit the Kingdom!”

The bread and wine

As we prepare to take the bread and the wine, some of us can let our minds wander back, 50 years or more, remember faces and names, and think of the power of tradition, of repeated actions and thoughts.

‘We do this, because of what the LORD God did for our fathers, and for us, in Egypt, and in the wilderness — and what the Lord Jesus Christ did for our fathers, and for us, in the Upper Room, in the Garden of Gethsemane, and at Golgotha.’

Others may think of today’s generic exhortation, with its all-time-favorite Bible verses:

- Everything that was written before is for our learning, so it’s important to read the Bible.
- The promises to Abraham are just as real today as when he first heard them. Those promises have been given to us all, regardless of race, age or gender.
- Having such a wonderful hope, and sustained by our faith in what God has said, we must show our love for Him, His Son, and one another. We do this in simple acts of kindness and care, toward those who are around us.
- We do not need to fear anything that may happen to us in this life, because God will delight in giving us all things.

When His Son returns, our Father will welcome us into His wonderful Kingdom, promised and prepared especially for us from the beginning of time.

George Booker (Austin Leander, TX)

First Principles

Fellowship Practice According to the Scriptures (2)

We continue our survey of the Biblical principles of fellowship. Following the pattern found in several New Testament letters, last month's article focused on the doctrinal basis for our fellowship practice and this month we turn to the powerful exhortations that follow from these principles.

Our Christadelphian fellowship is truly different from that which is common in most other communities. There is a strong sense of family, a closeness that most of us have experienced, especially when we travel amongst our brethren. We welcome them into our hearts and homes no matter where they come from, and we have visited in their homes in all parts of the world, language and cultural differences notwithstanding. There is a shared feeling that we are all working together in our Father's vineyard. Whether it is the work involved in performing our ecclesial activities, or the more personal efforts directed at ourselves as we seek to mold our characters into our Lord's example, we are all fellowshiping in these tasks. God's work is our common calling.

VI. One hope of your calling

We recall Paul's exhortation, "I... beseech you that **you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called...** even as **you are called in one hope of your calling**" (Eph 4:1, 4). Being a child in God's family has serious implications for us and our spiritual careers, the vocations to which we have been called.

In the Bible, trade guilds use familial language to describe their leaders and members:

- Guilds are called "families": "**the families** of the house of them that wrought fine linen" (1Chr 4:21).
- The founder of a guild, its current head, and its master craftsmen are each called "father": "Jubal: he was **the father** [i.e., founder of the guild] of all such as handle the harp and organ" (Gen 4:21); "Joab, **the father** [i.e., head] of the valley of Charashim <02798: craftsmen>; for they were craftsmen <02791 cheresh>" (1Chr 4:14); and "Now I have sent a skillful man, endowed with understanding, Hiram **my master craftsman** [literally, **father**]... skilled to work in gold and silver, bronze and iron, stone and wood, purple and blue, fine linen and crimson, and to make any engraving and to accomplish any plan which may be given to him" (2Chr 2:13, 14 NKJV; cf. Tanakh), that is, the King of Tyre sent no mere journeyman to work on Solomon's temple, but a highly skilled master, perhaps even the head of the profession (compare Bezaleel and Aholiab, Exod 31:1-6; 35:30-35).
- The members or apprentices of the guild are called "sons": "Next unto him repaired Uzziel **the son** of Harhaiah, of the goldsmiths. Next unto him also repaired Hananiah **the son** [i.e., apprentice] of one of the apothecaries... After

him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith's **son** [i.e., apprentice]" (Neh 3:8, 31).

- The same familial terminology is used of a school of prophets (1Sam 10:1, 5-13; 1Kgs 13:11-15, 20:35; 2Kgs 2:3-7, 12, 15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:12; Amos 7:14).
- The Bible has other examples of such family professions: Jesus was a carpenter (Mark 6:3), the son of a carpenter (Matt 13:55); James and John the sons of Zebedee followed their father's craft of fishing (Mark 1:19-20).
- "Apprenticeship was in fact analogous to adoption: the verb *ekdidosthai* is used for both."¹ To join a guild was to become an "adopted son" of its "father".

Even today, trade unions and guilds are often referred to as brotherhoods; for example, International Brotherhood of Steelworkers, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, International Brotherhood of Teamsters (i.e., Truck Drivers), and Brotherhood of Police Officers. The Mathematics Genealogy Project is documenting the "family tree" for those who have doctorate degrees in mathematics: advisors are parents and their students are children in the tree.

In a natural family, the Jewish father is expected to teach his son, especially the Torah and the history of God's salvation of Israel (e.g., Exod 12:26-27; 13:8-10; Deut 4:5, 9-10; 6:1, 7, 20-25; 11:19; 32:7, 46; Psa 78:1-8; Prov 1:8; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1). The same is true in a trade guild: the "father", a master craftsman, trains his "sons", the apprentices and journeymen learning the craft. Jesus alludes to this growth of a master's disciples, "*The **disciple** is not above his **master**: but every one that is perfect shall be as his **master***" (Luke 6:40). Moreover, this emphasis on training is also true of God's family guild: "***All thy children shall be taught of the LORD, and great shall be the peace of thy children***" (Isa 54:13).

Jesus was the Son of God, so Jesus was his Father's apprentice:

*"Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel***" (John 5:19-20).

*"Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you: **but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.** They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that **I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.** And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for **I do always those things that please him.** As he spake these words, many believed on him" (John 8:25-30).*

Jesus was God's apprentice: the Son could do nothing of himself, but what he saw the Father do; he was taught by his Father everything that he needed to know in order to finish the works that had been assigned to him. These works were the works of the One who sent him:

“Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John 4:34).

“But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17).

“And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:1-4).

Jesus finished these works that God had assigned him to do, and by doing so he turned in his masterpiece and so became the master craftsman in God's family guild:

“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4).

“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost” (John 19:28-30; cf. Gen 2:1-3; Exod 39:32; 40:33; Psa 22:31).

In like manner, we have been called to be part of God's family guild: we are sons of God, taught by God to do His work:

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13).

“Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:43-47).

“But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another” (1Thess 4:9).

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2Tim 3:16-17).

Our Statement of Faith, valuable as it is, must be understood to be more than a set of propositions to be affirmed or denied. God's Word instructs us in His ways. We

are called to be His children, following His commandments. Repeatedly the Bible tells us that God's teachings must be believed, and that beyond mere acknowledgment, they must be lived.

Paul uses familial language to describe his relationship to his disciples. He writes to the Corinthians, "I write not these things to shame you, but **as my beloved sons** I warn you. For **though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.** Wherefore I beseech you, **be ye followers of me**" (1Cor 4:14-16), and to the Thesalonians, "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (1Thess 2:11-12). He calls: Timothy "**my beloved son**" (1Cor 4:17), "**my own son in the faith**" (1Tim 1:2), "**my dearly beloved son**" (2Tim 1:2), and "**my son**" (2Tim 2:1); Titus "**mine own son after the common faith**" (Titus 1:4); and Onesimus "**my son**" (Philemon 10). Peter calls Marcus "**my son**" (1Pet 5:13). Similarly, in the Kingdom Age, Christ shall be called "**the everlasting Father**" (Isa 9:6), "**a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah**" (Isa 22:21), "**Behold I and the children which God hath given me**" (Heb 2:13; cf. Isa 8:18).

Being in God's family guild means that we need to be doing God's work, the good works we have been created for:

- "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good works**, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt 5:16)
- "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every **good work**" (2Cor 9:8).
- "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto **good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10).
- "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every **good work**, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (Col 1:9-11).
- "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of **good works**" (Titus 2:13-14).
- "Now the God of peace... Make you perfect in every **good work** to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ" (Heb 13:20, 21).

Jesus gives a simple definition of his true family: "**My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it**" (Luke 8:21). In short, being in God's family means being in God's family guild, hearing His word, and doing it. This is the true meaning of fellowship, of being true Christadelphians.

There is one hope of our calling, our vocation. Being in the family of God means being in His family guild. We are instructed by God's inspired Word, which prepares us to do His good works, unto which we have been created. We are to walk worthy of our vocation, worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work. To be true brothers and sisters of Christ, we must hear the word of God and do it.

VII. One spirit

We recall Paul's exhortation:

"I... beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is... one Spirit" (Eph 4:1-4).

Transforming our minds so that we think and act like Christ is the key to effective fellowship. Like the Word made flesh, we must reflect the Word of God in our lives. This is the essence of the fruit of the Spirit:

*"This I say then, **Walk in the Spirit**, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*

Now the works of the flesh are manifest... of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

*But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith [faithfulness, fidelity], meekness, temperance [self-control]: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. **If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.** Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another" (Gal 5:22-26; cf. Rom 8).*

The fruit of the Spirit are the watchwords of fellowship: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness/fidelity, meekness, and self-control.

We are to be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind, not thinking more highly of ourselves than appropriate, counting others better than ourselves:

*"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, **that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ.**" (Phil 2:1-5).*

*“For I say, through the grace given unto me, **to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith**” (Rom 12:3).*

We are to take on the mind of Christ, becoming last of all, servant of all, submitting to one another:

- *“Whosoever will come after me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.** For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it... If a man desire to be first, **the same shall be last of all, and servant of all**” (Mark 8:34b-35; 9:35).*
- *“**Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God**” (Eph 5:21).*
- *“**Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing**” (1Pet 3:8-9).*

In our society, accepting that we must submit to others is extremely difficult. The culture we live in tells us that we must stand up for ourselves, we must demand our rights, that submitting is for fools and the weak. In addition, there are many misconceptions about self-denial. In contrast, the Scriptures are clear: submission is the key to true self-fulfillment.

The repetition of these ideas—loving others, foregoing our rights, seeking the benefit of others, following the example of Christ — emphasizes their importance:

- Love thy neighbor (Lev 19:18; Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom 13:7-10; Gal 5:14; James 2:8; Matt 5:43-44).
- Love one another as Jesus has loved us, by which we shall be known as his disciples (John 13:34-35).
- Love without hypocrisy (Rom 12:9-18 NKJV).
- All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets (Matt 7:12).
- Forego our “rights” to promote the progress of the gospel (1Cor 9:1-12; 2Thess 3:7-9).
- Become servants to all, for the gospel’s sake (1Cor 9:19-23).
- Seek the benefit of others, please all men (1Cor 10:23-24, 31-33).
- Live not unto ourselves, but unto Christ (1Cor 5:14-15; Gal 2:20).
- Constrained by the love of Christ (2Cor 5:14).
- Please not ourselves, receive one another (Rom 15:1-9).
- Follow the example of Christ (Mark 10:42-45; John 13:3-5, 12-17; Eph 5:1-2; Phil 2:5; 1Pet 2:21).

This collection of exhortations indicate that the new commandment, to love one another, and the golden rule, to do unto others as we would have them do unto us, are the essence of true fellowship.

Reflecting these spiritual characteristics is the key to peace:

- “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, **live peaceably with all men**” (Rom 12:18).
- “**Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another**” (Rom 14:19).
- “And let **the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful**” (Col 3:15).
- “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; **let him seek peace, and ensue it**. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1Pet 3:10-12).

There is one spirit, one mind of Christ, and we must endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The fruit of the spirit — love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control — are the watchwords of true fellowship. We are to share the mind of Christ, becoming servants to one another, denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and following him. We are to love one another, treating each other the way we want to be treated. We are to seek peace, building each other up, thinking better of others. These behaviors are the keys to harmony in our community, and to us being approved at the return of our Lord.

Key ideas

Understanding and obeying fellowship principles according to the Scriptures is essential for our community today. These principles can be summarized as follows:

- Fellowship is a collection of covenant relationships, of mutual interactions with our heavenly Father, His son, and our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Fellowship is based on a common set of agreed Scriptural first principles.
- Fellowship is an ecclesia’s responsibility to implement for its members.
- Fellowship excludes those who do not share the same Scriptural first principles.
- Fellowship excludes those who do not walk after the commandments of Christ.
- Fellowship between ecclesias is a corporate responsibility that requires recognizing all ecclesias that follow the same doctrines and practices, and necessarily excludes those that do not.

May the God of peace bless us, and keep us; may His face shine upon us; may He be gracious unto us. May the LORD lift up his countenance upon us, and give us peace. Amen.

The Tidings Publishing Committee

Notes:

1. C. H. Dodd, “A Hidden Parable in the Fourth Gospel,” chapter 3 of *More New Testament Studies*, p. 33.

**Letters to the editor can be sent to letters@tidings.org.
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Bible Study

Creation's Gospel (11) Underestimating Our Creator

We can review ancient and modern records testifying how the scientific elite down through the millennia have been deeply puzzled by the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics in defining the features of nature. The validity and consistency of the mathematical patterns, binding these features of creation, have resulted in mathematical prophesies concerning sub-atomic structures that have ultimately been vindicated. The most emotionally unsettling component of these repetitive mathematical patterns is perhaps the way they drive to the conclusion that there is an intelligent designer. This conclusion is fought with every emotional ounce by both the mathematically inclined as well as the mathematically challenged, because of their naturally self-worshipping perspective. This supposedly 'unreasonable' effectiveness has generated the continuing question as to whether mathematics was invented or discovered. This continuing quandary for the unexpected effectiveness of mathematics in displaying the patterns and inter-related and inter-dependent nature of our universe is the premise for the most recent book by a senior astrophysicist associated with the Hubble space project. Dr. Mario Livio is the author of *Is God A Mathematician?*

The perspective differential

We have determined that the foundational motivation for the intentional complexity of all divine communications, is to empower the meek, circumcised as it were in their heart, to progress into increasingly greater levels of divine enlightenment, while preventing the self-obsessed from escaping their blissful ignorance. The expressions and parables of Yahweh and His son were carefully designed to give to those who had, and take away from those who had not. The crucifying of our ego (heart) facilitates an entirely new perspective for both the written word of God (Bible) and the spoken word of God (creation). Underestimating our Creator and overestimating ourselves is the universal paradigm for the societies of the children of men (as opposed to the community of the children of God). This differential in perspective is quite evident in these musings of the mathematical elite, as referenced in Dr. Livio's book. (He is a Jewish scientist from Israel.)

The universal underestimation of our creator

Sir Isaac Newton was perhaps the greatest of history's mathematicians. He was also a Bible student and believer in the intelligent design of creation (as opposed to 'nature' accidentally progressing from simple chaos to an ordered, yet interdependent complexity). However, Newton could not scientifically explain the stability of our solar system. He suggested that the reason the planets do not spiral into the sun or slingshot into deep space was the power of the Creator who miraculously (and unnaturally) maintained the balance of the solar system. Newton's reasoning

suggested that because the Creator's works of creation were not perfectly balanced, this somehow proved His existence. Despite Newton's faith in a Creator, his underestimation of that Creator somehow confirmed his confidence in the existence of a (somewhat) intelligent designer. A little over a hundred years later the Marquis de Laplace published his research entitled *Celestial Mechanics*. This work answered the questions about the stability of our solar system, without requiring magical tweaking by an almost omniscient and almost omnipotent creator. Laplace most certainly did not believe in an Intelligent Designer. His Perturbation Theory demonstrated how the stability of our solar system would extend for far longer than that anticipated by Newton. Laplace maintained that since nature was perfectly balanced, needing no magical interference, this somehow validated the absence of an intelligent designer.

Isn't that fascinating?! Both elite scientists employ their disrespectful impressions of a less than omniscient and omnipotent Creator to validate their diametrically opposed reasoning. Newton promotes the concept that because the Creator couldn't get it quite right and had to tweak the features of creation for sustainability, this somehow proves intelligent design and control. LaPlace promotes the concept that since the sustainability of the universe is perfectly right (that the Creator did a flawless job), that this somehow proves there is no need for man to 'create' some power higher than ourselves. Both men based their conclusions on the premise that our Creator cannot be as all-powerful and all-knowing as He claims. This Creator-degrading presumption is extremely common. The Creator is not some mere manipulator of a universe greater than Himself. Literally everything that has been made projects the divine truths and principles of our Creator, right down to the finest sub-atomic detail. The disciplines of mathematics, chemistry and biology all offer the same patterns as Scriptural expressions. The glory of the knowledge of our Creator is far more amazing than we can possibly understand with such limited mental capacities as we currently possess.

The enlightenment barrier

This line of reasoning begs the question: If we human beings can discover such incredibly complex scientific truths that have been the springboards for incredible lifestyle advances, why is it so impossible for mankind to see the supposedly far simpler relationship between spiritual truths and creational features? (We think of examples in medicine, travel, energy, communication and mechanization.) The answer is academically simple but very difficult to emotionally accept. "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it*" (Jer 17:9). The human heart is the barrier to eternal spiritual truths, but not scientific truths.

Listen to our hearts ... and we will always be wrong

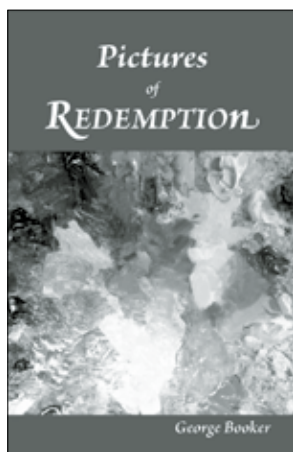
The sad truth is that society's shared foundational presumptions are entirely based on a shared set of heart generated presumptions. Political, religious, humanist and entertainment leaders all parrot the same mantra of listening to our hearts so that we will never go wrong. This is the great lie of this, our final Ecclesial Age generation. The serpent philosophy, preferred by our original ancestors over divine righteousness, is naturally generated from an uncircumcised heart. Our instinc-

tive thought process is naturally self-validating. Enlightenment doesn't reverse that reality. It simply highlights the real danger of listening to an uncircumcised heart, untrained in the eternal divine truths and principles. This is why apostasy is a constant and ever-present threat within the community of believers. This is why literally every form of false doctrine is always both God degrading and flesh exalting. Jesus addressed this issue with the Sadducees when he proved the doctrine of the resurrection by simply reminding the Sadducees how his Father defined Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Luke 20:37-38). If there was no resurrection, this would simply have identified God as nothing but a god of the dead, like the Greek Hades, the Roman Pluto, the Egyptian Anubis or the Indian Kali. Rejecting the doctrine of the resurrection is absolutely blasphemous, as is the same case with all heart distorted doctrines. Perhaps this stinging embarrassment is why none of Jesus' opponents were willing to risk the humiliation of asking him any further 'trick' questions after this response (Luke 20:40).

Our final Creation's Gospel commentary will touch on the microscopic validation of divine truths and principles offered by *the things that have been made* (Rom 1:20).

Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)

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The Joy of Sunday Schooling

Get Them Thinking and Talking! The Use of Question Sheets

More often than not, teachers do the talking and students do the listening. But talking is not always teaching and listening is not always learning. There are alternatives to the talking-listening model of education. A lively question-discussion session, for example, can help both teaching and learning take place.

Questions draw responses; and well-designed questions can engage minds, draw useful responses, and promote discussion.¹ Herein lies a lesson planning strategy that can make Sunday school classes more interactive and educational.²

Using question sheets

Perhaps the easiest way to illustrate the point is to share an experience. Some time ago I was asked to fill in as a substitute for our senior Sunday school class. The students – all teenage boys — were studying the commandments of Christ, and I was given free rein with the subject. I needed a quick lesson plan!

I decided to focus on matters of conscience, especially in relation to the way we deal with violence in the world. The entire lesson was developed around a single problem:

*What would you do if an intruder entered your home, pulled a gun, and threatened to kill your mother?*³

If you pose this as a one-off question, you might get a few quick responses from your students and then have things lapse into unproductive silence. It is not an easy question for a young person to answer on the spot. I wanted to make sure that this didn't happen. I wanted the kids to think about human nature and the way people often react in situations like this; I wanted them to think about the Biblical principles involved, and, as much as anything, I wanted them to have a little time to think before they spoke.

We used three question sheets that expanded on the problem and allowed us to accomplish all of these things. The question sheet strategy worked very well.

First question sheet: What would you do?

The students were each given a copy of the first question sheet as soon as they walked into class. We read the problem together and then they went to work. They were given three or four minutes of quiet time during which they were asked to ponder the problem and choose how they might respond. Here is what the first question sheet looked like:

What would you do?

*What would you do if an intruder entered your home,
pulled a gun, and threatened to kill your mother?*

Circle one or more choices.

- A — Tell the man that he has no business doing this and if he doesn't get out you will call the police.
- B — Try to bluff the intruder into thinking that you have already called the police.
- C — Grab a gun and try to kill him first.
- D — Try to knock the gun out of his hand.
- E — Turn your pit bull loose on him.
- F — Jump in front of your mother to protect her.
- G — Slip into another room and contact the police.
- H — Other. Please specify your own choice of action.

(writing space)

After think time was up, rather than make the students commit to any of these courses of action, I asked them to evaluate each of the options, one at a time. What did they think about each choice? Was it likely to work or not? What might be the probable outcome? Would the outcome be what they wanted? Could they think of any alternatives?

The students basically critiqued themselves as the discussion went along. It was interesting to see what they were thinking; and it definitely was not time for me to jump in and tell them “all the answers!”

Second and third question sheets: The issues involved

When this discussion had run its course, a second question sheet was handed out and we started to think more specifically about the Biblical issues involved in the problem. Again a few minutes of think time were given for the students to formulate answers to the questions before I opened it up for discussion. Here is what the second question sheet looked like.

Issues involved

*What would you do if an intruder entered your home,
pulled a gun, and threatened to kill your mother?*

Assume that you and your mother are Christadelphians.

- 1 — If you react with violence, what are the possible outcomes?
- 2 — If you react with nonviolence, what are the possible outcomes?
- 3 — What would the consequences be if you succeeded in killing the intruder?
- 4 — What would the consequences be if you tried to kill the intruder and failed?
- 5 — What would the consequences be if the intruder killed your mother?
Killed you? Killed both of you?

Ample writing space was provided after each question.

These questions further probed the nature of the students' thinking. Did they see the practical value of Christ's nonviolent teaching? Did they have a conscience about inflicting harm on someone else? Were they prepared to accept the consequences of their actions? Did they have enough faith to act in a Christ-like manner, even if it failed?

It still wasn't time for me to tell the students what to do. The point of these questions was to let them work things out for themselves while I listened to see just how Biblically they were thinking. Could they begin to identify the Biblical issues at stake?

The last question sheet followed up on this one and was handled the same way. Here especially we began turning up Bible passages to get God's guidance on the problem. At this point, too, the students were encouraged to evaluate the wisdom of their choices in light of God's wisdom. Were the choices they made the same thing that Christ would have done?

Issues involved

*What would you do if an intruder entered your home,
pulled a gun, and threatened to kill your mother?*

6 — Which of the choices on the first sheet require you to take matters into your own hands in an attempt to save your mother and yourself?

A B C D E F G H

7 — Which of the choices on the first sheet require you to trust God more than yourself?

A B C D E F G H

8 — How could you put faith in God and put Biblical principles into practice in this situation?

9 — What do you think Christ would do in this situation and why?

10 — What relationship must a Christadelphian have toward his enemy?

(Writing space provided for questions 8-10)

With these three question sheets, we were not at a loss for things to do and talk about. A full and vigorous Sunday school session was the result. But there was still something I wanted to get across to my students. They needed to know that God's way really works and is not just theoretical. For this we needed more time and more things to think about.⁴

A footnote on the preparation of question sheets

Framing good questions doesn't just happen. It takes work. I suggest that you do two things when you develop a question sheet.

- 1) Set it aside for a few days after you have finished it and then come back to it. Do the questions still make sense to you? Do you remember why you asked

each question? And are you really asking what you want to ask?

- 2) Give your question sheet to someone else to read. Do they understand the questions and interpret them the same way you do? Do they see the point of the questions or do you need to tweak some of them in order to clarify things?

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Notes:

1. See “The Questions We Ask,” *The Tidings*, June, 2012, pp.228-231; July, 2012, pp.281-285.
2. This strategy also works for CYC, the midweek Bible class, and other educational forums.
3. Not long ago, one of our Christadelphian young people in New England was asked this question by a military recruiter after he told the recruiter that he was a religious conscientious objector. It takes some careful forethought to answer this question well.
4. See next month’s article: “God’s Way Works! The Use of Case Studies”.

Does turning the other cheek mean that you shouldn’t protect your family?

Jesus says..

“But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Mat 5:39).

Taken at face value, this says that if someone wants to hurt you, you should not resist. (See also John 18:36, Rom 12:19-21, 1Thess 5:15, 2Tim 2:24.) Instead you should have faith in God to keep us safe. Here’s an example from Paul:

“The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen” (2Tim 4:18).

But this leaves open the difficult question of what to do, as a husband and father, about self-defense of defending your family from someone who might try to rape, murder, or otherwise harm them. How would a New Testament believer handle this issue?

Unfortunately, the New Testament doesn’t answer this. We have the principle defined above, set against with natural urge to defend our family (sometimes it’s a marriage vow too). It’s not clear how to resolve this. A clue comes from the general context of Jesus’ remarks in Matt 5:21-45:

- Forget about murder, don’t even be angry with someone
- Cut your eye out rather than look at a woman with lustful intent
- Don’t swear at all — simply tell the truth
- Don’t resist evil — pray for evildoers who hurt you
- And finally: *“You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:48).*

Jesus is describing a radically different kind of behavior — completely at odds with our instinctive behavior, with behavior that comes naturally. And it’s a standard that no one can meet either. According to this standard, we shouldn’t protect our family. Perfection: it’s something to strive for, every day.

<http://bibleq.info/answer/3999/> Answer by Graham Grieve

Youth Speaks

Introduction

This next series is a group of four articles that are about four major issues that young people face in their lives — baptism, character development, relationships, and debt. It is hoped that as you read through them, even if you have already made the decision to be baptized or if you are no longer looking for a relationship, they will cause you to think upon Biblical things, and to meditate upon practical advice found in the Word of God. Each of us, regardless of our age, are confronted with these four things constantly throughout our lives — if it isn't our own issues that we are facing, at times we are trying to help others with theirs. May these articles serve to help us look at each of these situations with a right attitude and with a Biblical foundation. May you find them to be practical, Scriptural, and encouraging.

Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA)

Section editor

Major Decision #1 — Baptism

As human beings we have been hard-wired from creation to have numerous thoughts, feelings, and emotions, but two are chief among them all in every single person on earth:

- 1) A fear of dying
- 2) The need to worship something

Not surprisingly these two are often seen linked together, that is to say often what we worship comforts us as we perhaps fear dying, or at least gives us feelings of eternal youth. Money, self, friends, a boyfriend or girlfriend, games, sports, intelligence, even Bible knowledge apart from a Godly lifestyle, all of these can be the hub of our lives. Sadly no sooner do these things that we worship bring us happiness, than do they become old news and then disappear. By default we usually end up being deceived into worshipping ourselves in one variation or another. However, if you could consciously pick one thing to dedicate your life to what would it be?

In the parable of the “*unprofitable servants*” in Luke 17:7-10, Jesus in his own way told us what we should be doing with our lives, and the attitude we should have while we are doing it. However, there is an amazing unspoken blessing to Jesus’ proposition here, but one had to be paying attention to his previous lessons to grasp them.

The word “you” in the parable reveals that there are two scenarios. First “*which of you having a servant...*” that is to say; imagine you are the master; however in verse 10 Jesus reverses the second scenario saying “*When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants’*”: that is to say; in reality you are the servants! Jesus plainly told us that based on how we would expect a hired hand to act for us, we should do whatever he commands us to do, and not expect a reward for it. Sort of like how the government commands

everyone to pay taxes, and does not mail out thank-you cards to those who have done as they were told. However, Jesus is in fact contrasting “you” as a human master and himself as loving master appointed by God! Consider these three differences between how “you” or any other human would treat a servant, and how Jesus in fact treats us:

- 1) We would tend to allow our servants to go hungry before we do; Jesus went hungry 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness because he was unwilling to perform a self-serving miracle (Matt 4:1-4), but he performed one to feed over 5000 fickle followers who had gone hungry no more than one day (John 6:1-15).
- 2) We would not give our servants a choice whether or not to follow our command; Jesus gives us commands, but we are free to choose not to follow them (Matt 16:24 — note the “IF” before the command).
- 3) We would not praise our servants for doing their duty, let alone reward them beyond what they earned; Jesus is offering us the prospect of being rewarded with eternal life despite us being sinners even when we try to follow him (Rom 6:23, Luke 12:32).

If I had to pick one thing to dedicate my life to, it would be to serving a master like this! All other worldly masters dispose of servants when they become unprofitable — this master actually laid down his life for his servants. Who won the gold medal for the 100m dash in the 1992 Olympics? Who was named “the most beautiful person” by People Magazine in 1992? Who was the world’s first billionaire? Surely anyone of these three achievements would have taken a lifetime of dedication. Sadly the people who the world once idolized are soon forgotten, as a master that moves on to the next servant when the last one has grown too weak to be profitable. Truly even the best positions the world has to offer cannot compare with the honor and pleasure of being a servant in Christ.

Baptism is when we accept the invitation to follow Christ, and by implication forsake all other things that previously controlled our lives. There is a sense of honor in no longer avoiding our duty to totally submit our lives to God. It is also humbling to confess that we are unprofitable servants because we can only give back a life to God that he has given us in the first place; but most of all it is a sense of thankfulness for salvation. We have the work-ethic and attitude of a servant, but with the complete joy that our master is like no other master in this world. Where else can a person go to find a master who would lay down his own life for you, pay you an infinite sum for a mere 70ish years of labor, forgive you when fall short of his commands daily, listen to you any time you need to talk, offer you good advice to live by if you want to spare yourself pain and heartache, and guide you to an ecclesia to keep you company?

Whether or not people are aware of it, we are all looking for a master to dedicate our lives to, but most are far more exacting and much less loving than Jesus, and his Father who sent him.

Joey Marple (North Battleford, SK)

Reflections

Marriage Proverbs: Guidelines for a Happy Relationship (10) Guideline Number 9: Immorality

The word “immorality” does not appear in the original King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. Some have deplored this omission and the use instead of archaic terms, such as fornication¹, which is not readily understood in the modern context. The English Standard Version (ESV) corrects this difficulty by using the word “immorality” forty-one times to describe behavior that is specifically repugnant to the Lord God. The Apostle Paul tells us:

“For this is the will of God,...abstain from sexual immorality;” (1Thess. 4:3 ESV²)

The sexual revolution

The sexual revolution that took part in the latter part of the 20th Century, fostered by the invention of the birth control pill, and the ready availability of legal abortion, are elements that made promiscuous sexual relationships more commonly accepted in society. The endless reports of sexual immorality in society, as a whole, was exemplified by the general acceptance of the multiple marriages, or live-in relationships, of public figures ranging from entertainment personalities and sports figures to political leaders. One infamous basketball star even boasted of having known intimately 20,000 women, and this didn't seem to incite any serious public approbation. The specter of sexually transmitted diseases, especially the possibility of contracting AIDS, slowed this immoral march for a time, but at least in the western industrialized nations the progress of medical treatments has largely alleviated these dangers. So, to a great extent, the explosive pace of immorality has resumed with vengeance in the 21st century. With many universities having moved to co-ed dormitories and the general blind eye college administrators seem to have towards sexual immorality — their attitude appears to be one of having much bigger issues to worry about, such as whether or not the school has a winning football team! For those of us born in the dark ages when men and woman lived in separate buildings on campus, where members of the opposite sex were not allowed anywhere except the lounge areas of the opposites dormitory and where housemothers zealously protected the virtue of the female students under their care — the current climate on campus is a total, unabashed shock. Even more troubling is that the sexual revolution has spread to high school where a recent extensive survey determined that 40% of young woman in America ages 15 through 19 have had intimate sexual relationships.³ Now is this a serious problem, or is it not?

From my observations on a college campus, I have found that most parents seem resigned to the sexually immoral climate these days, and simply hope that their child takes proper precautions so as not to cause a pregnancy. (Some minority of

parents may even give their children more explicit advice to protect themselves, but this still implies that they are implicitly accepting the sexual climate as a fact without condemning its promiscuous immorality.) I have heard some young people in our community say to me: Just what sort of behavior does God consider as being sexually immoral? After all we have politicians seeking Presidential nominations that have had multiple marriages and still claimed to be running on a platform of “Christian values”. I have also heard it said that promiscuity is a not considered a crime, and if the act is between two consenting adults, why should it be anyone’s business what they do in the privacy of their relationship. Of course, in saying this the “anyone” who is being left out of this equation is the Lord God! The notion that sexually immoral behavior is first and foremost a sin against God is not appreciated in modern society, but it certainly should be amongst us regardless of our age. That this is the case can be illustrated by the behavior of Joseph when Potiphar’s wife was attempting to seduce him. This seduction was intense, we are told: “...*she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her*”. Joseph’s spiritual character is wonderfully revealed in his refusal to give in to temptation when he said: “*How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?*” (Gen 39:9-10). It might be well for all of us to keep these words of Joseph in our hearts and minds if we are ever placed in a situation where peer pressure or simple lack of moral constraint might tempt us to do otherwise.

For a young person to indulge in immorality with the moral climate so prevalent today places them in jeopardy of not being able to eventually have a happy marriage. The apostle Paul was keenly aware of this danger especially since the moral climate of the prevalent pagan culture of the 1st Century A.D. was in many ways parallel to our society today. He exhorted his beloved friend Timothy to:

“... flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22).

The divorce society

The problem of pervasive immorality permeates all ages not just the teenage and college cohorts. At one university where I worked approximately 50% of the nearly 500 faculty and staff of my particular college were divorced, and among the most prevalent causes leading to the breakdown in the marital relationship was infidelity! While the statistics aren’t this outrageous for Christadelphians, the fact remains that marital infidelity has slowly but surely crept into our community with tragic consequences not only for the individuals involved, but also causing painful collateral damage to family, children and the Ecclesia. What are the implications of today’s loose morality with respect to being capable of having a happy marriage?

The Scriptures leave us no doubt with how the Lord God views sexual immorality:

“But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death” (Rev 21:8 , also 22:15).

This is a straightforward, unequivocal statement — if one is sexually immoral then that person will not be in the Kingdom. That makes it a “first principle” though not explicitly stated in our Statement of Faith! We need to appreciate the seriousness of this fact and not accept the modern world’s denial of the crime — in God’s sight sexual immorality is, in effect, a capital offense.

Now it is evident that temptation to infidelity is nothing new and it has caused even the greatest of men to stumble. We read of King David:

“David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king’s house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful” (2Sam: 11:2).

We all know the story; David’s passion led to sexual immorality with Bathsheba and eventually made him complicit in the murder of Uriah. David paid a terrible price for his infidelity and sadly didn’t even seem to recognize his crime until the Lord God strikingly pointed it out to him via the prophet Nathan. This is one of the most distressing features of sexual immorality — the self-justification and obfuscation that leads a person to do it with almost no awareness of the seriousness of their actions. At the time of occurrence they are instead being caught up in the passion of the moment.

Dissatisfaction in the marital relationship can drive a person, be it the man or the woman to seek, as it were, greener pastures. It is not at all unlikely that one can imagine finding a partner who is prettier, richer, more considerate, and more in harmony with our own dreams and ambitions. Sometimes it is not even a drive, but metaphorically a short-walk! It is the engine that propels the multibillion-dollar pornography business.⁴ This whole new form of virtual infidelity has ruined many a marriage. This industry preys upon human weaknesses and dissatisfactions and the apostle John clearly stigmatized such behavior when he wrote:

*“For all that is in the world — the desires of the flesh and **the desires of the eyes** and pride in possessions — is not from the Father but is from the world” (1John 2:16).*

We should be able to perceive that the application of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ recorded in Matthew apply precisely to the modern forms of virtually infidelity epitomized in pornography:

“... ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt 5:27, 28).

Pornography — a modern problem

Pornography has become commonplace, and accepted as a legal expression of free speech in the United States. So it is not surprising that most people in the world generally place no stigma on it as long as it doesn’t involve minors. Nevertheless, we should not confuse the law of God with the law of man! What the Bible is teaching is that high moral standards in marriage relationships include not having imagined infidelity, as well as actual physical unfaithfulness. The reason for this

must be clear in our minds, because such virtual infidelity would exactly parallel our unfaithfulness to God. If we only worshipped the Lord outwardly, but inwardly resented that relationship, our vows to God would be as hollow as our vows to our marriage partner if we harbored lust for others in our hearts.

In times past we were insulated from the pervasiveness of porn by it being difficult to find and access. In previous generations most youths were not really aware of it until well into their adult years.⁵ But today what once was hidden and on the fringes of society is now on every newsstand. It also obtains access into our very homes via the cable or satellite TV and of course the omnipresent Internet. Women also have been known to get caught up in sexual fantasies, but of a slightly different and possibly more benign variety, typified by the multibillion dollar romance novel industry which churns out more than 6,000 volumes a year. The trend unfortunately is to make such romance novels more and more explicit. Some of the top selling books on recent bestseller lists apparently fall into this category judging from reviews in leading newspapers. While still nowhere near as offensive as hard-core porn, this genre still is capable of becoming an addiction that detracts from the marital relationship by creating a fantasy world that a husband would find impossible to emulate.⁶ What to do about it? The Lord Jesus Christ provided us guidance if we are tempted to yield to this situation:

"If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell" (Matt. 5:29).⁷

The Lord here is talking metaphorically, but in the present discussion the analogy is especially apt. As with any addiction it is generally hard for a person to cut off the temptation stone cold without outside help. Most Ecclesias would not have the resources to deal with such a personal issue, and the danger of gossip would surely make almost everyone reluctant to discuss it with most other brethren and sisters. There are community resources available in most places in North America that specialize in dealing with a person's addiction to visual and written immoral sexual fantasies, and they can provide a way to deal with and control these impulses. A search of the Internet yielded several in my hometown that are available locally and several Christadelphian resources are also available on-line that are worth consulting.⁸ Another possible avenue for seeking help would be to have a confidential discussion with one's family doctor as to sources of expertise in this area. Finally, some Ecclesias in North America have a standing relationship with general counseling resources in the community, that either can help directly or would be knowledgeable to make appropriate referrals. I would urge anyone who suspects they have a problem in this area to recognize it immediately and get help sooner rather than later. Don't turn a blind eye to the issue like King David did, because it is unlikely that the Lord will send you a prophet like Nathan to point the finger. More likely it is an issue that we need to face ourselves or have a loved one hurt by our lack of appreciation for the damage it may cause.

Any chance for a happy marriage stands a very good chance of being dashed to pieces if sexual immorality raises its ugly head in the relationship. Unfaithfulness,

virtual or physical, is a serious breach in the bond of trust between a couple that is difficult to reconcile. If the condition is recognized, faced and dealt with via appropriate counseling it is possible for the offending party to control their future actions. The assurance that it will never happen again is a difficult thing to do and moreover may be hard for the injured partner to accept. However, we should never forget that forgiveness is also a “first principle”. It is the only phrase that our Lord Jesus Christ elaborates upon after teaching his disciples how to pray:

“... if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt 6:15).

The Scriptures teach that there is only one sin that is unforgiveable by our Lord and that is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:28-29). Surely, if the Lord God could forgive King David his sexual immorality, it is possible for us to receive this as a lesson in forgiveness ourselves. I would pray that none of my readers would face such a serious difficulty in their marriages, but if it does happen let the one who has offended repent and find the counseling necessary to permanently cease to cause such offense. Let the offended party find it in their heart to ultimately forgive and try their best to restore the relationship to the state of happiness that the surely they once had when they first fell in love.

John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)

Next: How to have happy intimate relationships in a marriage.

Notes:

1. The word fornication appears 40 times in the KJV and not at all in the English Standard Version (ESV). The KJV uses it to describe a plethora of actions including idol worship, adultery, promiscuity, and physical or moral unfaithfulness.
2. All references are from the ESV.
3. From a Center for Disease Control (CDC), report 2010, as cited by the Associated Press June 3, 2010.
4. “As an industry, it has a worldwide value of \$57 billion and a \$12 to \$14 billion value in America. To put this number into context, this industry grosses more money than professional football, baseball and basketball combined in the United States.” Quoted from the *Iowa State Daily*, Ames, Iowa.
5. OK — I’m ancient being 73 years old when this is written! The fact is that growing up to adulthood in the 1950’s the availability and access to porn was so remote that neither myself, nor any of my college peers as nerdy engineering students thought about it. Our biggest concern was trying to understand that new-fangled theory called quantum mechanics. The critical point here is that the incredible explosion in availability today makes the temptation infinitely more difficult to ignore than when I was a youth.
6. It is a fact that men and woman have very different reactions towards visual porn. It also may seem to the readers that my equating “Romance” novel addiction to visual porn as a stretch. However, this is not original with me, but an analogy drawn from numerous discussions with brothers and sisters and from consulting sociological research findings. For more information on this see the article on the website: http://www.netnanny.com/learn_center/article/122
7. In Matthew 5:29 — The ESV and KJV word “hell” is translated from the Greek word “Gehenna” (See the Diaglott), which as most Christadelphians know was the garbage dump outside of Jerusalem where perpetual fires were kindled. Hence, Jesus is telling us to throw out our immorality into the incinerator. A fit image for what to do with pornography!
8. See for example, <http://cycresource.com/> and <http://www.caringnetwork.ca/>

The Book of Mormon:

(1) Problems with Mormon Archaeology

In the January, February and September, 2012, magazines, Sis. Mary St. Onge published three articles examining “The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (The Mormons)”. Those articles, combined with the fact that a Mormon, Mitt Romney, is running for president of the United States, prompted us to carefully read the Book of Mormon, which is the primary text we commonly associate with the Mormon religion.

As Sis. Mary pointed out, the book primarily follows the migration of the Jew, Lehi, and his family from Jerusalem to a distant land. It also contains a brief summary of the earlier travels of the Jaredites to the same place. This distant land is claimed by Mormons to be the “Americas”. And, as Sis. Mary notes, the descendants of Lehi’s family are claimed to be among the native inhabitants of North, South and Central America. It is in following the migration and development of these peoples that we encounter the very significant problem of “Mormon Archaeology”.

Where is this place?

I Nephi is the first division of the Book of Mormon and starts us out in familiar surroundings — Jerusalem, the wilderness and the Red Sea (I Nephi 1:7; 2:5; B.C. 600). Once successfully integrated with another Jewish family group, termed Ishmael and his household, the company is said to begin their travel to the Promised Land. “And we did travel nearly eastward from that time forth.” Eastward from the Red Sea would take them across the Middle East and Asia. They spent eight years in this migration, until “we beheld the sea” (I Nephi 17:1,4,5). Mormons take this to be the Pacific Ocean. After building a boat, said to be at the direction of the Lord, Nephi records, “after we had sailed for the space of many days we did arrive at the promised land” (I Nephi 18:23).

When looking at a map, it is obvious to be a Mormon one must believe in the incredible miracle that a people with women and children could migrate from the Red Sea across Asia to the Pacific Ocean in eight years. They would have to traverse vast deserts and dense jungles and work their way through some of the most torturous mountain ranges on earth. They would then need to cross the world’s greatest expanse of ocean. If such a journey took place, one would suspect reference to it would be found in the extensive historical records of Persia (Iran) or China. However, no such records have been found.

Believing the record to be divinely inspired, Mormons attempt to identify the place along the Pacific coast of the Western Hemisphere where the company could have landed and begun the civilization that they feel eventually populated most of the Americas. Of course, Mormons aren’t sure where this was and speculate possible landing sites all the way from Chile to Mexico.

It’s upon reading the details of the place the tribal group supposedly populated that further problems occur. According to Nephi, “we did find upon the land of promise...beasts in the forests of every kind, both the cow and the ox, and the

ass and the horse, and the goat and the wild goat, and all manner of wild animals, which were for the use of men. And we did find all manner of ore, both of gold, and of silver, and of copper” (1 Nephi 18:25).

Where along the Pacific coast in B.C. 589 would fit this detailed description?

One major problem is that horses, cows, and asses don’t appear in the Americas for another 2,000 years, when they were imported by the Spaniards and other Europeans. The Book of Ether further complicates the situation by adding “elephants” to the mix (Ether 9:19; this book purportedly records an earlier migration to the promised land by the Jaredites). Mammoths (the Western Hemisphere version of elephants), along with horses, had become extinct in the western world thousands of years before the events the Book of Mormon could be referencing.¹

A civilization develops but can’t be found

Over the following centuries, a sophisticated civilization was said to have developed. A temple like Solomon’s was built (2 Nephi 5:16), great cities were built with many synagogues (Alma 21:2, 4), an elaborate system of measurement and coinage was worked out (Alma 11:4-19). By B.C. 46 reference is made to “their shipping and their building of ships, and their building of temples, and of synagogues and their sanctuaries... behold, there are many books and many records of every kind...” (Helaman 3:14-15). Earlier in the same chapter reference is made to “the people who went forth became exceeding expert in the working of cement; therefore they did build houses of cement” (v. 7).

Where are the remains of this civilization? In other places in the world, remains of such civilizations in Israel, Persia, Turkey, Italy, Egypt, etc. are easily seen.

The area of this activity seems to be fairly well defined: “And it came to pass that they did multiply and spread, and did go forth from the land southward to the land northward and did spread insomuch that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east” (v. 8).

Looking at a map of the Americas, Mormons have realized the only place that could fit this description is southern Mexico and Guatemala. Accordingly, they have much interest in archaeological investigations of ancient Mayan ruins found in that general area. Yet, as noted below, nothing has been found to confirm the historical accuracy of the *Book of Mormon*.

In the world of Mormon archaeology, Thomas Ferguson is a well-known name. He believed the Book of Mormon to be divinely inspired and felt that proving its historical accuracy would greatly advance acceptance of the faith. In 1952 he started the New World Archaeological Foundation which was still operating in 1999. While Ferguson initially thought it would be easy to find proof that the book was accurate, he eventually gave up and lost faith in its historical accuracy. Likewise, after much work on the various sites in Central America, the National Geographic Society made the following observation in 1998: “Archaeologists and other scholars have long probed the hemisphere’s past, and the Society does not know of anything found so far that has substantiated the Book of Mormon.” In

1996, the Smithsonian Institution commented that the “Smithsonian archaeologists see no direct connection between the archaeology of the New World and the subject matter of the book”²

What the archaeologists were looking for was Hebrew or Egyptian writings, pottery or buildings with distinctively Middle Eastern patterns, paintings of horses, cows, etc. As noted above, these were not found. The Smithsonian added the comment: “Reports of findings of ancient Egyptian, Hebrew, and other Old World writings in the New World in pre-Columbian contexts [before A.D. 1492] have frequently appeared in newspapers, magazines, and sensational books. None of these claims has stood up to examination by reputable scholars. No inscriptions using Old World forms of writing have been shown to have occurred in any part of the Americas before 1492 except for a few Norse rune [having obscure language] stones which have been found in Greenland.”³

As we know from Biblical archaeology, many confirming discoveries did not come to light until the past 100 years. Therefore we acknowledge that because something has not been found does not mean it will not ever be found. So Mormons must hold to the belief that eventually archaeological confirmation of the *Book of Mormon* will be found. To this date, however, they have experienced little but disappointment.



The Hill Cumorah

As Bible readers, we are accustomed to reading of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Capernaum, Damascus, Rome, etc. These are all names of cities that still exist and are readily found on modern maps. So our curiosity and suspicions are aroused when we read of Zarahemla, Desolation, Ammonihah, Moriaton, Omner, Gid, etc. as cities of the Jewish civilization in the New World. Where are these places? We’ve never heard of them and we don’t find them on current maps.

But finally we come to a place that is on the map: “the land of Cumorah, by a hill which was called Cumorah” (Mormon 6:2). It is there that Mormon (a great

Nephite leader c. A.D. 385) is said to have hidden the plates (v. 6) and it is there that Joseph Smith claimed he found them. It is also said that Mormon's son Moroni hid additional plates which Joseph Smith claims to have found (Mormon 8:14-15; Moroni 10:2). The hill Cumorah is in the Finger Lakes district of New York State near the town of Manchester, New York. Mormon's reputed description of the area as "a land of many waters, rivers and fountains" (Mormon 6:4) certainly fits as does his description of the movement of armies between two lakes.

What doesn't fit reality, however, is his description that "the whole face of the land had become covered with buildings, and the people were as numerous almost, as it were the sand of the sea" (Mormon 1:7). This was supposed to be in A.D. 322 in west-central New York State.

Where are the remains of all these buildings? They have not been discovered.



Hill Cumorah: no evidence of battle

Further, according to Mormon, there was a great battle in which over 300,000 warriors died. Where are their remains and the accompanying weapons of war? They have never been found.

There are many archaeological confirmations of events recorded in the Bible and more keep showing up. Many of us have seen the remains of Solomon's stables at

Megiddo, the inscription in Hezekiah's tunnel, the extensive excavations at Lachish, the synagogue where Christ taught at Capernaum, the great stones from Solomon's and Herod's temples. We've read translations of the inscriptions on the Moabite Stone and Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem. There is no doubt about the historicity of events recorded in the Bible.

As we have noted, such confirmation of the accuracy of the historical accounts given in the *Book of Mormon* is completely lacking. Therefore, before even considering the theological teachings of the Book, we are fully justified in suspecting it is a fanciful invention as opposed to any heavenly revelation.

Don Styles (Ann Arbor, MI)

Notes:

1. 2008 Ency. Brit. Articles on "Horses" and "Anthropology and Archaeology"
2. This information is readily found from a Google search on "Mormon Archaeology"
3. Ibid.

Remember the Sparrows

"I watch as a sparrow alone upon a rooftop" (Psa 102:7).



A lonely, insignificant little bird without flock or even a mate is one example of what King David uses to try to express his own feelings. He is in isolation, feeling forsaken by others, a deep aching loneliness, and sadness to the point of despair. He can't eat or sleep because he feels so attacked, alone, small, abandoned, and helpless. So David mourns. He describes himself as a rough, drab little bird exposed for all to see how pitiful and vulnerable it is. No one who

will love it or protect it or care what happens to it. Imagine how David feels. Can you remember when you have felt this way? No one should have to endure being treated this way, but unless your heart is aching right now, you will gain nothing from I have to say further — nothing.

The good news is your actions, even your life, will **not** go unnoticed by those who see your true value — especially God.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Mat 10:29-31).

Come to think of it, God's people are a lot like sparrows in more ways than one. In order to know what those ways are, one must view the example of a sparrow's life. Fly on the wings of a sparrow with me.

House sparrows are plain-looking, little, gray-brown birds with plump bodies and short powerful beaks designed for eating seed. Such sparrows are not native to America. They were originally brought here, probably from England in around 1851-2. They're immigrants, too. In fact, these little birds have become the most widely distributed bird in the world. That and the fact that there are so many of them have made them the most commonly recognized bird in the world. Nearly everybody knows what a sparrow is, but people take little notice of them. I wouldn't say God's people are vast in number, but they are viewed as common. There is nothing exciting about them that the average person would take notice of them compared to celebrities, executives, or other such rich popular people.

I fed a sparrow once. It chose me. It fluttered in front of me waiting for my outstretched hand. It rested on my thumb and ate crumbs from my palm. I was ecstatic that something that lives so wild could be so tame. Sparrows love wheat the best. Wheat is wholesome. It has a wonderful earthy smell during harvest that reminds me of comfort and kitchen baking. It's like the feeling of satisfaction after a hard day's work in the field. A blade of wheat has kernels of grain — grains of Truth — that has to be separated from the chaff before being eaten. Both human and bird alike have to have these grains pounded into flour before being able to

digest it just as Truth must be fully understood in order to apply it. The sparrow has to keep grit (fine gravel) in its crop to grind every piece of food it swallows for this very purpose. If we don't have the grit to discern right from wrong and to face the truth, we would not survive either.

Sparrows are very gregarious. That means outgoing and friendly. They try to incorporate themselves into the flocks of other species like robins and cardinals for example. They can fly as high as the observation deck of the Empire State Building to be with other birds or to seek food. But most birds don't like the sparrow. They drive them away. Those who do not seek to rid them from their territory will try to kill and eat them. Sparrows are prey for several larger birds. And as if that wasn't enough, cats and squirrels eat their eggs and kill their babies. Sparrows are viciously attacked by nearly every other bird in nature because they are seen as being too small and weak to defend themselves. Jesus warns us to expect such treatment. "The world hated me, therefore they will hate you also."

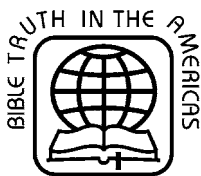
The sparrow is one of the very few species of bird that mates for life like the dove. They typically lay 4-5 eggs. Here is the number four signifying "gospel" and five signifying "grace". It also reminds me of the parable of the talents when comparing the number of babies that survive to adulthood. Birds who do not find both nest and mate often serve as helpers for mated pairs, just as God's people are to help others in their flock who are in need. This trait to be a helper is unique to sparrows. This is to develop their maternal instinct while becoming more visible to other single birds thus increasing their chances of being chosen as a mate. Also while a single bird is seeking a nested family to become a helper for, they could even replace a lost mate

The last thing about sparrows is that they often have no set habitat — no land area of their own for nesting. Other birds drive them away. Since most birds are bigger or more aggressive than the sparrow, the sparrow usually loses out. So they have to be resourceful. They have to settle for whatever homes they can find. Sometimes sparrows will use the abandoned nest site of other species of birds. But here's another very unique trait of this sturdy little bird: they go where their troublemakers fear to tread. Sparrows are fearless! They prefer to nest as close to human dwellings as possible. As sparrows seek to be close to humans so believers seek to be close to God. When sparrows can't find a fortified, enclosed site like a hole in a tree, they seek the tops of drain pipes, holes in garages, and the like. They love neon signs for the warmth and shelter from attack it provides. They will do anything to provide protection for their babies. If the tabernacle of Moses had eaves, you can bet it would have been full of sparrows!

"My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God" (Psa 84:2-3).

The next time you see an ordinary little sparrow remember that you are not alone and that you are important because God cares what happens to you.

Deborah Ramos (North Houston, TX)



Bible Mission News

2012 Trinidad & Tobago Bible School



The Caribbean island of Tobago is only 6.2 miles wide and 26 miles long, covered with rainforest, rimmed with pristine beaches and home to some of the most amazing brothers and sisters in Christ.

The annual Trinidad & Tobago Bible School alternates between the two sister islands, and this year the Mount

Grace ecclesia in Tobago was the host. The gathering was larger than usual due to brethren arriving for the All Caribbean Youth Week, which took place in Tobago the week following the Bible School. Due to all of the visitors flying in from Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Guyana and North America, the venue for the Bible School had to be relocated from the hilltop ecclesial hall down to the John Dial Community Center. In addition to being large enough to host the anticipated crowd of 120 brethren, the Community Center sits right above Hillsborough Bay and had a breath-taking panoramic view of the Atlantic Ocean.



John Dial Community Center

The theme for the Bible School was taken from James 5:8, “establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord.” Bro. Ted Hodge Jr. from Ontario, Canada, and Bro. David Andrews, from Georgetown, Guyana led the week’s studies. Bro. Ted’s classes focused on the book of Galatians and centered around the theme of “Faith which Worketh by Love” (Galatians 5:6), while Bro. David’s classes were entitled “Secrets of the Kingdom” (Mark 4:11) and focused on Jesus’ parables.

The Bible School began on Sunday, July 29th with memorial service and an exhortation by Bro. Ted which followed the theme of “the cup” through Scripture — from its first appearance in the butler’s dream in Genesis to the “cup” that Jesus partook of during his death on the cross. Even as grapes must first be pressed into a cup to produce a pleasing drink, so the “cup” we have been given may involve

pressing trials before joy. We then shared in the Lord's cup and began our week of Bible school mindful of how we have been called to follow Jesus' example of taking in faith the "cup" the Father had set before him.

Following the memorial service, the 2012 Truth Corps team had the opportunity to introduce themselves and share their experiences from spending the two weeks prior preaching and supporting the ecclesial in Guadalajara, Mexico. Introductions finished, we had our first of many generous lunches that would be served at the Bible School. Over the week we were treated to fried King fish, baked chicken, roti, pelau, sweet potato, rice, mango curry (as well as many other curries) and macaroni pie, just to name a few dishes the Sisters lovingly served.



The schedule for the week was packed; the first class each morning started at 9am, followed by a brief break before the second morning class. Following that, the two speakers would take a seat at the front of the room and field questions from the audience about the day's studies. After the Q&A hour wound down, we broke for lunch, which was served there at the community center. After

lunch we took our seats again for the third class, followed by another Q&A session. While the adults learned about Galatians and the Parables, the Truth Corps team led the Sunday School lessons for the kids in a convenient landing tucked behind the stairs on the lower level. Aided by the Mt. Grace Ecclesia's 7-foot tall painting of Nebuchadnezzar's image, the Truth Corps members taught the kids about Daniel's time in Babylon. After the lesson, the kids made crafts based on the day's story, and at the end of the week, they put on a presentation for the Bible School.



The afternoons and evenings were reserved for fellowship and preaching activities. The Mount Grace ecclesia had planned a busy schedule of canvassing, public lectures, radio addresses and open-air presentations for the port city of Scarborough. Around 5pm, the Truth Corps team, local brethren, and visiting brethren would gather at the Scarborough PRDI, and while half stayed to support the public lecture, the other half would canvass the harbor area. These activities were so well



Preparing to canvass

supported and received, we found ourselves wishing we had brought more literature to distribute! The public lecture topics for the week were “Who is Lucifer?”, “Is the Soul Immortal?” and “Is God One or Three?”; each night several contacts showed up as a result of the distributed leaflets or through the encouragement of the local brethren. After each class, everyone stayed for another hour of refresh-

ments and robust discussion about the evening’s topic. Then it was off to bed to get rested up for another full day.

The local brethren did an amazing job of coordinating the transportation, accommodations, meals and schedule. It’s likely that none of us realized how much “behind the scenes” time and effort went into ensuring the week ran well. What an example of letting “thine alms ... be in secret!” Many thanks goes out to all those involved in the coordination of the week.

Like any Bible School, one of the critical components is fellowship. The Bible School allowed for old friendships to be rekindled, new ones to be formed, and brethren from neighboring islands to share in each others’ joys and trials. Younger brethren from ecclesias that lacked elders were able to gain wisdom and encouragement from those much wiser than themselves, which the elders were able to benefit from the enthusiasm and strength of the youth. The week was full of great Bible studies, late night conversations, and meaty discussions around God’s word. Several times throughout the week brethren mentioned that in sharing in fellowship with brethren from different countries, backgrounds and cultures, we were having a foretaste of the Kingdom of God.

Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD)

Truth Corp 2012

Truth Corps completed its 43rd consecutive year of work in early August. This year the team spent two weeks in Guadalajara Mexico, followed by a week in Tobago. The team promoted classes in Guadalajara for the Bible Center and at Lake Chapala, about an hour outside the city. We were very pleased that so many new students came to the classes as a result of the work of the team. The work with these new students is now continuing in the capable hands of the brothers and sisters in Guadalajara. In Tobago, the team participated in the Bible School and had the opportunity to work with the young people. The following paragraph describes the experiences from one the Truth Corps members themselves:

The work we did this summer benefitted the team as much as it did the ecclesia's we were visiting and the strangers we were teaching the truth to. One of the greatest things I took away from Truth Corps 2012 was a genuine realization of how special our faith is. I grew up in the truth, encouraged by parents who drove me to meeting and Bible classes and promoted a life of faith. As I spent time with those who found the faith later in life, seeing first hand their struggle against angry family members trying to prevent their progress, or communities and societies inhibiting such beliefs, or culture and tradition which carves opposing paths — I gained a new perspective to the religion I believe in. I have a deeper understanding of its beauty and how precious it is. As a result, I gained confidence in preaching, enthusiasm to live a more godly life in the short days before Christ returns, and desire to continue in the faith despite any trials thrown my way. I learned to never limit God — to not prevent the seed from being sown because you think someone will never accept Christ, or because you feel you are unable or insufficient (2Cor.12:9). God gave each of us exactly what was needed to preach His message. So redeem the time and live for God while we yet have life!

Meg Milne (Brampton, ON)

North to Alaska!



Bro. Stan Wilkinson of the Glendale, Arizona ecclesia is no stranger to bicycle riding, even at the age of 73 years young. Seven years ago Bro. Stan travelled by himself from San Diego to Boston, some 3400 miles, in 42 days, averaging 100 miles per day on travelling days and he encountered no problems other than flat tires and headwinds.

In May 2013, he plans to do a fundraising event for CBMA/C in the form of a bike-a-thon from Phoenix Arizona to Fairbanks Alaska. He plans stops along the way at ecclesias for “mini-bike-a-thon” events. In preparation for the event, he will be riding from Arizona to El Paso in October 2012 (400 miles one way) and then to the Palm Springs Bible School in February 2013 (600 miles round trip) from Arizona.

He already has more than 30 riders interested in joining him for different parts of the ride, and a sponsor to cover his expenses. In addition, several ecclesias have offered to host events along the way.

Watch for more details throughout the year and especially as the time for the race grows closer. If you or your ecclesia would like to participate, please contact Bro. Joel Rosenau at joel-rosenau@shaw.ca. You will be able to follow the race on the CBMA Facebook page. Details on contributing to this fundraiser will follow later in the year.

*Submitted by Sis. Jan Berneau
CBMA/C Publicity*

Addresses for Bequests and Donations

Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA) supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Truth Corps, etc. Visit www.cbma.net for current activities as well as to make US dollar donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Jeff Gelineau, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941, or contact jeffandkellie@gelineau.org

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

Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF) supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 88, Deland, IL 61839-0086. Website: wcfoundation.org

CBMA Overseas Book Service welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110.
Phone: 818-842-2868
jberneau@earthlink.net

Christadelphian Tidings Publishing Committee publishes this magazine and other works on the Truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696, www.tidings.org

Christadelphian Tape Library. Contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923.
Phone: 732-381-4590
Fax: 732-499-8415
christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net

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

Agape in Action provides help for Christadelphian families and children living in extreme poverty. Donations may be sent to 39 Manor Park Crescent, Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1A2 or 521 Valmont Dr., Monrovia, CA 91016 or via website www.agapeinaction.com
Email: agapeinaction@rogers.com

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

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

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

Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH) donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457. For info email daconstiles@att.net

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

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

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

Christadelphian Care Line fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039

Alcohol Help Line fully confidential help for overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039

News & Notices

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

AUSTIN LEANDER, TX

We rejoice that MIKE WILSON put on the saving name of Christ in baptism. He was introduced to the Truth by Sis. Miriam Simmons. Due to his blindness, he had not read the Bible, but eagerly embraced the hope within. We are also pleased to announce that Bro. Mike Wilson and Sis. Miriam Simmons were married September 22, 2012. Also, Sis. O'Bera June, who had been in isolation many years, has moved to our area. After talking with her, we welcome her to our ecclesia.

It is with sadness we report the falling asleep of both Sis. Ouida Henry on June 18, 2012, and Bro. Mack Lucas on September 24, 2012. Both had been battling illness, and though Sis. Ouida had only been a member of our ecclesia for a few years, and Bro. Mack was one of the original members, the loss of them both is greatly felt. Our prayers are with Sis. Lori Lucas and their children, and Bro. Steve Lucas, and Sis. Julie Ishman, and their families.

We have welcomed the following brothers and sisters from other states and countries: Carl and Gina Parry (Salsbury Adelaide, Australia); Tim and Karen Bering (Saltillo, Mexico); Rob Webb (Hamilton Greenway, ON); Blanche Wallace (Freehill, Jamaica); Tiffany Bevans (Reseda, CA); and Linda Putnick (Ann Arbor, MI). We also wish to thank Bre. Carl Parry, Wesley Booker and Larry Beutel for their words of exhortation.

Fred Bearden

BRANT COUNTY, ON

On July 1, 2011, the Brant County, ON Christadelphian Ecclesia, a new Central Fellowship ecclesia, was established in the Brantford area. Our place of meeting is the Bellview Community Hall, 55 Tom St., Eagle Place, Brantford, ON.

Our Sunday school begins at 9:30 am with the Memorial service following at 11:00 am with Sunday afternoon or evening Bible study varying. Tuesday Bible class is at 7:30 pm and Senior CYC is held at 7:30 pm every other Friday evening in the homes of brothers and sisters.

The following are the founding members of the new Brant County Ecclesia, former members of the Brantford, ON Ecclesia including: Barbara Casson, Keith and Carolyn Easton, Peggy Easton, Rhonda Gallant, Barrie and Cathy Heywood, Ben and Lisa Jennings, Dan and Sarah Jennings, Jim and Shirley Ann Jennings, Naomi Jennings, Peter Jennings, Ed and Denise Kanno, Scott and Brenda Krakar, Donald and Miriam Luff, Joel Luff, Michael and Anna Moore, Sasha Moore, Lloyd and Joan Newth, Ken and Debby Read, Mark and Jennifer Read, Daniel and Ashley Robinson, Trevor and Heather Salisbury, Gary and Shirley Smith, Joyce Webb, Graeme and Carol Wilson, David and Nicole Wisniewski, Sarah Wisniewski, and John and Trish Woods.

Since July 1, 2011, the following brothers and sisters have been accepted as members at the Brant County Ecclesia: Doreen Jones, Kerry Sakaluk, John and Natalie Easton, Bekah Robertson, Ben Robertson, Jennifer Robertson, and Grant and Rachel Pryer from the Brantford, ON Ecclesia and Chesed Mindorff from Vernon, BC.

We thank the following brothers for their encouraging words of exhortation: Bill Jennings (Hamilton MacNab, ON); Henry Wisniewski (Rogue Valley, OR); Mark Newth (Royal Oak, MI); Glen Abel (Vernon Okanagan, BC); David Kanno (London, ON); and Frank Abel, Richard Morgan, Joel Robinson, Kevin Spry, and Matt Trowel (Hamilton Book Road, ON).

On Saturday, December 31, 2011, we witnessed the marriage of Bro. Peter Jennings to Sis. Chesed Mindorff. We pray for our heavenly Father's richest blessings on them as they continue their life together before Him. Bro. Peter and Sis. Chesed Jennings moved west at the end of March 2012, to the province of Alberta. Both Peter and Chesed are missed as they were active and faithful workers at the Brant County Ecclesia. We commend them to the loving care of the brothers and sisters of the Calgary, AB Ecclesia.

Brant County's first study day was held on Saturday, May 5, 2012. Bro. Matt Trowel (Hamilton Book Road, ON) presented an interesting study on the topic, "The Empty Tomb". We are very thankful to him for his study presentation and his ministrations the following day.

On Saturday, September 1, 2012, we were blessed to witness the baptism of JAMIN MOORE, son of our Bro. Michael and Sis. Anna Moore, after giving a good confession of his faith. We pray for our heavenly Father's richest blessings as our new brother commences his new life in Christ Jesus.

On Tuesday, September 4, 2012, we were blessed with a Bible class presentation on the subject, "They Knew Not the Time of Their Visitation," presented to us by Bro. Jim Cowie (Queensland, Aust.). We had good attendance at this special Bible class. We are very thankful to Bro. Jim for this interesting and worthwhile presentation.

On Tuesday, September 25, 2012, we held our first outreach seminar at our place of meeting on the topic, "The Coming Russian Superpower Destroyed by God in Israel". Two presentations were made by Bre. Frank Abel and Matt Drywood (Hamilton Book Road, ON) on Bible prophecy and current events respectively. We were blessed with the attendance of eight visitors to our special effort; two from personal contact, two from seeing the newspaper ads, and four because of leaflet distribution. Follow-up lectures are being engaged in for the month of October.

All ecclesial correspondence should be sent to: Brant County Christadelphians, PO Box 21047, RPO Lynden Park Mall, Brantford, ON N3R 7W9 Canada; or by email to: BrantCountyChristadelphians@gmail.com.

H. Gary Smith

BRANTFORD, ON

We rejoice with our family in heaven that on September 19, 2012, SHOSHANNA BOWEN, daughter of Bro. Jonathan and Sis. Charlene Bowen, was baptized into the hope of Israel. From September 19-25, 2012, we have also enjoyed the fellowship and ministrations of Bro. Matt Norton and Bro. David Clark-Smith (Lismore, NSW, Aust.). We thank Bro. Matt for the encouragement and exposition he provided, including the Prophecy Day held in Mississauga on the theme, "The Revelation, Examined and Explained". MP3 recordings of the classes are available from www.brantfordchristadelphians.com. We also thank Bro. Simon O'Grady for visiting us and leading our Bible class on July 22, 2012.

Despite outstanding concerns, in light of the confirmation we received on September 16, 2012, "that there are no outstanding matters considered by the brothers and sisters of

the Brant County Ecclesia to be of such a fundamental nature that it warrants a breach in fellowship”, and with a desire to move in a loving and more positive direction the Brantford Ecclesia, as of September 16, 2012, has voted to acknowledge the formation of the Brant County Ecclesia.

We therefore acknowledge the transfer of the following founding brothers and sisters of this ecclesia: Barbara Casson, Peggy Easton, Keith and Carolyn Easton, Rhonda Gallant, Barrie and Cathy Heywood, Dan and Sarah Jennings, Ben and Lisa Jennings, Jim and Shirley Ann Jennings, Naomi Jennings, Peter Jennings, Ed and Denise Kanno, Scott and Brenda Krakar, Don and Miriam Luff, Joel Luff, Mike and Anna Moore, Sasha Moore, Lloyd and Joan Newth, Ken and Debby Read, Mark and Jennifer Read, Dan and Ashley Robinson, Trevor and Heather Salisbury, Gary and Shirley Smith, Joyce Webb, Graeme and Carol Wilson, David and Nicole Wisniewski, Sarah Wisniewski, and John and Trish Woods.

We also acknowledge the transfer of the following members who have requested to transfer to the Brant County Ecclesia since that time: John and Natalie Easton, Doreen Jones, Rebekah Robertson, and Kerry Sakaluk. In addition, we also acknowledge the transfer of Grant and Rachel Pryer as of September 24, 2012, and Ben Robertson and Jen Robertson as of September 25, 2012. We echo the words of the Psalmist: “Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation” (Psa 85:7).

Daniel Billington

BROOKLYN, NY

In July, we rejoiced at the baptism of JOSEPH (PRINCE) JOHNSON, son of Bro. Leroy Johnson of May Pen, Jamaica.

In August we joined with the Sarasota, FL Ecclesia in mourning the falling asleep of Bro. Ron Badlu. He was the youngest brother in the flesh of Sis. Christine Drepaal (Brooklyn, NY), Sis. Elaine David (Norfolk, VA), Bro. Harold (Manhattan, NY), and Bre. Joe and Richard (South Ozone Park, NY).

Outreach activities included a six-week Bible seminar and a weekly literature distribution during the four months of June to September by the retiree group in key areas of Brooklyn and Queens. The distribution was accompanied by pin-point talks by the brothers. Even a few non-retirees joined the party on occasions. Public response was encouraging.

We joined the Manhattan Ecclesia in its yearly one-day fraternal at Westchester. It was a memorable, refreshing, early September day. Early in June, there was the two-day Metro Fraternal, at which Bro. John Pople gave a unique exposition of the Song of Solomon under the theme, “Solomon and Delilah”.

The role of women in Scripture was further highlighted in Bro. Selvin Sawyers’ exhortation, as he and his family ministered at our ecclesia. Bro. Selvin also did our Genesis Workshop that Sunday afternoon. We do thank him.

Clive Drepaal

CRANSTON, RI

We are very pleased to have received into fellowship and membership, Sis. Sarah Telles, by way of transfer from the Norfolk, VA Ecclesia on May 1, 2012.

We are very pleased and thankful that the “This Is Your Bible” television program has resumed in Rhode Island, thanks to the programs produced on the West Coast. We

are thankful for their work in providing the programming and we are thankful that once again the name “Christadelphian” is before the Rhode Island public. We thank the following visiting brethren for their words of exhortation: Bre. Eric Pride and Jim Rutkovski (Westerly, RI), and Philip Hazard (North Atlanta, GA).

We thank Bre. Bob Corbeille (Granite State, NH) and Frank Locke (Westerly, RI) for their Public Bible Talks on the theme, “The Bible, the Book for Today”. Our present Public Bible Talks theme is, “Christendom Astray From the Teaching of the Bible”. Our own brethren have presented the first three talks.

The Cranston CYC hosted their Twelfth Annual Bible Study Weekend in May. Bro. Allen Laban (Baltimore, MD) led the classes on the theme, “Godly Relationships”. There were approximately sixty teenagers and young people in attendance at the classes.

Our Bro. Brandon Entwistle returned home from an extended stay in China. He has since returned to Shanghai to continue teaching English at a school. He is also fully engaged in the workings of a very small ecclesia there.

We are saddened to report that Sis. Carol Houghton, wife of Bro. Paul, fell asleep in Christ on August 4, 2012. Sis. Carol was of a “meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price”. She was indeed a “mother in Israel”. She was baptized into the saving name of Jesus Christ at the Worcester, MA Ecclesia on November 18, 1955. She died in full assurance of hope, looking forward to the time when “we shall be like Him, raised above all weakness”. Her patient waiting has ended. Her awakening will be when she, along with the faithful of every age, “in glorious beauty see His face”.

At the same time, we rejoice and give thanks for a new birth in Christ. On August 18, 2012, ERIC LEWIN, son of Bro. Kevin and Sis. Brenda Lewin, put on the saving name of Jesus Christ. From his youth, our young Bro. Eric, has known the Holy Scriptures and has been an active member of our Sunday school and CYC. We are certain that our ecclesia will benefit by his enthusiasm and dedication.

Paul Houghton

DETROIT LIVONIA, MI

We apologize that we have not submitted ecclesial news recently. In the past two years we have enjoyed visitors from our Detroit area ecclesias as well as many other ecclesias in the US, Canada and other areas of the world. We are thankful for efforts of the following brethren who exhorted us from God’s word: Ken Comito, Jacob Styles, Ryan Vaughn, Mike Livermore, Josiah Hewitson, Ken Sommerville, Frank Abel, Matt Jackson, Dave Giordano, Jim Cowie, Mark Newth, Joe Hill, Jim Styles, David Deakin, Greg Muniz, and Paul Jackson.

We are thankful to our heavenly Father for our new additions. In November 2011, we rejoiced with Bro. Simon and Sis. Hannah Gore at the birth of their son, Ewen William. In December 2011, we rejoiced with Bro. Paul and Sis. Mary Jane Styles at the birth of their daughter, Eden Abigail.

We were also reminded of our mortality during this period of time. We are saddened by the passing of Sis. Catherine Stewart on September 20, 2011. She was baptized in 1946 and had been a faithful member of the Detroit Livonia Ecclesia ever since. We also mourn the loss of our dear Sis. Mary Bobis who fell asleep in our Lord on December 30, 2011 after a long struggle with cancer. The Livonia Ecclesia would like to thank all our brothers and sisters for their prayers and concern during this difficult time. Both of our dear sisters will be greatly missed as we await the Lord’s return.

We had the following brothers and sisters transfer to other ecclesias during this period. We miss them, including: Jim and Sue, Andrew, Nathan, and Rebekah Styles to Simi Hills, CA; Sis. Jen Jones to Lismore, Aust.; Lindbergh and Shirley VanReuter to Ann Arbor, MI; and Grace Kirian to Toledo, OH. We rejoice with the additions of Sis. Jen Kowicki (South Adelaide, Aust.) and Bro. Tim and Sis. Christi Bryan, and their sons, TJ and Joey, from Kouts, IN.

Over the past period God has blessed our Bible seminars. We have an average of eight interested friends with two families who regularly attend all our ecclesial functions including Hanover Bible School. This has been a great blessing for our ecclesia.

Paul Styles

HAMILTON GREENAWAY, ON

We welcome by way of transfer from the London, ON Ecclesia, the following brothers and sisters: John and Joanne Andrews, Donna Barr, Leah Barr, Ron Broda, Joanne Webb, Tom and Rachel Giampa, Ron and Jennifer Gordon, Bob Howes, Pat Scott, Bill Scott, Michael and Pauline Walker, and Roger and Denette Walker.

Although members of Greenaway, these brothers and sisters will operate as a satellite ecclesia, meeting twice monthly on Sundays and each Tuesday for Bible class. For details of time and location, please contact either the Walkers at 519-471-0438, or mcwalker43@hotmail.com; or the Andrews at 519-474-7127 or joanieandrews@sympatico.ca

Tom Thorp

HONESDALE, PA

Our ecclesia is very happy to welcome Gary Burnard as an active brother again as of September 16, 2012.

Stephen DeMarco

LONDON, ON

With reference to the notice of transfer to Hamilton Greenaway, the London AB's have agreed that there is little to be gained from being in constant agitation about the matter and simply accept their departure. Notwithstanding under the circumstances we are not prepared to commend them to Greenaway. This is as far as we are prepared to go; the 17 members have made a decision and we are prepared to accept it, trusting that one day we shall be able to resolve our differences in a manner becoming brethren.

Ron Kidd

PRINCE GEORGE, BC

We are sad to transfer our long time Bro. Rod and Sis. Dianne Massey to the Vernon, BC Ecclesia as well as Bro. Nathanael and Sis. Nicole Massey to the Kamloops, BC Ecclesia. We pray our heavenly Father will bless them in their new ecclesias. With the departure of Bro. Rod, our new recording brother is Bro. Jonathan Lawrence and all email correspondence can be sent to him at pgchristadelphians@hotmail.com.

We would welcome any brothers or sisters who are thinking of traveling or even moving to our area. The help would be greatly appreciated in fellowship and ministry. We will not be holding our annual fraternal gathering this year due to our few numbers but instead will hold a study day on Oct 27-28, 2012, on the subject: "Six Night Visions of Zechariah," by Bro. Nathan Bartholomew.

We have welcomed and thank the following brethren over the last year: Graham

Osborn, Terry Houghton, Peter Lawrence, Rick Evans, Dean Montgomery, Adam Jones, and Dan Sargent. We also thank our Bro. Tim Osborn for doing a study day as well as Bro. David Lloyd who spoke at our fraternal in May. Their encouragement and words are very much appreciated.

Jonathan Lawrence

ROGUE VALLEY, OR

In September, Bro. Graeme Osborn, (Vernon Okanagan, BC) gave a Bible class entitled, "Tell It to Future Generations", and exhorted us on Sunday. We were blessed again with the baptism of one of our Sunday school scholars, TIMOTHY YOSHIDA. On January 5, 2013, Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilton Brisbane, Aust.) will conduct a study day on the topic, "Gibeah of Saul". Contact Bro. Randy Yoshida, our Recording Brother for more information if you plan on attending at: 541-479-5358.

Henry Wisniewski

WICHITA FALLS, TX

Since last reporting our ecclesial news we have welcomed around the table of our absent Lord the following visitors: Stan and Eunice Newton (Pomona, CA); David and Erin Clubb (Simi Hills, CA); Bucky and Debi Wilhoit (Detroit Royal Oak, MI); Ruth Bittinger (Joplin, MO); Sandra Maggard (Albuquerque, NM); Stephen Berry (Kouts, IN); Landon Wolfe, Levi Wolfe, and Jeremy and Leah Wolfe (Abilene, TX); Miah Hefner, Amanda Buck, Gene and Seba Fay Farley, and Andrea Banta (Austin Leander, TX); Ralph and Elizabeth Hollenbeck, Ronnie and Kristen Hefner, and Nathan Daniels (North Houston, TX); Garth and Kerri Maier, and Sarah Maier (East TX); and Jorge and Julie Garcia (Houston, TX). We thank Bre. Stan Newton and Bucky Wilhoit for their words of exhortation and David Clubb for his Sunday school class.

On June 2, 2012, we rejoiced as we witnessed the joining as one of Bro. Caleb Clubb and Sis. Megan Holmes. It is truly a joy to see two of like precious faith unite in serving our heavenly Father and dedicating their efforts to the edification of His Son's body. We seek God's blessing upon them as they journey together toward God's kingdom.

We are pleased to announce that in August we welcomed Sis. Debby Compton from the East Texas Ecclesia and in September we welcomed Sis. Jeanna McLaughlin from the Dallas area. We are very thankful for the addition of these two sisters and the wonderful boost to our Sunday school.

John A Clubb

RUN FOR THE EVERLASTING CURE NOVEMBER 24, 2012

The purpose of this event is to come together to pray for those who suffer in our midst as well as those on the prayer list posted on the Facebook site and to be posted on the run site, as well as to pray for our everlasting cure, Christ, that he return soon and end all pain and suffering. This is our 8th year holding this event and we have ecclesias all over the world who carve a small part out of their day each November on the last Saturday, to pray together. We follow the prayer with a 5 km walk or run that helps bond our brothers and sisters together. Please participate....it doesn't matter the number of people, and it's not a flashy event. Please check out our website at: <http://www.runfortheeverlastingcure.org/index.html> and our facebook site at <http://www.facebook.com/groups/5595409986/events/>. Prayer requests can be emailed to Kevin and Rebekah Hunter at bible@christadelphia.org, and we can post those to the shared page.

Kevin and Rebekah Hunter

Minute Meditation

Be Doers of the Word

Leonardo da Vinci said, "I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do."

Leonardo's words echo the inspired counsel found in the book of James, "Do not merely listen to the word [of God], and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." James elaborates, "Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does."

We do not know if Leonardo da Vinci ever read the epistle of James, but he surely captured the importance of being doers of the word and not hearers only. James explains just how important this principle is in God's eyes: "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."

There are many Scriptural examples where people knew the right thing to do, but did not do it. An outstanding example from our readings recently is in the prophecy of Jeremiah. After the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and carried away captive most of the Israelites, the people left in the land wanted to know what God wanted them to do. They came to Jeremiah and asked him to ask God for direction: "Pray that the LORD your God will tell us where we should go and what we should do." They promised, "May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act in accordance with everything the LORD your God sends you to tell us. Whether it is favorable or unfavorable, we will obey the LORD our God, to whom we are sending you, so that it will go well with us, for we will obey the LORD our God."

"Ten days later the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, 'If you stay in this land, I will build you up and not tear you down; I will plant you and not uproot you, for I am grieved over the disaster I have inflicted on you. Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you now fear. Do not be afraid of him,' declares the LORD, 'for I am with you and will save you and deliver you from his hands. I will show you compassion so that he will have compassion on you and restore you to your land.'"

What the people decided to do when they heard this message from God was so wrong, especially after they had just said that they would obey whatever God said. First the people tell Jeremiah, "You are telling a lie. The LORD our God did not send you." Then they decide not to do what God told them to do. They later tell Jeremiah, "We will not listen to the message you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD! We will certainly do everything we said we would." Not always are those who deliberately disobey the word of God quite so blatant as these people who rejected God's message. Sadly, the end result is the same in that when people

do whatever they want to do and not what the Lord commands, there are consequences. The fate of these people should be a warning to all of us to take seriously the word of God and obey it.

Faith is one of the essential requirements for salvation. James in his epistle makes it quite plain that it is impossible to show our faith without action. We need to do the righteous deeds that we know should be done. James calls those who disagree with this principle as being vain, from a Greek word meaning foolish or shallow. "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

We do not have a choice when it comes to God's commandments. God did not give Moses the ten suggestions. When God told Israel to rest on the Sabbath, He really meant it, and the penalty for the man who disobeyed by picking up sticks was death.

What are you and I doing about obeying our LORD? Are His commandments subject to discussion or do we submit willingly? Too many people in the world today want to play fast and loose with God's commands, and we as His sons and daughters must not allow the thinking of the world around us regarding tolerance towards sin to affect our thinking and actions.

Once we know what we are to do, we must do it to the best of our ability. Leonardo da Vinci was right when he said, "Being willing is not enough; we must do". Jesus tells us what it will be like when he sits on his throne at his return to establish his kingdom: "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.' " We must act on our beliefs if we hope to be granted a place in the kingdom. James was correct when he said, "Faith without works is dead."

We pray that the LORD will give us the wisdom and faith to be workers together with Him, doing His commandments and looking forward to serving with His son in His soon coming kingdom.

Robert J. Lloyd

Great stress is laid in all the Scriptures on this feature — the doing of the will of God. Jesus brings it out forcibly, when he says to certain, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? He that DOETH the will of my Father, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." So does James: "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers ONLY." The rule of action is therefore exceedingly simple. Are we acting in conformity with Christ? Are we doing the will of God? This is a simple question that will enable everybody to test themselves. The will of God is luminously indicated, and it will be our own fault if we continue ignorant of it, in the many features of it affecting practical life.

Robert Roberts (*The Christadelphian* 1870 p. 171)

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

NOVEMBER 2012

9-11 Brothers' Weekend at Hidden Acres, New Hamburg, ON. An excellent opportunity to stimulate faith and build brotherly love through which our families and ecclesias can be strengthened; all for the glory of God. Bro Ron Hicks (Washington DC). Theme: "Get Wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." For information Bro Nathan Badger 519-568-7830 or email natejbadger@gmail.com.

10-11 Largo/Orlando/Sarasota, FL Study Weekend. Speaker Bro. Stan Isbell (North Houston, TX). Theme: "As A Man Thinketh In His Heart." Lunch will be provided both Saturday and Sunday. Contact: Bro. Walt Dodrill/Largo at waltdodrill@msn.com or call 727-410-0896.

10-11 Pittsburgh, PA CYC Study Weekend. Bro. Everett Muniz (Paris Ave, OH) will be speaking on "Holy Living in Perilous Times". Contact Sis. Becca Pommer at (724) 757-8582 or pghecclesia@gmail.com.

10-11 Victoria, BC Fall Study Weekend. "Defining the Household" by Bro. Wesley Butler (Vancouver, BC), Bro. Marc Hunter (Saanich Peninsula, BC), and Bro. Simon Snobelen (Vancouver, BC). For further information contact csnobelen@csl.ca.

23-25 Austin Leander, TX Study Weekend at the HEB Camp near Leakey, TX. Bro. Jason Hensley (Simi Hills, CA) will be speaking on "The Parables of the Lost". To register e-mail Sis. Maritta Terrell, mt-ct@swbell.net.

23-25 Washington, DC Family Study weekend at Camp Hashawha, Westminster, MD. Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton Book Road, ON) will lead us in classes entitled "The Pattern of the Tabernacle". Weekend fee is \$60. A \$20 deposit is required with registration. Deadline is November 12. Mail registrations to Bro. Dave Fertig, 9703 Schmidt Dr., Burke, VA 22015. For forms or information, phone 703-644-6311 or e-mail Bro. Dave at Hashawha@gmail.com.

24 Run for the Everlasting Cure is a world-wide prayer event. The purpose is to come together and pray for those who are struggling with sickness and problems, as well as to pray for the return of Christ. Prayer requests can be emailed to Kevin and Rebekah Hunter at bible@christadelphia.org. The website is www.runfortheeverlastingcure.org/index.html.

25 Ann Arbor, MI Thanksgiving Gathering at Ann Arbor Holiday Inn, 3600 Plymouth Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105. Memorial Service 11am and Lecture 2pm. Lunch will be provided. Speaker: Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD).

DECEMBER 2013

29-Jan 5 Texas Youth Conference at T4C near Freestone, TX. The Texas Youth Conference is a Bible Study Conference for young Christadelphian adults who are between the ages of 17 and 35. Baptized members under the age of 17 may attend. For registration and other information please see our web site at www.texasyouthconference.com.

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JANUARY 2013

5 Rogue Valley, OR Study day with Bro. Jim Cowie (Wilton Brisbane, Aust.) on the topic, "Gibeah of Saul". Contact Bro. Randy Yoshida, for more information at 541-479-5358.

FEBRUARY 2013

24-Mar 1 Palm Springs Bible School. The speakers at this year's school will be Bro. Stephen Palmer (Cardiff, Wales) and Bro. Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA). The school offers a wonderful environment for the mature adult to study God's Word and enjoy the fellowship of other brethren and sisters. To register, please contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau at Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or visit our website www.californiabibleschool.org.

MARCH 2013

29-31 Wichita Falls, TX Spring Gathering at T4C Camp, Freestone, Texas. Class leader Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD) his topic is "Valued of God — Study of the Life of Timothy". Please contact Bro. Larry Beutel lbeutel@alsco.com.

MAY 2013

18-19 Calgary, AB Rolling Hills Study Weekend: A weekend of study, fellowship as well as assorted activities for children. Bro. Ron Ledbetter from Ontario will present the classes for adults and Sis. Cherri-Lynn will coordinate accommodation, children's activities and catering. Accommodation is available in homes and there is space for RV's and tents. Classes will be held at the Rolling Hills Community Hall. Register with dana.kohlman@grasslands.ab, or 403-964-2562.

JULY 2013

7-13 Southwest Christadelphian Bible School at Schreiner College, Kerrville, TX. This years teachers will be Bro. Peter King (UK), Bro. Joseph Palmer (San Diego, CA USA), and Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton, Ontario CA). Please register with Bro. Shannon Strickland, 9305 Nancy Lane, Tomball, Texas USA or Shannonjejh@att.net.