

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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Thousands [now billions!] of dollars are spent in an election year by each of the opposing candidates for election to impress on the people the necessity of putting this or that man in office, and stressing the fact that the safety of the nation depends on a wise choice. Yet we are admonished by God in Psa 146:3: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help"; and in verse 5 of the same Psalm: "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." There are no unforeseen circumstances with God. He does not have to change His plan at the last minute because of some unexpected development. In Isa 46:9, 10 He says: "... For I am God and there is none else: I am God and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

The problems that plague the heads of nations today are not to be solved by men. Only by divine intervention, when God sends His beloved Son again, will the troubles of the world be put to rights. The insoluble problems vexing the statesmen of all countries today will only be solved when Jesus returns to the earth and reigns in Jerusalem, the future capital city of the world, and we are assured that he will do just that.

Marguerite C. Curry (*The Tidings*, May 1965, p.3)

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Editorial

Democracy

“And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:24-26).

Introduction

By the time you are reading this, the election process in the USA will (thankfully) have terminated. Whoever wins, we will have had examples of all types of attempts to influence that small part of the electorate that has (relatively) open minds. Whether by innuendo, mis-truths, or outright lies, much time, money and effort will have been spent — especially at attacking the opposing candidates. It is hard to avoid these efforts, much as we attempt to do so. And it is certain, that, whoever wins, this will be repeated in four years, last for an almost interminable time, and cost billions of dollars. All in the name of democracy — allowing the citizens of this country to have a say in the government and rulers of this country.

Whoever wins, Peter tells us to “*Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor*” (1Pet 2:17 NIV). So our community takes no part in this process, because as Jesus says “*My kingdom is not of this world* (John 18:36). So our emperor, our ruler, our king, the savior, is not present in this world, and our allegiance is first and foremost to him.

So we stand aside, take no part in the water cooler discussions as to which candidate to choose — except to use it as an opportunity to declare which ruler the world is truly in need of. No program or party platform will solve the problems of the country, or the world, until he comes in power and glory to bring true peace and prosperity to our time, and all time.

The very idea of democracy was a concept quite alien to almost everyone in the New Testament. Greece had a form of citizen democracy, and the Romans flirted with the idea of a Senate, but in both cases only a very small minority of the population had any role. It was not until the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century did any form of real democracy emerge. So the whole concept, particularly of everyone having a vote, is very new.

It is the subject of democracy I would like to cover, and whether it is appropriate to use it, as we customarily do, in selecting our elders and leaders.

OT and NT methods of selection

Selection of the leaders, judges, and Kings was of course initially by the direct intervention of God. Both Saul and David were appointed in this way; although after this the Kings were hereditary (or else self-appointed by force of arms, or later by

foreign powers). Other choices were made either by lot, or with the intervention of God through His High Priests, by Urim and Thummin. (The latter is a fascinating study, with no clear answers as to how this method functioned — except it could give a “No Answer” as well as Yes or No.) But by far the prominent way was by lot, with over 75 uses, with perhaps the best known being the selection of the scape-goat in Lev 16:8. But even in this use, the divine guidance was recognized: *“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD”* (Prov 16:33).

In the New Testament, however, the selection of apostles, teachers, and preachers is, with rare exception, performed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Even so, careful consideration of the required characteristics of leaders is given, particularly to Timothy (1Tim 3:2-9) and Titus (Titus 1:7-9). Only in Acts 1 is this not so: the assembly had not yet been blessed with the possession of the Holy Spirit. So there are certain aspects that parallel our present situation:

- The choice was a human one, made by about 120 individuals, both brethren and sisters.
- The choice of the individuals among whom the lot was cast was very restricted by the prescribed qualifications (Acts 1:21-22).
- The whole company prayed for guidance.
- *“And they gave forth their lots”* (Acts 1:26). The precise way this was conducted is not given: whether they used something similar to the two pebbles implied in the Proverbs passage above, or each member had their own lot, is not clear.

The Christadelphian practice

Our normal procedure is to follow the guidance of Bro Roberts, to be found in *The Ecclesial Guide*. As is the practice in all ecclesias of a sufficient number, the selection of arranging brethren was to be by a democratic process as follows:

- Names of all adult males are placed on a ballot sheet.
- Members are nominated secretly, after consideration of their qualifications and prayer.
- All baptized members then vote for the vacant positions.
- In addition, in any disputes, with rare exceptions, the will of the majority was to be followed.

(It must be remembered that the Birmingham Ecclesia of which Robert Roberts was a member has 450 members or so by 1880, and grew to over 1500 later.)

This practice is generally followed: but there are several methods used concerning the length of service and frequency of votes for the elected positions, and which positions are voted for. In larger meetings, you can find exhorting brethren, serving brethren, presiders, and doorkeepers being elected positions as well as the normal recording brother, finance brother, SS superintendent, etc. The normal variations in the voting process are:

- All positions are voted for every two years, but the same brother can serve any number of years (the longest serving recording brother I knew personally had that position for almost sixty years).
- Some or all positions rotate every two years.

- The length of service is four years, but every one to two years some part of the board is subject to a new ballot.
- Sometimes any brother who wants to serve, and is suitable, is appointed to the arranging board because there is no fixed number of such brethren.

(I personally think the second method has a lot to commend it, but really the method should be the one the majority of the ecclesia is most comfortable with.)

The use of the lot in modern times

It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others that have been tried.¹ The use of the Lot in ecclesial elections has been suggested, but tried only very rarely. The evils of democracy were recognized by John Thomas, and early on he suggested letting an elder decide who was suitable, and then using the lot to decide — the resultant appointment being for life.² (This is similar to the way the Amish and Mennonites select their deacons and bishops to this day.) This method was considered, and rejected, by Robert Roberts: it seems more suitable to small ecclesias than to large ones, but most would say any appointment for life is not desirable.

But is our democratic process the ideal one to use? Unfortunately, it might turn into a popularity contest, or depend on who has the largest numbers of relatives to vote for a person. I would hope neither is the case, but we ought always be aware it is not the most Biblical, apostolic, nor the only means of selecting those charged with being servants of the ecclesia: as Robert Roberts puts it in *The Ecclesial Guide*, “the ecclesia does not appoint masters, but servants”.

Perhaps the wisest guidance I can give in this area is to quote a member of the Kingston Ecclesia, who wrote “Since ‘all things work together for good to them that love God,’ would it not be true to say that God will honor whatever reasonable method we use for reaching an important decision, whether we ask for a sign making our own conditions as Jonathan and his armor bearer did (1Sam. 14:9–10), whether we decide from our own reasoning, or whether we allow lots to decide for us. The conditions being of course that we ‘love God’ and that our motives are not selfish.”³

It seems to be reasonable, in light of the abuses of so-called democracy we see around us, to contemplate whether there is a better way to regulate our affairs. We ought always to be conscious of the will of our Heavenly Father, and search the Bible diligently, with an open mind, to answer our concerns: in selecting leaders we should look at their spiritual qualifications first, and their earthly abilities second. If in doubt, perhaps the use of prayer for guidance, and the lot in cases of indecision, might sometimes be appropriate. Whether democracy is better than any other form of government is not as clear in our community as it might be in the world around us.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. Usually ascribed to Winston Churchill.
2. See *Herald of the Kingdom*, 1854, p 1.
3. *The Christadelphian*: Volume 97 (1960) p 367.

Exhortation

Never Give Up

Examples of God's mercy

It is in order to save us from death that is our natural end, that the memorials of our Lord testify before us what God and Christ have done out of love for us. We see a body that was mortal like ours, put to death, and raised to immortality. We see the extent of God's power to save and of our Lord Jesus' desire to save. This has stood as an example through the ages: the compassion of God for His creation and especially for His people does not come and go. We are all dependent on God's love and faithfulness. Peter observed "*The Lord... is not willing that any should perish*" (2Pet 3:9): this must first be applied to ourselves. Except for the long-suffering of God on our account there would be no hope. And in Rom 5:8 we learn that His patience with us began well before we were aware of our need: "... *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*"

God loves His creation, especially His Holy people. God does not give up on His people. The Bible is full of examples of God working to save men, whom we might have thought beyond hope. Consider **Saul of Tarsus**, a man greater in accomplishment, and greater in sin, than any one of us. He surpassed all in his nation in regards to the Law of Moses, and he persecuted the disciples of Christ Jesus even to death. Such a man, vehement in his opposition to the true ways of God, zealous for the false ways of the Pharisees, was seen in the early church as the most fearsome of their enemies. In the face of the direct commandment of the Lord, the faithful disciple Ananias balked, protesting that this was a man to be feared and avoided, not a man to be helped. But Christ insisted, and Saul went on to become Paul, the apostle of Christ. **King Manasseh** was one of the most wicked kings of Judah. 2Chron 33 tells us how he stopped the worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem, and promoted the most debased idolatry, yet God turned him around and redeemed him from his wickedness through exile and prison time in Babylon. We wouldn't ordinarily think of this as God's way to redeem such a man, but that was the effect for Manasseh. Even with such a man, God did not give up.

Israel, the holy people, are presented to us in Scripture as wayward throughout their history. There were occasional reformations, but these were always followed by apostasy and idolatry. In the end, God likens His relationship to Israel to a marriage that has reached its end (Jer 3:1-5). He sent Israel away from His holy land, into the home of idolatry, into Babylon. But this is not a record of God giving up on His people — to the contrary — "*Return, faithless Israel...*" (Jer 3:12). Even in the extremity of divorce and expulsion, God did not give up on His people Israel, but was willing to restore them to favor and to His land.

These are all examples of the divine precept in 1Cor 13:8, "*Love never fails.*" There is a day of judgment; a day in which the righteous will be given God's gift of life, and the wicked will be condemned. There is a day of death, beyond which no man can respond to God and be saved. But until that day, God, our Father, is tireless in

His efforts to redeem any and all who will respond to His mercy. Until that day, there is hope even for men such as Saul of Tarsus and Manasseh king of Judah.

Our response

Here then is the faithfulness of God and of His son Christ Jesus our Lord: they will never give up on their people. With this reassurance, and with the Lord's memorial before us, we should consider our response to the unfailing, steadfast love of God. In this wonderful love, we all have found hope. Think about how it will affect our lives. There are two responses we should consider: First our response to Christ and his Father, and second towards each other. Here is the call, then: Never give up! ... this may describe the essence of faith in God... a consistent reliance on the Almighty, our Father. It is God who has called us to obedience; therefore before the world and the temptations of this life, never give up! There is no condition in life; there is no opponent more powerful than our Father. Never give up on God.

God does reprove and discipline his people — a fact that has led some of them to wonder whether it's a good thing to be God's people. There may be times when we wish He'd give up on us! But the essential thing about this special position is that it's eternal. If you have hope of eternal life, that life will be in the presence of God. So it's important to get used to His presence now.

Do not mistake the Father's correction for abandonment. No one should expect this life to be trouble-free: Jesus tells us plainly that the Father chastens or disciplines every son whom He loves. God is patient; we need also to be patient with Him.

Continue to rely on God in prayer — sometimes we need a “No!” and sometimes we need to wait for God's time. We need to understand that there are proper things to pray for. But God always works with us in prayer to increase our appreciation of His ways. In Deut 8 God gives us a clear statement of His dealings with Israel. They had challenged God many times, thinking He did not see their need or did not care for them. His explanation is given us *“And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD”* (Deut 8:3 ESV). It took them a very long time to learn this lesson! How many times did they lose faith, giving up on God who loved them and was trying to teach them His ways? Some patience — extreme patience is what is required of us. This is the path of Abraham.

Jesus' statement is a guide to our dealings with him: *“and whoever comes to me I will never drive away”* (John 6:37 NIV). The thief on the cross was a condemned, dying man — and justly so, as even he admits. In his dying he reached out to Christ, justifying our Lord rather than himself, and pursuing a desperate hope of mercy. One who was condemned and being executed for his crimes, as good as dead, won eternal life in that moment. God had not given up on him, and he did not give up: he came to the Lord Jesus, and the Lord did not turn him away.

And know this: even when you have given up on Christ, he does not give up on you: *“if we are faithless, he remains faithful — for he cannot deny himself”* (2Tim 2:13 ESV).

In the presence of others

If we are all going to enjoy eternal life in the presence of God, we shall most assuredly enjoy it in the presence of one another. So get used to it! Years ago I realized this and have been using this little prayer, which I recommend to all: *“May God so bless me that I may spend eternity with this person.”* Now, with many of the Lord’s people this is a heartfelt and earnest prayer: I really enjoy your company and anticipate that eternity in your presence will never be tiresome. With others, I’m afraid it’s a bit of an attitude adjuster. The thing I hope for most is that all of saints may be saved — and I recognize a responsibility to work for that end. It does not mean that I accept every one, no matter how they behave. It means that I accept that every one of us has the potential to manifest God, and I will not give up on any of my brothers and sisters.

If we are to be the sons and daughters of God, it is fitting that now we should behave as God’s children toward one another. I do not mean by this, “Yeah, you need to behave toward me like God’s child.” I mean rather, how would God deal with the problems we see in one another? Does God give up? Does God consign His people to oblivion before the Day of Judgment?

It is all too easy to give up, to say things like *“He’ll never change!”* or, *“You’re wasting your time!”* or, *“These people are a bunch of hypocrites.”* It is easy and therefore an easy option on both sides of every disagreement, to say, *“I’m absolutely right; you’re hopeless.”* — and in so doing, to judge God’s people, to condemn those for whom Christ died. This is true whether it’s a disagreement with one brother, or several, with a whole ecclesia, or indeed with the brotherhood as a whole.

In the Bible, the idea of judgment is always associated with finality. These are blessed forever; these are rejected and outcast forever. The command, *“judge not, lest ye be judged”* means that kind of judgment. It cannot mean, *“Don’t tell anyone he’s done wrong”* because that is exactly what the Bible does every time we read it. It cannot mean, *“Don’t require any one to repent of his sins”* because that is the way of salvation. And, as the Proverb says, *“reprove a wise man, and he will love you”* (Prov 9:8). No, the command not to judge others means, don’t consign any one to damnation before the time, because that is the way God works with all of His creation. To judge someone then, is to give up on him. Brothers and sisters, none of us has any right to do this.

The Day of Judgment will come. And here is how the Lord Jesus describes it. *“Inasmuch as ye have done it/not done it/to one of these my brethren...”* (Matt 25:31-46). In prison? This does not mean only, one who was in prison unjustly; the Lord did not place any such limit on his mercy. Hungry, poor or afflicted? Often the pitiless will find reason for turning away, saying *“he brought it on himself.”* This is not the spirit we see in Christ. Christ may instruct, he may warn, he may even rebuke those who behave foolishly or wickedly. But he does not abandon them in their folly or in their wickedness. If this memorial means anything to us at all, it must remind us, as the apostle Paul noted — he who was formerly Saul of Tarsus — *“while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom 5:8).

Jim Seagoe (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

First Principles

Background of Previous Reunions

Introduction

There have been three essential elements of all the previous major re-unions in Christadelphia:

- An agreement on the doctrinal aspects in dispute;
- a statement on the on-going basis of fellowship; and
- a transition period has occurred (whether implied or explicit), allowing the reunited parties to adjust to the new situation.

We will here deal with the last aspect of previous re-unions. In connection with this, we can re-capitulate the previous fellowship statements, as discussed in a previous (often cited) article in *The Tidings*, December 2008, entitled “Fellowship Practice of Central Ecclesias”.

Previous Fellowship Statements

1957 Central-Suffolk Street (United Kingdom) Final Statement

GENERAL BELIEFS

“We agree that the doctrines to be believed and taught by us, without reservation, are the First Principles of the One Faith as revealed in the Scriptures, of which the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (with positive and negative clauses, and the Commandments of Christ) gives a true definition. It is agreed however, that ecclesias in both fellowships may continue to use such statements as are current among them, supplementing them where necessary with the Clauses herein set out.”

1958 Australian Unity Agreement

“Basis of Fellowship

“(1) We agree that the doctrines to be believed and taught by us, without reservation, are the first principles of the One Faith as revealed in the Scriptures, of which the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (with positive and negative clauses and the Commandments of Christ) gives a true definition. Clauses 5 and 12 are understood in harmony with the explanations provided by Brethren Carter and Cooper, reading: ...

“(2) Acceptance of this basis would not preclude the use of any other adequate Statement of Faith by an ecclesia, provided this is in harmony with the B.A.S.F., understood in Clause 1 (a) above.”

1952 Berean-Central (North American) Reunion

The Berean-Central Reunion Agreement (“The Jersey City Resolution”) highlights the importance of both the inclusion of those who accept and the exclusion of

those who depart from the basis of fellowship:

- 1) That we agree that the doctrines set forth in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith are a true exposition of the first principles of the oracles of God as set forth in the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and that therefore these doctrines are to be believed and taught by us without reservation: the doctrine of the Scriptures on sin and its effects and God's salvation from sin and death in Christ Jesus being defined in the clauses three to twelve of the Statement of Faith.
- 2) That we recognize as brethren and welcome to our fellowship all who have been immersed by whomsoever after their acceptance of the same doctrines and precepts, and that any brother departing from any element of the one Faith as defined in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith is to be dealt with according to apostolic precept.
- 3) If an ecclesia is known to persist in teaching false doctrines, or to retain in fellowship those who do, other ecclesias can only avoid being involved by disclaiming fellowship. (See *The Christadelphian*, 1952, p. 376).

PCCARC, (Central- Unamended on West Coast) 1994

(Note that the "their" is here referring to the former Belmont ecclesia):

- 1) The basis of their fellowship since uniting with the Central community is the doctrines and precepts embodied in the BASE.
- 2) No fellowship can exist where this basis is lacking.
- 3) When traveling, their members will attend and break bread at ecclesias which use this same basis: Central ecclesias.
- 4) They will welcome to participate in their breaking of bread service visitors from those Central ecclesias.

Note that the practice of the "Belmont" ecclesia was, and continues to be, to welcome to break bread occasional members of Unamended Community, but that teaching of error is not allowed. This is in conformity with the "exceptions" discussed in *The Tidings* article referred to above.

Cultural Changes in Biblical Times

The Apostle Paul

The apostle Paul apparently spent three years in the desert of Arabia after his conversion on the road to Damascus. Some commentaries have called these the *wilderness* years and they have even been alluded to as the *wasted* years. However, the apostle never makes that assertion; rather he told the Galatians:

"[God] was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days" (Gal 1:16-18 ESV).

This passage reveals that between his vision on the road to Damascus, and his later intense preaching in the synagogue in that same city, he spent time in the wilderness of Arabia rather than immediately assuming the mission that God had intended for him. The Scriptures are replete with interim periods that seem to apparently interrupt the spiritual path that God ultimately planned for that person. Consider, for example, the forty years that Moses spent in Midian, or the years Joseph spent as Potiphar's slave that cumulated with him languishing in prison for three years. Events in the lives of Jephthah and David provide similar instances of interim periods before they are fully prepared to accomplish what God had in store for them.

The case of the Apostle Paul, in particular, illustrates the fact that the Christians, and even the apostles in Jerusalem, would hardly have accepted him if he had immediately gone to that city and asserted his new status as an apostle. The time in the Arabian dessert, followed by his initial preaching in Damascus, not only prepared Paul for the tasks ahead, but also provided time for the main body of brethren in Jerusalem to begin to heal the memory of the havoc Paul had previously committed in that city. Then and only then were they willing to accept the fundamental change that Paul's conversion had rendered. The situation was similar for Moses — without the forty years in Midian it is unlikely that the children of Israel would have accepted his leadership, given his prior status in the court of Pharaoh.

If there is the need for a time to heal and allow cultural change for one man, the situation becomes enormously more complex for large groups of people. The forty years that the Israelites spent in the wilderness of Sinai was designed to create a new culture for the nation — one of humble obedience and dependence on the LORD God (e.g. Josh 5:6).

The Jews in the time of Christ

Perhaps the most relevant transition in the household of God was the period of time God gave to the Jews to accept Jesus as their Messiah and to drop observance of the "Law of Moses." The Jews in the first century fell into three categories;

- 1) Jews that accepted Jesus as Messiah and also recognized the Gentiles as fellow heirs of the promises (Gal 3:28).
- 2) Jews that accepted Jesus as Messiah but held that circumcision of Gentile converts and observance of the Law was still required by Jewish converts and Gentile converts. (Col 2:10 to 17, Acts 21:18 to 21).
- 3) Jews that did not accept Jesus and viewed the Gentiles as unclean.

God showed great forbearance with the Jewish people. The Hebrews had been God's "chosen people" since the time of Abraham. When Jesus came 2000 years later the old covenant and "the Law" were fulfilled and the Jews needed to now accept the long promised Messiah. During his ministry, some believed that Jesus was the Son of God and thousands after his resurrection believed. But many still did not believe particularly among the religious leadership of the Jewish nation. God was patient. For the period from the ministry of Jesus until the destruction of Jerusalem the Jews had opportunity to believe and abandon the ritual service

in the Temple and observance of the Law. This was a very painful transition and caused the Apostle Paul and Jewish and Gentile converts much grief for many years.

The transition period was not negotiated, it was ended by God. Roman forces surrounded Jerusalem and eventually destroyed the city, leveling the Temple as Jesus had foretold.¹

The reality of transition periods

There is sometimes a tendency among us to refuse to recognize the need for an interim period in implementing unity agreements. We resort to thinking that signing an agreement on a piece of paper automatically guarantees that everyone involved will adjust to the new situation the minute the ink is dry! A compact between two large groups of people is far different from a decision that has been made between two individuals. One might argue that one should abstain from sexual relations prior to marriage and set a specific date when the couple will officially be joined and the union fully implemented, but the analogy does not carry over to blending large groups of people that come from different cultures. Consultants who deal in corporate organizational change that might come about from a merger, for example, have found that this blending can take a considerable amount of time and forbearance. The new culture can eventually emerge only if there is a serious effort to work together project by project on a presumed equal basis from the very beginning. When blending two diverse cultures into a new united community it takes time for the values of the new situation to diffuse through the whole body. Some individuals will perceive immediately the values of the blended community and embrace them, while others will need more time to adjust, but will eventually become loyally committed after a reasonable amount of time. Unfortunately, some may also stubbornly cling to past values until it is overwhelming obvious to them that the new path is going to be successful — then and only then will they cooperate. Finally, a few may never adjust and will simply opt out of the new arrangement of their own accord. Obviously, this spread in the rate and degree of acceptance of a new situation, which is typical in trying to merge large groups of people, is a fact that needs to be fully understood in terms of creating a successful reunion effort.

Experiences in our community

Our Christadelphian Community has faced challenges of this sort in trying to blend different fellowships in the past when reunions were achieved in the United Kingdom, Australia/New Zealand and North America. In every case in the past history of reunions in Christadelphia, interim periods, formally or informally, happened that allowed the unity process to eventually reach closure. We will examine the history each of these prior successful efforts in turn, as follows:

- Suffolk Street/Central in UK
- Berean/Central in North America
- Shield/Central Australian Reunion
- Central-Unamended reunion on the West Coast of North America

Suffolk Street – Central Christadelphian reunion in the UK

The general impression in North America about the reunion between the Suffolk Street and Central Fellowships that took place in the United Kingdom in 1957 is that it was implemented on a fixed date that was set by a joint agreement of the two Committees, each representing their respective fellowship.² This idea comes from the first paragraph of the note published in *The Christadelphian* magazine,³ under the heading “Reunion” which we quote:

“A CIRCULAR is being issued by the two Committees of the Central and Suffolk Street fellowships, to all ecclesias in Great Britain, recommending that Reunion shall take effect from February 17, 1957.”

However, continuing in the same article the following should be also noted:

“It should be that there are still a very few who will be reluctant to fall in with the majority. **May we ask that the wishes of the majority be given a trial**; and it may be with experience, reluctance will give place to satisfaction that the step taken is the right one.”

Note the bold lettered portion — clearly this call is for reluctant ecclesias to use a “trial period” to work together in full fellowship to see if the new arrangement would eventually be acceptable. Hence, while not formally declared as an interim or transition period in so many words, this was what nevertheless actually transpired. It is hard to pin this down specifically in written sources how long this “trial period” lasted, but the nature of the culture in Great Britain enabled it to be done discreetly and locally. Indeed, some ecclesias needed only a short time, but others took several years. There was no rush to judgment and no ecclesia that didn’t accept the reunion agreement by the suggested February 17, 1957 was automatically put out of fellowship.

Consideration was also given to how the reunion in Great Britain would affect overseas ecclesias.

“The situation that the reunion in Great Britain placed overseas ecclesias also was addressed in this article — please note: ‘There are questions affecting overseas ecclesias. In Australia brethren are discussing the question of reunion, as we have reported some months ago. Until these discussions end, and as an **interim measure**, the Committees have made recommendations in their circular which it is hoped all ecclesias in Great Britain will follow..’ ”

Here the words “**interim measure**” are specifically used. The Brethren on the reunion committees in the United Kingdom did not wish to interfere with reunion efforts in other areas of the world. They urged ecclesias in the Great Britain to accept an “interim period” where they would retain their overseas relationships, as in the past, on an interim basis until the situations overseas came to a conclusion. That is why, in effect, visitors from North America are still often accepted by many ecclesias in Great Britain, regardless of their fellowship affiliation back home, as long as they themselves are found to be sound in believing the inter-ecclesial standard of the *Biblical principles conveniently summarized* in the Birmingham

Amended Statement of Faith (BASF). Since these visitors nominally constitute a very small minority of the worldwide fellowship, treating them as exceptions is viewed as the reasonable way to proceed. Such acceptance should not be regarded as recognition of the North American situation since it should be obvious that as the article states: "...that there have been no Advocate ecclesias in Great Britain for thirty years..." (*as of 1957*). Furthermore, this article also pointed out that the reunion expressly required that the British reunion was based on the understanding that - "those doctrines are not being countenanced which led to the denial of resurrectional responsibility of enlightened rejecters..."

Hence, the "interim period" or "trial period", whether inside the United Kingdom or with respect to relationships between ecclesias in that country and the rest of the Christadelphian world, did not apply to those ecclesias that outright rejected the basis of fellowship specified in the principles summarized in the BASF. Individuals coming from such ecclesias would thereby still be willing to countenance the errors that caused the original division and this was clearly labeled as unacceptable.

Also apparent was that all ecclesias in Great Britain who eventually participated in the Suffolk Street/Central Unity agreement, would acknowledge the same ecclesially (or community) based fellowship standard with respect to the agreed principles stated in the "Final Statement" (which did not require ALL Ecclesias to adopt the BASF, but only to recognize its principles as a basis for inter-ecclesial cooperation). This can be seen from the following quote in the same article:

"The two other ecclesias are, we believe, prepared to accept the Final Statement as such, but they are not willing to accept its terms as a basis of fellowship. They wish to exercise an ecclesial autonomy which would enable them to treat as "in fellowship" another ecclesia which does not regard itself as in association with either the Suffolk Street or Central fellowship, and which has not, of course, accepted the terms upon which agreement is based. This is a point of view which the Suffolk Street Committee cannot accept. During the discussions leading up to the preparation of the Final Statement, the Joint Committee found it necessary to exclude certain extreme views before they could arrive at an agreed position. Is it not, then, a point of simple logic that recognition can be extended only to those ecclesias who accept the agreed basis? This is the unanimous view of the Suffolk Street Committee, who feel that a little quiet, clear thinking on the point should convince all our brethren and sisters of the correctness and reasonableness of their view. An article contributed in this issue by bro. Leslie Jennings, at the request of the Suffolk Street Committee, has a bearing on this subject."⁴

Central-Berean Reunion in North America.

The reunion between the Central and Berean fellowship in North America is based on a document commonly known as the Jersey City agreement made on September 20, 1952. In giving consideration to how to implement this agreement throughout the continent several insights can be gathered from correspondence published in *The Christadelphian* magazine. Under the heading "The general plan of implementation," we read the following:

“Discussion then took place as to the method which should be followed to implement the decision reached. Many spoke in favour of prompt effect being given to the decision and it was decided unanimously that a report of the meeting and its decisions should be circulated without delay to all Berean Ecclesias in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand and Australia, and to all Central Ecclesias in the United States and Canada... Each ecclesia has to make its own decision. It is hoped that all will give a favourable response. In order that all ecclesias should know the results of the appeal, it was agreed that brethren Ashley and Twelves should jointly publish a report of the decision reached to ecclesias concerned of both fellowships.”⁵

Note that no fixed implementation date was planned with the actual rate of acceptance being left to the actions of individual ecclesias. That the Berean/Central reunion had an interim period is clearly documented in various correspondences published in *The Christadelphian* during that period; for example, in a letter from the Secretaries of the reunion conference to the magazine in May, 1953:

“A further report from brethren W. J. Ashley and E. Twelves (secretaries to the Jersey City Conference) has been received in which they say: ‘The last report revealed that all of the Central Ecclesias in the United States and Canada were unanimous in their approval of the resolution (approved by the Jersey City Conference). We are pleased to report that the following Berean Ecclesias, having unanimously adopted the resolution, have also by recent ecclesial action now extended their fellowship circle to include the Central Brethren. They are as follows: Glendale, Hollywood, Los Angeles, Pomona and Santa Barbara, all California. A notice of similar action by the Sarasota (Florida) Ecclesia has been received; their reunion with the Central Fellowship is to become effective May 17, 1953. Further reports will be issued as replies are received.’ ”⁶

Further evidence of a prolonged interim period being employed can be seen in a letter from Brother John Carter answering a query from the Newark, New Jersey Berean Ecclesia that was sent to British ecclesias, he wrote:

“The Newark circular rightly says that all Central Ecclesias in the U.S.A. and Canada have approved the recommendations of the Jersey City Conference. **Already a number of Berean ecclesias have not only approved them, but have resumed fellowship with Central ecclesias.**”⁷

This was in the July 1953 issue of the magazine some 10 months since the resolution was passed in Jersey City and it is abundantly clear that fellowship was being phased in between Berean and Central over an extended period of time.

Further evidence of the extended interim period that was involved in the Berean/Central reunion can be culled by reading a number of *The Christadelphian* magazine issues in 1953 and 1954. The reunion secretaries dutifully reported to the magazine month after month as groups of ecclesia joined into the reunion agreement. Reports of ecclesias implementing the reunion appear in the following issues: October 1953, November 1953, January 1954, March 1954, and as late as December 1954 approximately 27 months since the Jersey City agreement in

September 1952. The mode of implementation of the Berean/Central reunion was previously summarized in this magazine in a November 2003 editorial.⁸ (The editorial is available online on the website noted in reference 8). This editorial reviewed the historical evidence that the Berean/Central reunion was actually phased in over an roughly a 27 month period. Implementing unity in practice was left to individual ecclesias to work out in their own way on their own time table. This meant the whole period was a transitional time. The content of *The Tidings* and conclusions drawn in the November 2003 editorial were verified in a private correspondence with the late Brother Ernest Twelves who was one of the secretaries of the Jersey City conference. His reply is reproduced unabridged below:

“It was nice to hear from you on Tuesday evening particularly as it relates to a subject very close to my heart. You have very well captured the spiritual as well as the practical aspects of the issue of fellowship which emerged from the Central Berean Union Agreement in 1952.

“It has been cause for rejoicing for over 50 years that we can fellowship in love those from whom we had been separated in the past. We hold in loving memory Bro. John Carter whose labors along with brethren now long since deceased, both Central and Berean, provided the impetus to move forward to a very joyful and just reunion all to the Glory of God.

Your brother by Grace, Ernest Twelves”

Central-Shield fellowship reunion in Australia/New Zealand

Next we will consider the reunion in Australia/New Zealand, which took place over a number of years in the 1950s. Reunion began in one Australian state (Victoria, the city of Melbourne being the capital) in 1953 and developed over a six-year period to eventually reach a continent-wide closure in 1959. Details on this are supplied below in an abstract from an article by Brother John Carter in *The Christadelphian*, July 1958, from a cooperating group of ecclesias in Australia⁹, as follows:

“For some time we have had a note at the head of Australian intelligence items that the position was confused. A word of explanation may be here added. As reported in *The Christadelphian*, 1956, page 189, the Victorian ecclesias (that is in Melbourne and the vicinity) had agreed in 1953 on a basis for reunion, and with the exception of two ecclesias (one of which has since joined in), were co-operating together. This left somewhat undefined their position with regard to the ecclesias elsewhere in Australia and throughout the world.”

In an earlier “Intelligence” from the Launceston (Tasmania) Ecclesia¹⁰ we get an inside view of how one ecclesia was handling fellowship issues that confronted it during the interim multi-year period while reunion was diffusing throughout the Australian/New Zealand body of ecclesias. Citing from their December 1957 letter:

“The following five point resolution is now adopted as our stand in relation to all ecclesias in Australia. This was passed at a special business meeting on Aug. 31, 1957: (1) That this ecclesia desires to make its position clear in the present confused state of the Christadelphian body. We stand firm on the wholehearted acceptance

of the B.A.S.F. as always. (2) That we extend fellowship to any brother or sister who does so without deviation, condition or reservation. (3) That we withhold fellowship from any ecclesia tolerating false doctrine in their own ranks upon proof of such being brought to our notice. (4) That we do not extend this ban to any other ecclesia who if sound in themselves, extend fellowship to an ecclesia where heresy exists. That we deplore the principle of chain reaction in the matter of disfellowship as making for greater and more harmful division. (5) That the above resolutions are purely temporary and transitional until a more stable base of unity may be found. — W. T. Case (rec. bro.).”

It is clear from this and the above note from Brother Carter that a rather long transition period occurred in the Central/Shield reunion in Australia/New Zealand. The correspondence from the Launceston ecclesia contributes to the verification of this fact and also provides some other points that ecclesias in North America should ponder that might be helpful in rendering a more peaceful and orderly transition to a final closure of the unity efforts on this continent.

Finally, some six years after Central/Shield Ecclesias in the state of Victoria, Australia had started cooperating in fellowship a date for closure to the Unity process was announced in a report from the N.S.W. Christadelphian Unity Committee published in September, 1959:

“N.S.W. CHRISTADELPHIAN UNITY COMMITTEE: Report on Unity in Australia.

“After months of endeavour for the consolidation of the valuable work of bro. John Carter and the publication of the reports of his findings in Australia, the Unity Committee meeting in Sydney feel that reasonable time has now elapsed to enable ecclesias in what were once the Shield groups, to make their decisions as to whether or not they wish to participate in the Unity arrangement. Consequently, Feb. 28, 1959, was fixed, by which date any organized ecclesia could say yea or nay.”¹¹

Central-Unamended reunion on the West Coast of North America

Finally, since it is probably already well-known to our readers, we will consider only briefly the reunion process which transpired on the West Coast of North America some twenty years ago.¹² This reunion had a transition period that initially was proposed to last eighteen months, but as progress was made forbearance extended the time to roughly three years. As with the other cases illustrated above in Great Britain (Central/Suffolk Street), North America (Central/Berean) and Australia/New Zealand (Central/Shield) at the time there were strong voices of dissent from a minority of ecclesias, but there can be no argument today that all these reunions have been successful and have provided great benefits to the ecclesias involved.

Conclusion

In conclusion we will sum up the key points that this historical review has revealed:

Central-Suffolk 1957. The UK ecclesias agreed, in principle, on a start date at which point all ecclesias involved would recognize each other in fellowship. In practice there were local transitions in the UK both with respect to Unamended

overseas and with some UK ecclesias that were reluctant to move on the “official” start date recommended by the reunion committees. In addition, in some areas of Great Britain ecclesias in both fellowships had been fully cooperating for some years before the “official” reunion closure date.

Central-Berean 1952. This reunion was actually phased in over approximately a two year period. Implementing unity in practice was left to individual ecclesias to work out fellowship in their own way and on their own time table.

Central-Shield 1958. This reunion actually started in the state of Victoria (where Melbourne is the primary city). Some Victoria Central and Shield ecclesias were breaking bread together as early as 1953. Reunion gradually spread from there in fits and starts until it basically culminated in 1959 throughout Australia/New Zealand.

Central-Unamended 1992, (West Coast of North America). An approximately three year transitional fellowship period led to a successful reunion.

Finally, all four of these successful reunions had three things in common:

- The desire and commitment on both sides to reach closure with uniform doctrinal believes and a fellowship practice in the united community,
- A plan to support and achieve unity, eventually reaching closure, and
- Patience and forbearance of the preponderant majority involved on both sides during the transition period.

The Tidings Publishing Committee

Notes:

1. It is stated in many ancient sources that the Jewish Christians fled Jerusalem before the siege, many settling in Pella — across the Jordan in modern Jordan.
2. Of course, the agreement had previously been ratified in principle by the overwhelming majority of both sets of ecclesias.
3. *The Christadelphian*, V. 94, p. 26, (1957).
4. *ibid*.
5. *The Christadelphian*, V. 89, p. 375, (1952).
6. *The Christadelphian*, V. 90, p. 185, (1953).
7. *The Christadelphian*, V. 90, p. 216, (1953).
8. <http://www.tidings.org/2003/11/historical-guidelines-to-fellowship-practice-3/>
9. *The Christadelphian*, V. 95, p. 324, (1958).
10. *The Christadelphian*, V. 94, p. 475, (1957).
11. *The Christadelphian*, V. 96, p. 405, (1959).
12. *The Christadelphian*, V. 129, p.80, (1992).

The Jewish Christians to Pella

The first clear reference comes from the fourth century church historian Eusebius. He says that as the Romans approached the city, “The people belonging to the church at Jerusalem had been ordered by an oracle revealed to approved men on the spot before the war broke out, to leave the city and dwell in a town of Peraea called Pella” (EH III:5). The destruction of the city, Eusebius says, came only after the Jerusalem Christians had made their escape.

http://www.preteristarchive.com/JewishWars/articles/1998_scott_flee-pella.html

Bible Study

Creation's Gospel: (12) The Veiled Glory

Although this will be the final commentary in this series, the opportunity for the meditational expansion of this Scriptural/creational theme is limitless. The basic doctrinal truths of Scripture offers the exclusive platform from which to view the veiled divine glory, and contemplate how the tiniest to the largest features of creation perfectly project those eternal divine truths and principles expressed in Scripture. Unenlightened humanity has no excuse for ignorant innocence, because that which may be known of our Creator is manifested openly to all. The invisible things of our Creator can be seen and understood in the things that He has made (Rom 1:19-20). Creation's testimony is a universal language, testifying every day to the glory of the Creator (Psa 19:1-3). The foolishness of the natural heart, generated thought process of mankind blinds and deafens the unenlightened to these humbling declarations, that only the meek are empowered to see and hear.

The three immortalization events in the divine plan

We previously reviewed how the basic design of our universe perfectly parallels the divinely designed configuration of the Kingdom of God established at Sinai. Now let's look at the atomic and molecular validations of our Creator's veiled glory. In a separate commentary we noted that water is Scripturally identified by the word of God, having a testimonial application in all the natural forms of water (seas, clouds, rivers, ice, etc.). The word of God (Scripture) repeatedly presents the three stage progression of the divine plan for harmony (peace) between creation and the Creator. These three stages are the three great events in the divine plan. The first was our Messiah about two divine days ago (two millennia). The second great immortalization event will be the great cloud of witnesses at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom Age. The third and final stage is creating peace between all that is physical and all that is spiritual, which will be the final immortalization at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. The last enemy will be destroyed: death will be eliminated (cast into the lake of fire which is the second death ...of perishing). These three great stages in the completion of the divine plan are repeatedly presented in Scripture in different formats.

- The three holiness stages depicted in the wilderness Tabernacle
 - Courtyard
 - Holy Place
 - Most Holy Place
- The three configuration stages of the wilderness encampment
 - Foursquare political construction of 12 tribes
 - Foursquare spiritual construction of Levites and priests
 - Tabernacle

- The three Atonement events in the Most Holy on the annual Day of Atonement
 - The High Priest's life is saved by the incense to cloud conversion by fire
 - The bullock sin offering blood is spattered on the Mercy Seat
 - The goat sin offering blood is spattered on the Mercy Seat
- The three great Feast Weeks at the three significant annual harvests
 - Feast of Unleavened Bread/barley
 - Feast of Firstfruits/wheat
 - Feast of Tabernacles/vineyard

There is a long list for this Scriptural pattern, but space limits our pursuit of these topics. However, the potential for expansion offers an opportunity for continuing meditational development on a personal level. These three great stages in the divine plan are expressed in the three part molecular structure of the creational symbol for the word of God. Water's molecular structure is two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen (H₂O). Hydrogen is the first element on the Periodic Chart of the Elements and oxygen is the eighth. These numeric positions are identified by the number of protons in the nucleus of each atom. The placements and numbers of creational elements are not without divine significance. The fact that hydrogen is the most abundant element in the universe as well as being the first element on the chart with a single proton suggests a logical relationship with our Creator. This is similar to the color blue. Blue is the most dominant color in our created environment (sky and water) and is directly identified with Yahweh (Num 15:38-41).

The glory of the number of His Name in the things that have been made

Oxygen has eight protons. This numerical status identifies oxygen with both eternity and our Messiah. Even mathematicians recognize the relationship between 8 and eternity as that digit, placed sideways, is the mathematical symbol for infinity.¹ The eighth millennium in the divine plan is when all mortal life is completely eliminated. Our Creator will **be** all and **in** all (1Cor 15:28). Eight is the number of our Messiah. Christ's six letter Greek name adds up to 888 (Iesous: iota=10, eta=8, sigma=200, omicron=70, upsilon=400 and sigma=200... equaling 888). The triple eights in the name of Jesus is another veiled validation of the three immortalization stages in the divine plan. While 666 is the number of the man of sin (Rev 13:18), 888 is the number of the man of righteousness. This understanding is cemented by the subtle divine identifications of our Messiah's roles with the number eight. His savior role is seen in the eight people on Noah's ark. His kingship is inherited from his ancestor David, the eighth son of Jesse. His sacrifice and mediatorship is seen in the eight carcass components of the heaven and earth covenant with Abram (Gen 15). His covenant status is seen in the eight surfaces on the two sets of four stones upon which our Creator wrote the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. The covenant sealing ritual of circumcision was performed on the eighth day of a baby boy's life. Christ's sacrificial status is seen in the ritual law that a sacrificial animal is unacceptable until the eighth day of its life (Lev 22:27).

Oxygen's numerical status of eight is also directly associated with immortality by Jesus in his comments to Nicodemus. In describing immortalization (being born again) Jesus explains this new nature as becoming like the wind (John 3:8). The only

elemental component of wind that sustains life is oxygen. The Greek word for wind is similar to the Hebrew word for wind and air. They are also each used to define the omnipotent power and nature of our Creator: the Holy Spirit (Heb: *ruach*; Gk: *pneuma*). Oxygen is the first of the three components that sustains life under the curse of sin and death. An absence of oxygen will result in death within minutes. An absence of water will result in death within days. An absence of bread (solid food) will result in death within, at most, a couple of months. Oxygen, the most significant element sustaining mortal life, is the creation icon for immortal life.

Carbon based mortal life

The creation icon for mortal life is simple to identify. This would be carbon. Every single form of life in our sin-cursed creation is scientifically defined as carbon based life. This understanding is taught to us before we are even teenagers. Appropriately, the atomic number of carbon is six. Six is the Scripturally assigned number for the curse of sin and death, including all its effects. It is not simply the number of mortal man or just the number of sin. It is the number of the curse, including the other effects of that curse such as disease, hard labor, subjugation, and frustration.

The six and eight pattern of Scripture and creation

The status of our Messiah being both the son of man and son and son of God as well as his mediatorship is expressed in his saving name of Jesus where six Greek letters add up to triple eights. This presents exactly the same message projected by the atomic numbers and creational assignments for carbon and oxygen. The six and eight pattern in Christ's name and creation's design is confirmed repeatedly in Scripture. The golden ark of the covenant was formed by six separate geometric planes (left, right, front, back, top and bottom) that converge at eight points (corners) formed where three planes meet. The heaven and earth covenant with Abram required two sets of halved carcasses from three, three-year-old, earth-bound animals (heifer, female goat, ram) as well as two whole carcasses of the fowls of the heavens (turtledoves). The six carcass halves representing earth added to the two whole birds of the heavens make a total of eight components, declaring our salvation through the sacrificial man of eights who was of the earth but also of heaven. The six-eight pattern of the name of Jesus is whispered with that still small voice through the stormy winds, earthquakes and raging fires of fleshly perspective both Scripturally and creationally exclusively for those with seeing eyes and hearing ears.

The end and the beginning

It has been our intention over these twelve successive commentaries to provide a foundational platform for witnessing a greater measure of our Creator's glory. The presentation of these creation/spiritual patterns has been intentionally measured and conservative. There is an ocean of evidence offering discovery at every level of consideration, for the sheer joy of witnessing glimpses of our beloved Creator in the things that have been made. While these commentaries have concluded, our opportunity for expanding the application abounds, to our Creator's glory. The observations of these patterns comes from the threefold source of a simple

high school science education, daily Bible readings and the grateful education of divine truths taught from youth by parents and our Christadelphian community.

In the Service of our King, Jim Dillingham (Granite State, NH)

Notes:

- 1. This could well be true, although conventionally there are several other explanations.

“In the Beginning was the Word”

Another look at the opening verses of John’s Gospel

“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1-2).

John 1:1-2 does not teach the literal pre-existence of Christ. Instead, it declares what *was foreordained* of him. Accordingly, it was *the word* that was in the beginning, not the actual person of Christ. John does not say, “In the beginning was *the person!*”

Foreordination is Biblical. Pre-existence is not. The latter is a Platonic concept that came into Christian thinking after New Testament times and makes it impossible to understand John’s message of salvation in Christ.

In the opening verses of his gospel, John is telling us what was prophesied about Christ from the beginning of time. *The word of prophecy* that John had in mind portrayed Christ *with God* and *as God*. What this means is, that from the very beginning, Christ was ordained — *foreordained* — to dwell with God in divine glory.

It is not difficult to identify *the word* that declared this *in the beginning*. It is Genesis 1:26. It is the same word that Jesus had in mind when, on the eve of his crucifixion, he prayed that the divine glory ordained for him might now be granted:

“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5).

In John 1:1, *the word* is the Christ of prophecy, not the Christ of history. It is a picture in preview of Christ in glory. It is what God purposed at the creation of man. The rest of John’s Gospel tells how the Genesis 1:26 prophecy came to be fulfilled in Jesus and how, through him, others can also receive eternal life and dwell with God in glory. The message of John’s Gospel is that the man, Jesus, has attained to the eternal life ordained for him from the foundation of the world, and, through him, eternal life is mediated for all mankind.

The gospel of eternal life

John’s Gospel is the gospel of eternal life; eternal life first given by God to Jesus and then made accessible to us through him. The language that John uses compared with the other gospel writers underscores this fact:

AV:	“eternal life”/“everlasting life”	“life” (implying “eternal life”)
Matthew	3	3
Mark	2	2
Luke	3	0
John	17	19

Given John's emphasis on eternal life through Jesus Christ, it is entirely fitting that he begins his gospel by declaring that eternal life with God was first ordained for Christ. And it is this that gives Christ his due preeminence throughout John's Gospel. It is in this respect that Christ was before Abraham (John 8:58); this is the reason that Moses and the prophets wrote of him (John 1:45; 5:46), and this is why he was preferred before John the Baptist, even though John could say that Jesus Christ came *after* him in point of time (John 1:15, 27, 30).

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen 1:26).

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Historically, this was the pronouncement of God at the creation of Adam, and the angels entered into the creative work with Him. *Prophetically*, Gen 1:26 is God's invitation to the glorified Christ — in fact, it is God's invitation to the glorified Son of man — to join Him in the work of bringing many men and women to divine glory. *This is the word that was in the beginning.*

In New Testament parlance, Gen 1:26 contains a mystery of Christ (also see 1 Cor 2:6-10; Eph 1:9-12). John 1:1 interprets the mystery for us, but, of course, the interpretation did not become historical reality until after Jesus rose from the dead.

John's Gospel is chronological

The Gospel of John is set out in chronological order. This is not because John is concerned with a detailed timeline of the Lord's ministry, but because he is telling us how God's purpose proceeded to fulfillment in Christ, from the time that the word — the Christ of prophecy — was made flesh (John 1:14), until he rose from the dead and stood before his disciples in the glory of God (John 20:28). Several key statements mark the progress of John's record:

"(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)" (John 7:39).

At the feast of tabernacles, six months before the crucifixion.

*"And Jesus answered them, saying, **The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified**" (John 12:23).*

In the last week of Christ's ministry.

*"And **now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self** with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5).*

On the eve of Christ's crucifixion.

*"Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, **I ascend (I am ascending) unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God**" (John 20:17).*

On the day Christ rose from the dead.

*“And Thomas answered and said unto him, **My Lord and my God**” (John 20:28).*

Eight days later

It is altogether significant that Thomas did not declare Jesus to be “God” until *after* he had risen from the dead and was glorified by his Father and his God (also see Acts 3:13-15). A declaration of the kind that Thomas made would have been altogether out of place earlier in John’s chronology of salvation. This also means that the statement in John 10:30 — “I and my Father are one” — is not a statement about shared divinity or “substance”, but, as the context makes clear, is a statement about the unity of saving purpose that the Son has with the Father.

John 17:5 is wonderfully meaningful in John’s sequence. It shares several points of contact with the Prologue and gives us a splendid insight into the fact that the Lord Jesus indeed saw himself in the prophecy of Genesis 1:26:

- “before the world was” (John 17:5) = “In the beginning” (John 1:1; 1:2) = before the creation of man (in Genesis 1:27);
- “with thee” (John 17:5) = “with God” (John 1:1; 1:2) = “let us” (Gen 1:26);
- “the glory which I had” (John 17:5) = “was God” (John 1:1) = “our image ... our likeness” (Gen 1:26).

In the prayer of John 17, on the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus asked his Father to give him the glory that was ordained for him from the beginning. The time had come, historically speaking, for the Son to receive the effulgence of divine nature.

It is worth noting in passing that “the world” in John’s Gospel is the world of mankind. “Before the world was” takes us back before the creation of man. The world of mankind quickly became a sinning, dying world, and, again, John is concerned with telling us that the singular man, Jesus, came into the world to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29); that the world should be saved through him (John 3:16-17, etc.).

John’s Gospel documents God’s mediation of eternal life through the man Jesus Christ. It starts by declaring the fact that this man was ordained for glory with God from the beginning (John 1:1-2), and it brings us to the point where we see him stand before us in divine glory (John 20:28). John then invites us to believe what he has told us about Jesus, that we may be numbered among the men and women whom the Father and Son will bring to the same eternal glory:

*“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and **that believing ye might have life through his name**” (John 20:30-31).*

Jim Harper (Meriden, CT)

The Joy of Sunday Schooling

God's Way Works! The Use of Case Studies

In the previous article,¹ the use of question sheets was presented as a way to get Sunday school students thinking and talking about important issues. When this happens, the teacher facilitates the discussion and becomes a listener and evaluator. It is an opportunity to find out what the students are thinking. Do they grasp the Biblical principles involved in the issue? Do they know how to apply the principles in their own lives? And in the end, are they convinced that God's way really works?

The last piece is critical. God's way does work, and the use of case studies can be an effective way to augment instruction and drive the point home. Case studies show principles at work in real life situations. They add credibility to what some students might otherwise think is theoretical, or even optional instruction. Let me illustrate this with an example.

Man's way or God's way?

Several years ago I came across an instructive pair of articles in our local newspaper.² It was real life stuff, and it provided the substance for a case study that I have used with young people many times since. The situation bore directly on the question of facing violence in our personal lives.

The first article carried the headline: "Escapees Kill Tennessee Man". The second had the headline: "Armed killer succumbs to home cooking, Bible". The stories were related and you can imagine what they were about.

A major prison break took place in western Tennessee in February, 1984, and five heavily armed convicts went on the loose for several days. The man they killed was a Sunday school teacher who felt the need to pack a pistol in his belt when he stepped out of his house to grill steaks. He was no match for the two professional killers who smelled the cooking food and emerged from the nearby woods. One is left wondering what Bible this man taught Sunday school from. And one is left wondering what would have happened if he had offered the convicts something to eat rather than bullets.

The second article was about an elderly grandmother who discovered a third escapee curled up on her front porch with a shotgun in his hand. When he came into the house, she told him, "Put down your gun. I'm a Christian woman and I don't want no violence." The convict was a young man in his mid-twenties, and he obeyed. She talked to him about his life and she prayed for him. She also talked to him about the Bible and Jesus. Meanwhile, she prepared breakfast for him because he hadn't eaten a good meal in three days. At the end, the man gave himself up and went back to prison where he was serving a 25-year sentence for murder.

Which way worked, man's way or God's way? Things may not always turn out as they did in this case, but the wise grandmother certainly did the right thing. To meet violence with violence produces only one outcome: violence. To meet violence with nonviolence stands at least a chance of producing a nonviolent outcome. It is in God's hands, of course, but God's ways are far more practical than many people think. We place our faith in this, and in the process, understand that God holds our eternal destiny in His hands no matter what happens in this life.

I use this case study as a follow up to a set of question sheets.³ The question sheets pose the jail-break problem in hypothetical terms and give the students an opportunity to think and say what they would do if something like this happened to them. We talk the situation through together and get the alternatives on the table: man's way and God's way. If the students have any doubts that God's way is an effective way of dealing with the problem, the case study comes as a real eye-opener. It's my punch line.

It is important to drive the point home that God's way works in real life. And it is important for the students to realize that God's way is the only way that holds promise for the life to come.

Finding case studies

Case studies do not always have to be drawn from the newspaper or other modern media. They can be drawn from personal life experiences as well. Students can relate more easily to case studies when it is obvious that the stories come from the lives of real human beings, especially ones whom they know.

The Bible is full of good case studies, too. For example, David faced violence at the hands of Saul. (See 1Sam 23:25-29.) David found himself in a life and death situation in which he had to rely entirely on God for a way of escape. God intervened in a timely manner. It all seemed to happen circumstantially; we would call it "the ways of providence", but David was saved and he recognized that God was with him. Psalm 54 is David's prayer of faith and thanksgiving at this frightening time in his life.

The finest man in the Bible did not escape the violence that was perpetrated against him. The Lord Jesus Christ went to the cross; he suffered and died at the hands of ruthless men. His life, like ours, came with no guarantees other than death, but there is hardly a student in our Sunday schools who does not know the outcome of this: God raised him from the dead. God's way works favorably for the faithful: sometimes in the short term and always in the long term.

Using case studies

Case studies are versatile. They do not have to be used just to culminate instruction. A good story can also be used to get instruction started. When this is done, the case study provides an immediate focal point for class discussion. Students can be asked to analyze the story and identify the Biblical principles involved. They can be asked to think how they might handle a similar situation and give reasons why they might or might not behave the same way. In either case, the value of

God's way of doing things can be brought to life and emphasized. How you use a case study in Sunday school depends on the makeup of your class and what you, as the teacher, want to accomplish by using the story.

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Notes:

1. See "Getting Them Thinking and Talking! The Use of Question Sheets," *The Tidings*, November, 2012.
2. The first article appeared in the *Record-Journal*, Meriden, CT, February 23, 1984, p.10. The second one appeared in the same newspaper a day or two later. (I no longer have the dateline of the second article).
3. E-mail me if you would like a copy of this case study and the question sheets that go with it. If you have a case study to share (i.e., an instructive anecdotal story), I would be pleased to receive a copy of it.

Youth Speaks

Major Decision # 2: Character Development "TH-JPL-GR"

That acronym stands for "True," "Honest," "Just," "Pure," "Lovely," and "Good Report," six things that Paul suggests that we think on (Phil 4:8). Unfortunately, my heart is like a factory churning out evil thoughts every minute of every day (Matt 15:19, Mark 7:21). More so than anything else, I look forward to the decommissioning of that factory should I be found worthy to be in the Kingdom of God. In considering the paradox of being asked to think on virtuous and praiseworthy things while having a heart generating evil thoughts, the first, automatic reaction is "why do I have to think on these sorts of things?" (i.e.: reasoning that it is enough of a struggle to not "do" sinful things, God should be satisfied with that, let alone asking me to go one step further and control my thoughts). For all the wonderful names and titles of YHWH that Jesus could have taught us to address him by, the name "our father" (Matt 6:9-13) this is the key to understanding why God, our Father, has asked this of us.

A Godly father does not place grievous commandments on his children (1John 5:1-6), but rather gives his children commandments to provide for them, to guard them from evil, and to teach them. As a man thinks, so he becomes. That is to say, thoughts are the seeds that sprout actions, and actions blossom into character. It is therefore impossible to uncouple what you think about from the character you are developing. When we find our thoughts drifting towards evil we should be on red-alert, because the minute opportunity presents itself, sin will take hold of us and leave us with only painful consequences. A covetous man left alone with someone else's goods becomes a thief; one who quietly despises their fellowman becomes a slanderer when given the semi-anonymity of Facebook; and inner-pride drives one to boast when given an audience. We don't want to become thieves, slanderers, and boasters — those who care about us don't want that for us, and our Heavenly Father certainly doesn't want to have to exclude us from the Kingdom of God! God is telling us that it matters what we think about because it is a safe

guard against evil. If we only thought things of people that were of good report we would never slander our fellow man. If we were obsessed with being true, the gain of theft would never be outweighed by the deceit of it. If we loved being honest we would never brag because the truth is we have nothing that we have not been given (1Cor 4:7). Pure thoughts would prevent women from ever being treated in a way that a man would not want his sister to be treated.

As per usual, despite our flesh casting doubts on God's good guidance, there are some undeniable benefits to leaning on our Father's understanding. Our character comes with a default setting from the day we are born, specifically the production of evil, first in thought and then in action, given any sort of opportunity. We must realize we have been called to forsake the squalid moral condition we are born with and rise to be sons and daughters of God. There ought to be a sense of urgency to make this ascension, for the longer we unwittingly let sin play a part in our lives the deeper the scars it leaves. The images from video games I played, the contorted views of the roles of men and women I formed, the self-glorifying song lyrics I sub-consciously memorized, the vile ways I learned to rebuke an adversary, hinder the development of a spiritual character to this day. It doesn't happen all the time, but there are times when even before the emblems my mind drifts back to the unwholesome things I filled it with during the Godless times in my life. The point, or perhaps the warning, is this: don't fill your mind with evil that is going to hinder your spiritual development for the rest of your life. There will always be a battle between the spiritual character we are trying to grow, and the fleshly character that dwells in us. The sooner we start nourishing the spiritual man instead of the carnal man, the greater our chances of entering into the Kingdom of God will be.

Like hymn 405 of the hymn book says, "we make the answer now" — but where can we go to find nourishment for a spiritual character so that our answer can be the correct one? When the disciples were asked if they too would leave Christ like so many others already had, Peter replied "*Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life*" (John 6:68). And he was right. There are many places we can go, many books we can read, many worldly mentors we can turn to for character development, but the Bible alone offers eternal life. Will the author of *The Secret* tell you that if the dead can think positively about the resurrection, it will happen? Probably not, but Jesus did say that those that believe in him, and by extension the hope of Israel, will partake in the resurrection (John 11:25-26). If you ever want to kill the mood when worldly advice for "good living" is being offered just ask the question, "will any of this advice matter if I get hit by a bus going home?" Within the Bible, God is offering us more than just good advice for being citizens of this present world, He is offering us the kind of advice that can grow a character whose name will be written in the book of life, and never blotted out (Rev 3:5). What better reason is there to open the Bible and start developing a Godly character now?

Joey Marple (North Battleford, SK)

Reflections

Marriage Proverbs: Guidelines for a Happy Relationship (11) Guideline Number 10: Intimacy

One flesh

We have explored how infidelity, whether physical or virtual can destroy a marriage, now let us turn our attention to positive ways to build a relationship that can lead to a lifelong happy bond. The Bible doesn't avoid discussing marriage intimacy and neither should we. From the very beginning God created woman and man to be companions, which is completely contrary to the oft-stated view of evolutionists. Modern evolutionary thought ascribes pleasure in intimate relations between a man and a woman as nature's way of assuring propagation of the species and leaves the LORD God completely out of the equation. This, in effect, turns a God given design into a mechanical convenience bereft of any spiritual qualities! Romantic love, passion and intimacy are Biblically revealed as a gift from God to be enjoyed and appreciated in the bonds of matrimony. The fact is that the bonding of man and woman into one flesh is a Biblical principle from the very beginning:

*"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, **and they shall become one flesh**" (Gen 2:24 ESV¹).*

This principle is repeated four more times in the New Testament to emphasize its importance and to leave no doubt in our minds that this was, and is God's design. Our Lord Jesus Christ endorses this principle (Matt 19:5, 6 and Mark 10:7, 8) and the Apostle Paul expands upon it by quoting Genesis (Eph 5:31 and 1Cor 6:16) with the latter reference making it clear that such intimacy was to be enjoyed only within the marriage relationship. The spiritual reason for this is made clear earlier in the fifth chapter of Ephesians (v. 22, 23) where the Apostle draws a picture of the relationship between husbands and wives as analogous to that of Christ to his Church. We can hardly imagine that Christ would be anything but faithful, loving, steadfast, kind, gentle and fulfilling in his relationship towards us. These qualities are the beginning of a proper understanding of how to have happy intimate relationships in a marriage. The husband is to love and respect his wife as Christ loves his "Bride" — the church — and in like manner the wife is to love and respect her husband.

Marital love was intended by God to be spiritually passionate and committed. An important component of the bond of love in a marriage is the intimate relationship that husband and wife share together when they become one flesh, to use the direct Biblical phrasing. When husband and wife have difficulties in the bedroom it is invariably a reflection of deeper problems in the marriage, related to many of the stresses that come as part of our human condition. One of the amazing things about the Scriptures is the universality of the messages given for our learning. Marriages in the first century ecclesia had difficulties with maintaining happy

intimate relationships too. In many ways the challenges then, in some respects, mimic our own age perhaps even more than we realize and more than believers faced only a generation or two before us.

As the “Truth” spread to *Gentile* lands the moral and legal climate governing relationships between men and women faced drastically different conditions than what had prevailed in the land of Israel. For the Jews, the Law of Moses should have elevated them to a much higher ethical plain. The problem with the first century Jews, when it came to how husbands treated their wives was not due to God’s intentions, but their own fallibility. Thus Jesus could say to them:

“Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so” (Matt 19:8 also Mark 10:5).

If a wife was no longer physically pleasing to a Jewish husband he simply divorced her. There was little that could be done to protect her interests and she had to rely principally on her family, or if they were not alive, or capable of sheltering her, she became a beggar.

The Roman Empire

The situation was even worse for a married woman in the extended Roman Empire. The concept of romantic love was not the norm in the New Testament era. Marriages were principally arranged by families and sometimes even before the parties involved were born! Hence, often intimacy in a marriage was hardly one where one expected pleasure, but an act strictly reserved for producing heirs. As compensation for the husband, if the wife’s physical attributes did not please him, he would often get his pleasures from prostitutes or concubines. In theory in ancient Rome monogamy was the law, with such extracurricular moral meandering illegal, and preserving monogamy was especially important in preserving the legal inheritance rights of the patrician families. However, by the time of the New Testament, men could legally keep concubines in the household, and the role of such extramarital relationships was officially recognized. There is ample evidence of the regularized role of such relationships, since the wording on many tombstones of concubines from ancient Rome attest to their accepted position in the household. Divorce was originally frowned upon in ancient Rome, but had become trivially easy, especially for the male by the first century AD — essentially no reasons had to be given by the male other than the wife no longer pleased him. *(Today of course most states in the USA have empowered no fault divorce laws and the only difference is that either party, male or female, can walk out on the marriage, citing merely incompatibility as sufficient cause, with little interference from the state and with much profit to divorce lawyers.)*

Prostitution was especially rampant in the first century Roman world. Again while theoretically illegal under the Augustine Code, it still was practiced virtually everywhere in the empire and there was no such thing as a vice squad to police the situation. In some places in the Roman Empire local cult religions even dressed up prostitution as a religious experience with services performed after a suitable contribution was made to the local pagan temple priestesses. Corinth was an espe-

cially immoral place at the time the Apostle Paul wrote his epistle to the ecclesia in that city. Corinth was a prime transit point for goods and produce being shipped from Asia to the Roman provinces in Italy and the mainland of Europe. It was a bustling seaport city with perhaps a population estimated to be as high as eight hundred thousand² at the time of the apostle Paul. This city had all the moral accoutrements that usually accompany such a large population accustomed to an open culture.³ It is important to appreciate the background conditions in the first century Roman Empire, and in particular in the city of Corinth, before one can completely appreciate the climate in which the apostle Paul gave his advice on marital relationships to that ecclesia.

In writing to the Corinthians Paul makes it plain that the commonly accepted Roman practice of satisfying intimate pleasures between man and woman outside of marriage is not only a sin against the marital partner, but also a sin against God.⁴

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,... you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1Cor 6:19, 20: see the whole passage starting with verse 12 for context).

Paul goes on to answer a question that was obviously posed to him by the Corinthian ecclesia:

“It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman” (1Cor 7:1).

Perhaps because of the rampant immorality of Corinth, which dwarfs anything we can openly imagine today (the emphasis here is on ‘openly’) the Corinthian believers may have thought that the only way to remain pure spiritually was to avoid intimate male/female relationships of any kind. It is perhaps from this type of thinking that the celibacy of the Roman Catholic priests and nuns is derived. But the apostle Paul in writing to Timothy specifically castigates any doctrine that forbids marriage and makes it once again abundantly clear that it is a God given design that our Maker created.

(Speaking of some that will depart from the faith) *“... who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth” (1Tim 4:3).*

It was furthermore a design that was to be received “with thanksgiving” making it clear that both marriage and food were meant to be an enjoyable experiences.⁵

Marriage (or not) today

For balance here I want to make a parenthetical comment that one should not also draw the conclusion from this reference that one has to be married in order to be a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul makes that obvious elsewhere in the same chapter when he told the Corinthians:

“To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion” (1Cor 7:8, 9).

Also;

*“But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. **Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that**” (1Cor 7:28).*

Particularly notice the parts I have underlined. There was no doctrine that you had to be married to be a good Christian, and in fact we know from Paul's own testimony that he was not married during his ministry. Sometimes we treat brethren or sisters that are not married as virtually second class Christadelphians, whether they have made this choice consciously, or by circumstances beyond their control. We forget about them socially and sometimes don't place much value on their opinions regarding ecclesial issues. This is a situation that we should not find ourselves endorsing. The second underlined passage about Paul sparing unmarried brethren and sisters worldly troubles has sometimes been generalized by Bible commentaries, well beyond what in my opinion is the point that the apostle is trying to make. The whole of this section of the epistle to Corinthians is concerned with marriage relations, and all he is saying is that if one is not married you will be spared the problems related to the marriage! Indeed, anytime one adds complexity to one's life, additional problems naturally arise. When one is married one cannot selfishly make decisions and raise expectations that simply gratify themselves. One has to be cognizant of the feelings and needs of our partners to be truly happy in a marriage. This leads us to the next point of what the apostle has to say to the Corinthians of how to have happy intimate relations in a marriage.

Critical to good intimate relationships is mutual love, respect and good communication skills. Each partner in a marriage should feel free to discuss with their spouse what they like or dislike about their intimate relationships. Moreover, neither should either feel pressured, or worse, forced into doing something that they feel is repugnant. A married couple should not use sex as a weapon in a battle that started over other issues such as disagreements over finances, childrearing, inattentiveness, in-law disputes and many other issues that are extraneous to having intimate relationships. Settle the external differences first and don't use intimate relations as a tool for playing games with your partner. The apostle Paul is pretty blunt in making this clear to the Corinthians when he wrote:

“The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time,” (1Cor 7:3-5).

Aside from proving that nothing really ever changes, because marriage counselors in this day and age have found that when couples ignore this type of advice and use sex as a weapon rather than fulfillment of mutual love and respect — then the marriage is usually in deep trouble. Naturally, if physical difficulties or illness occur that prevent intimacy, the partners need to seek professional medical advice and both may need to resort to exercising great patience until the situation can be resolved.

Thankfully, husbands and wives can be happily content with their intimate relations throughout their whole lives, if they would exercise the kindness, love and consideration that they extended to each other during courtship. It is a good idea for a married couple to date regularly. My wife and I tried every week to have at least one night to ourselves and let someone else watch our children. This was done with a baby-sitting pool that a group of young mothers put together and payment was with 3"x5" index cards: money was never exchanged only services. Everyone in the pool started with 20 cards with each individual card exchanged entitling them to one hour of child monitoring. You paid back by reciprocating and watching some other couples' children in the baby-sitting pool. The only rule was that you could never go less than zero in the number of cards you possessed. Date night didn't necessarily involve anything very costly either, sometimes it was just a long walk with just the two of us alone to talk and ponder life. Other times it was just spending a couple of hours with over a friend's house sharing some coffee and a dessert. Intimacy developed in this fashion keeps a relationship fresh and develops a sense of togetherness that carries over to every aspect in a marriage.

We may not all be great lovers, but we should all be capable of being educated, especially a couple can learn from each other. The Song of Solomon provides some very frank descriptions of how a husband should praise, cherish, and passionately love his wife. Conversely the love and respect that is attributed to Sarah in her feelings for Abraham many a wife would do well to emulate (Gen 18:12).

Finally, this article is not intended to be either definitive, or all-inclusive on the subject at hand; the amount of printed space available and the lack of comprehensive knowledge by the author preclude it. However, we pray that this chapter has pointed a way that may help guide parties interested in having a happy (*or happier*) marriage can grow to cherish each other more and take pleasure in the God given gift of married love. If your marriage is troubled and lacks satisfying intimacy please seek wider help through such external resources such as those mentioned in the footnote.⁶

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Notes:

1. All references are from the ESV
2. <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/greece/corinth>
3. Today the population is reported as approximately 30,000 in some sources and as large as 58,000 in others (depending on how the boundaries of the municipality are defined).
4. With the Apostle Paul's thorough knowledge of the Old Testament he probably had in mind the words that Joseph spoke to Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:9) that we examined earlier in this series.
5. Since both "marriage" and "food" are the compound subjects of this verse and they were both created by God it is a reasonable assumption that both are to be accepted with thanksgiving. Indeed we should accept all things that God has created with thanksgiving (Psa. 26:7; Psa. 50:23; Psa. 100:4 and many others).
6. Christadelphian Care Network — <http://www.caringnetwork.ca/> Also some ecclesias have ongoing relationships with professional counseling that has been vetted and completely compatible with our beliefs. If you are in an area where this is the case, and in need of help, please take advantage of this possibility. One magazine article cannot possibly do more than open the door to this weighty subject.

Book of Mormon: (2) Mistakes and Inaccuracies

The edition of the *Book of Mormon* in our home library was dated 1950. When we called a local office of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints to double check a few things, we were told we really should be using an updated version and were subsequently sent an edition dated 2003. In that edition the following note appears: "About this edition: Some minor errors in the text have been perpetuated in past editions of the *Book of Mormon*. **This edition contains corrections** that seem appropriate to bring the material into conformity with prepublication manuscripts and early editions edited by the Prophet Joseph Smith." We were interested to note that obvious mistakes in the earlier edition were not corrected.

Furthermore, throughout the *Book of Mormon*, there are extensive quotations of sections of Isaiah and frequent paraphrases of other Scripture. Clearly the writer had ready access to the King James Version. There is thus no excuse for mistakes in respect to facts made plain in Scripture.

And we were further intrigued by words in the "Introduction" attributed to Joseph Smith: "I told the brethren that the *Book of Mormon* was the **most correct** of any book on earth..." To a reader familiar with the Biblical record, such an assertion makes the problems noted below seem all the more mystifying as the inaccuracies are so obvious to the Bible reader.

We need to remember as well that the *Book of Mormon* supposedly comes from the same source as the Bible: the mind of God. We are therefore fully justified in expecting total compatibility in regard to facts, attitudes, priorities and standards between the Bible and the *Book of Mormon*.

Where Jesus was born

In the *Book of Mormon* we read: "...And the Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth. And behold, he shall be born of Mary, *at Jerusalem* which is the land of our forefathers..." (Alma 7:9-10).

It clearly says, "Jerusalem" and not "Bethlehem"!

When we first read the passage, we felt there must be something in the context to modify the mistake. But, no, there is not. Then we looked for something later in the *Book of Mormon* which countered the error, but there is nothing.

How such an error could have been made in the first place is remarkable. Having it perpetuated through several editions is rather unbelievable. True, Bethlehem is only a few miles south of Jerusalem, but there is distinct countryside between the two cities and Bethlehem is never considered part of greater Jerusalem in Scripture. And the Biblical prophets make a distinct point that: "*But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth to me who shall be ruler in Israel*" (Micah 5:2).

The location of Bethlehem receives significant emphasis in Matthew's account: "*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king...*"

And when he [Herod] had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, 'In Bethlehem of Judaea...'” (Matt 2:1,4,5). Later we read, Herod “*slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof...*” (v. 16).

Bethlehem, not Jerusalem, is the place clearly identified in Scripture. What a curious error to make and then leave uncorrected through several editions especially when there is no theological reason to make the mistake.

Jesus' attitude to healing the sick

One of the striking features of our Lord's ministry is that he rarely accentuated his ability to heal the sick. He could have healed every blind person, every lame, every leprous, every disabled person in all the land and could have fed everyone who was hungry. But he did not. In fact, it's evident he tried to distract attention from his ability to perform miracles by appealing to the healed not to spread what had been done for them: Upon healing a leper he said, “*See thou tell no man*”; after healing two blind men he requested, Later “*great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; and charged them that they **should not make him known***” (Matt 8:4; 9:30; 12:16).

After his first public miracle of healing in Capernaum, word rapidly spread in the immediate area so “*at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased...and he healed many*”. But the next day, rising early “*he departed into a solitary place...and [the apostles] followed after him. And when they had found him they said unto him, 'All men seek for thee.' And he said unto them, 'Let us go into the next towns that I may **preach** there also: for **therefore** came I forth'*” (Mark 1:32-38). While word had spread and many more were seeking to be healed, the Lord's priority was preaching the gospel which could result in eternal life, which was more important than the curing of temporal problems. He did not want to be known as a healer of physical infirmities, but he wanted to be known as the teacher of the one way to be healed from sin and death.

In accord with this priority, the Lord never issued a call for all the ill, blind, lame, etc. people to come to him for healing. Contrast this Biblical information with 3 Nephi 17 where Jesus is portrayed as saying: “Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither...and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you...” (3 Nephi 17:7 — note, the author of 3 Nephi is a distant descendant of the author of 1 Nephi but is also named “Nephi”). Of course Jesus had compassion on the sick in Israel, but the perceptive Bible reader is immediately alerted by the contrast between the Jesus of the Bible and the Jesus of the *Book of Mormon*.

This same place in 3 Nephi goes on to quote Jesus saying, “For I perceive that ye desire that I should show unto you what I have done unto your brethren at Jerusalem...” (v.8). There are only two miracles of healing recorded in Scripture as happening at Jerusalem: the infirm man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5) and the man born blind (John 9). It would have made sense for Jesus to allude to healings done in Galilee or Decapolis or even Perea, but not Jerusalem. It may be a minor mistake to reference Jerusalem in this regard but it is a significant indication that

the *Book of Mormon* is not the product of divine revelation but is a creation of Joseph Smith.

Three hours of darkness mistaken for three days

The gospel writers are clear that the darkness which occurred during the crucifixion lasted three hours: “And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour” (Luke 23:44; Matt 27:45; Mark 15:33). In contrast, the *Book of Mormon* consistently mistakes this three **hours** for three **days** of darkness.

The first reference is in I Nephi 19:10: “[the Christ] will be lifted up, according to the words of Zenock, and to be crucified, according to the words of Neum, and to be buried in a sepulcher, according to the words of Zenos, which he spake concerning the **three days of darkness**, which should be a sign given of his death...”. I Nephi is dated about 575 B.C. Several hundred years later (6 B.C.) a similar prophecy is attributed to “Samuel, the Lamanite” (Helaman 14:1) where he says that at the time of the crucifixion “darkness should cover the face of the whole earth for the space of **three days**” (Hel 14:27 see v. 17 on to confirm the context is of the death of Christ).

By 32-34 A.D. the book claims “the people began to look with great earnestness for the sign which had been given by the prophet Samuel, the Lamanite, yea, for the time that there should be darkness for the space of **three days** over the face of the land...and it came to pass that there was thick darkness upon all the face of the land...that it did last for the space of **three days** that there was no light seen...” (3 Nephi 8:3,20,23 A.D. 32).

No correction is made of this obvious mistake. It simply stands as a signal to the Bible student that something is wrong with the *Book of Mormon*.

Knowledge of the death and resurrection of Christ

In the foregoing quote from 1 Nephi 19, specific clear reference is made to the crucifixion of Christ in writings said to be about 575 B.C. Such specific, unambiguous, impossible not to understand statements about the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ are made throughout the book: “they shall scourge him, and shall crucify him. And he shall rise the third day from the dead...” (Mosiah 3:9-10, B.C. 124); “Now those priests who did go forth among the people did preach... holding forth the coming of the Son of God, his sufferings and death, and also the resurrection of the dead” (Alma 16:18-20, B.C. 78); “and there began to be men inspired from heaven and sent forth, standing among the people in all the land, preaching and testifying boldly...the resurrection of Christ; and they did testify boldly of his death and sufferings” (3 Nephi 6:20, A.D. 29-30).

These stark pronouncements would without doubt have made impossible what actually happened. In spite of the Lord’s own clear message, even his closest followers did not believe he would die. The women had seen the empty tomb as had Peter and John, but still they didn’t believe. Thomas refused to believe until he actually put his fingers in Christ’s hands and side.

The disciples should have known. The Lord sternly rebukes them: “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken” (Luke 24:25). Yes there were many Old Testament prophecies about the death of Christ. After the fact, they were understood by the apostles, but before the fact, none of these prophecies approach the explicit language found in the *Book of Mormon*. That book is so explicit about the death and resurrection of Christ it surely could not have been missed by anyone.

Furthermore, the apostle Paul states that none of the authorities had any idea that the crucifixion was an integral part of God’s plan for the Messiah: “**none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory**” (1Cor 2:8).

The *Book of Mormon*’s explicit prophecies about the death and resurrection of Christ form another of the mistakes which should not have been contained in plates supposedly originating from the same source as the Bible — the mind of God. In this case, they prove the book does not contain translations of legitimate prophecies. Rather this mistake leads to the inescapable conclusion the book is the product of Joseph Smith’s creative and imaginative mind.

Gentiles as fellow-heirs of the promises

In Ephesians 3:5-6 the apostle Paul makes a rather remarkable statement: “Which in other ages **was not made known** unto the sons of men, as it is **now** revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be **fellow heirs**, and of the **same** body, and **partakers** of his promise in Christ by the spirit”.

To us, in our day, it is patently obvious that non-Jews (Gentiles) are fully welcome to become heirs to the promises and enter into the body of Christ. But the apostle tells us the inclusion of Gentiles as fellow heirs of the promises to be included in the same body as the Jews was *not understood by believers* until the middle part of the first century A.D. He says that is because God *had not revealed it* until that time.

From the beginning of Israel’s existence as a nation, it was certainly clear that Gentiles could be incorporated into the nation of Israel: Rahab was a Caananite, Caleb a Kenite, Ruth a Moabitess, Uriah a Hittite, David’s mighty men included an Ammonite and some of his most loyal troupes were Philistines (Josh 2:1; Josh 14:6; Ruth 1:4; II Sam 23:37,39; 15:18, etc.) . And prophecies of the Messianic age clearly speak of all the Gentiles being included under Messiah’s rule (Psa 2:8; 72:8; Isa 2:2-4; Rom 11 etc.). What was not understood, however, *because God had not revealed it to them*, was the fact that during the ecclesial age (from the resurrection of Christ until his return to set up the kingdom), Gentiles would be on a totally equal footing with the Jews.

However, the *Book of Mormon* makes the mistake of having the inclusion of the Gentiles *revealed* to Lehi in 592 B.C.: “And after they [the Jews] had slain the Messiah, who should come, and after he had been slain he should rise from the dead, and should make himself manifest, by the Holy Ghost, *unto the Gentiles*” (1 Nephi 10:11, B.C. 529). Nephi goes on to underscore the point by saying: “And after the house of Israel should be scattered they should be gathered together again; or, in

fine [sic.], *after the Gentiles had received the fullness of the Gospel...*" (v.14). This is the very point which the apostle Paul writes "*was not made known*" until the first century A.D. — 650 years later.

Joseph Smith seems oblivious to the words of Paul as he frequently emphasizes a full revelation of the gospel to the Gentiles centuries before it was known that Gentiles would be fellow heirs with the Jews: "after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the *fullness of the gospel* of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles..." "For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the *covenant people* of the Lord" (1 Nephi 15:13; 2 Nephi 30:2, B.C. 545). Take careful note that this fact would not be revealed for another 600 years.

It's easy for us to miss the mistake because believing Gentiles are now in truth fellow heirs of the covenants of promise. The mistake is that this development was *not made fully known* until revealed to the apostles well into the first century A.D. This is another mistake supporting the conclusion that the *Book of Mormon* is not divinely inspired but is a creation of Joseph Smith.

Curious mistakes about the development of Christianity

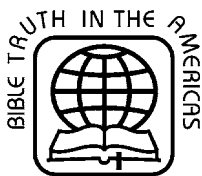
The Scripture is clear that "the disciples were called Christians *first* in Antioch" (Acts 11:26 about A.D. 40). A hundred years before this term was used, Alma records that the faithful were diligently working "that they might maintain that which was called by their enemies the cause of *Christians*" (Alma 48:10 B.C. 72). Joseph Smith is having the term "Christian" used well before any were known by that name and well before *the* Christ was born.

As a paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 11 the following words are attributed to Christ: "And now behold, this is the commandment which I give unto you, that *ye shall not suffer* any one knowingly to partake of my flesh and blood unworthily, when *ye shall minister it*; for whoso eateth and drinketh my flesh and blood unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul; therefore if *ye know* that a man is unworthy to eat and drink of my flesh and blood *ye shall forbid him*" (3 Nephi 18:28-29). The point is clear: the person presiding over the bread and wine is to decide who is worthy to partake. This is in sharp contrast to Scripture which says: "*let a man examine himself...if we would judge ourselves*" (1Cor 11:28, 31). The examination is to be done *of ourselves* by *ourselves* not by someone else as the *Book of Mormon* mistakenly teaches.

Conclusion

Lord willing, in the course of this series, the great theological errors contained in the *Book of Mormon* will be considered. This article points out lesser teachings of the book which are incompatible with Biblical facts and constitute major misrepresentations both of the mind of Christ and the revelations which God has provided. In our view, no Bible student could read the *Book of Mormon* and conclude it was coming from the same source as the Bible — the mind of God.

Don Styles (Ann Arbor, MI)



Bible Mission News

Our Guyana Experience

What a wonderful and memorable experience! Bro. Edward Anthony and Bro. Andre George left Trinidad for Guyana on Sunday, August 12th, after attending a successful Caribbean Bible School and Youth Camp held in Tobago from July 29th to August 11th, 2012. The following article is a description of their experiences.

On our arrival in Guyana (a one hour flight from Trinidad) we were warmly welcomed by Bro. Timothy Barnwell and Bro. Jed Joseph who drove us to Eccles (part of Georgetown) where we would be residing. Again we were greeted with a cordial welcome by our hosts Sis. Jennifer Porte, her parents Bro. Berry Williams and Sis. Elaine Williams, (both stalwarts of the Eccles Ecclesia). From that moment it was home away from home. Very friendly and hospitable people who treated us like royalty.

After being taken to our separate rooms, and then having had an appetizing breakfast, we left for the memorial meeting at the Eccles Ecclesial Hall where I gave my first overseas exhortation. In the evening, at about 7pm, I spoke on the topic "How to be buried in water and come out alive"? Tuesday, August 14th, was my first Bible class on the subject "Does it matter what we believe"? On Wednesday, August 14th, it was Bro. Edward Anthony's turn to speak. He spoke on "Reasons to believe the Bible" at the Ecclesial Hall in Mocha. The following Wednesday, August 22nd, he lectured on the topic "A man born blind" at the Georgetown Ecclesia. Saturday, August 18th, I had a joint CYC (youth) class at the Georgetown Ecclesia. About thirty young persons were in attendance. The subject discussed was entitled "Friends". I had one more lecture on the topic "The Kingdom of God on Earth" and a Bible class (later that same week) on "Israel — Chosen or Rejected". On average about fifteen or more persons attended the lectures.

Sunday, August 19th, I exhorted in the hall in Georgetown where I met the octogenarians, Sisters Lorraine Mitchell and Glancy Spence who invited me and Eddie to their home. Those two sisters who also are sisters in the flesh, (husbands deceased) have carried on courageously with constant faith and dedication to their Lord and master. The story of how Sis. Lorraine became a Christadelphian is a fascinating one. They are indeed persons to emulate. I was spellbound by the Biblical knowledge of Sis. Lorraine as she shared it with Eddie and me.

Bro. Edward Anthony, who has the ability to lecture to young people, was invited to speak to a group of about twenty young underprivileged children at the Ruimveldt Children Aid Centre in Georgetown. The Centre is managed by a capable sister,

(Maudelin December) who is doing a herculean job with these young people. Bro. Edward (Eddie) who had the opportunity of meeting with them (twice) gave good power point presentations on the subjects “God’s plan of Salvation” and “The importance of Reading”.

Amidst all of those activities, we had some time for leisure and sight-seeing. Bro. David Andrews and Sis. Joan Andrews acted as our tour guides. Bro. David drove us over the one mile Demerrara Bridge to the small village of Parika where we had a breath-taking sight of the Essequibo River which looks like a large lake. On Saturday, August 19th, we had the experience of driving over the Berbice Bridge (one mile long) and nearly 80 miles up the coast to the small town of Corriverton (about one hundred and fifty miles from Georgetown) where we viewed the Corentyne River which separates Guyana from the neighboring country of Suriname. Since it was such a long and tiring journey, we overnighted in Kilcoy at Bro. Abedi Ndjelekulu and family who were friendly and hospitable to us. The following day, Sunday, I exhorted at the Kilcoy Ecclesia while Bro. Eddie exhorted in New Amsterdam. After a sumptuous lunch, we bid farewell to the Abedi family.

Our Guyana experience ended on Wednesday, August 29th. It was hard to bid goodbye to the Williams/Porte family who took such good care of us during our sixteen days in Guyana. Thanks to all the brethren and sisters (too numerous to mention) who either invited us to lunch or otherwise made us feel welcome and at home. Thanks to Bros. David Andrews, Jerold Joseph and all who were instrumental in preparing for our visit to Guyana. Last, but by no means least, grateful thanks to Bro. Martin Webster (CBM linkman to St. Lucia) for making our trip to Guyana possible. Guyana was definitely contagious. Very warm and friendly brethren and sisters who gave us a foresight of what the Kingdom would be like. To God is the glory.

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

St. Lucia Missionary Trip

The following article from Bro. David and Sis. Joan Andrews, describes their recent trip to St. Lucia, from Guyana where they have been helping in various ecclesias.

Return to St Lucia

On Friday, July 12th, 2012, Joan and I once again left Guyana on a three-week visit to the beautiful Caribbean island of St Lucia (our third in three years) and as usual we were welcomed at the Vigie Airport just outside the capital of Castries, by our fellow labourers and local Brothers Andre George and Eddie Anthony.

Public lectures

On our previous visit in August/September 2011 we held a number of public lectures that focussed on Israel and the many signs that herald the return of Christ. On this occasion we chose to follow through with five lectures surrounding the theme: *How shall a man cleanse his way?*

The related topics were: 1) A dream coming true; 2) Signs of the times; 3) The world today and you; 4) The world tomorrow and you; and 5) Making it right with God. Flyers were prepared and distributed. The response while not as encouraging as expected, saw a number of visitors faithfully returning on each occasion.



St. Lucia Ecclesia

Something new!

During this visit we were very pleased to observe an added feature of gospel proclamation entitled “*Lunch & Learn*” being practised and for which the Ecclesia should be complimented. Each Tuesday and Thursday the Hall is opened to interested friends during the mid-day hour for Bible discussions. Because this exercise entails visitors foregoing their lunch, light refreshments are offered.

During our stay, the book of *Acts of the Apostles* happened to come under review, and again, a core of about four to five interested friends, as well as a few brethren who could make it, repeatedly showed up to share in this spiritual treat. This exercise presents many opportunities to focus on Bible first principles, prophecy, and early Church history, thus helping with a greater understanding of the purpose of



God. As such, this new practice carries potential to attract the serious enquirer and should be encouraged, perhaps by more aggressive advertisement, personal and otherwise.

Over the three weeks, we were privileged to share in six such sessions touching on Acts chapters 20 through 24 and each of them involved lively discussions and serious Bible questions from our visiting friends. Topics raised during these sessions included: 1) Holy Spirit Gifts; 2) Sabbath Keeping; and 3) Citizenship of the Kingdom.

Home visits

On July 12th, we once again seized the opportunity to visit the **Lambert family** who were instrumental in aiding our early preaching work in St Lucia, only on this occasion, the matriarch Mrs. Lambert had recently died after a prolonged illness. We however met at her sister Ahya's residence, just about a hundred yards further down the road. Sadly, Ahya also is confined to a wheel chair. This however did not prevent her enthusiasm in the presence of her five visiting friends as we expounded the good news of the Kingdom of God and tried to comfort her in her physical distress.

Joan and I also paid our usual visit to the home of elderly **Bro. George Rock**, who lives in Gros Islet, near the tourist resort of Rodney Bay, as well as our dear **Bro. Sydney Enebelli and Sister/wife Ruth** who invited us for a lovely dinner and fellowship around the Word. We were glad to again see Ruth's two sisters, Sister Lois Hammond and Eunice who were spending holidays away from home in Canada.

Beach party!

It was one of St Lucia's national holidays on Monday, July 16th, and we thought it convenient to get away to a somewhat different setting and escape the city noise that usually accompanies such revelry, so we invited all the brethren to come with their bathing suits and Bibles and join us for a trip to **Pigeon Island**.

The only music we played came from our excited chatter over the Bible readings. The sunbathers at Pigeon Point must have thought us a strange and anachronistic bunch! We didn't care being heard and would have welcomed interested listeners but they kept their distance! What's more — there was lots of good Caribbean food to help keep the physical side happy. Sorry only six of us were able to make the trip.



Brethren's class and Mutual Improvement class

It was good to be able to meet with the brothers specifically to consider tips for improving our service in the Ecclesia. We considered points on presiding, prayer, and how to prepare Bible addresses.

Ecclesia support

By Friday, July 27th, it was time to leave St Lucia, together with Andre and Eddie, and head for Tobago to attend the Bible School and 13th Triennial Caribbean Youth Camp. Having these two brethren in attendance no doubt should prove good exposure to the overall benefit of the St Lucia Ecclesia in the long term, seeing there is only one meeting on the island. They also went on to visit the ecclesias in Guyana where they rendered yeoman service by way of exhortation, public lecture, Bible Class, and Youth Circle.

Again, we sincerely wish to register our appreciation for this opportunity to share in the work in St Lucia.

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

***thisisyourbible.com* Report International Plowing Match 2012**

*Many ecclesias are looking for different ways to preach the gospel, and using the resources available through **thisisyourbible.com**. The following article is just one of those ways.*



**Cambridge and Kitchener Waterloo Ecclesias Booth
at the International Plowing Match.**

The Cambridge and Kitchener Waterloo Ecclesias worked together in staffing a booth at the International Plowing Match (IPM) from September 18 to 22, 2012. It was held near the village of Ayr in Ontario, Canada. This is an annual event held in various locations in Ontario and sponsored by the Farmers Association. Typical attendance during the six days is about 100,000 people.

We had printed one thousand small bags with the “*thisisyourbible.com*” logo printed on one side. Into each bag was inserted an invitation to a “*Learn to Read the Bible Effectively*” seminar, (one in Ayr commencing on Tuesday, September 25th, and the other in Kitchener commencing on Wednesday, September 26th). In addition to the invitation; a Bible Companion, a “*thisisyourbible.com*” refrigerator magnet and a booklet were inserted.

The display backdrop was borrowed from the Toronto Church Street Ecclesia who use it each year at the Canadian National Exhibition. The large banner we made “*Learn about your Bible with us!*” together with the “*thisisyourbible.com*” logo attracted attention.

At the booth a DVD entitled “Why I Believe the Bible” ran almost all the time. On this DVD are six five minute video clips by brethren qualified in the scientific field who each gave reasons for their belief in the Bible relevant to their respective field of professional expertise. People passing by stopped to watch these clips which gave us an opportunity to give them a bag and engage in conversation.

A team of brothers and sisters from both ecclesias took turns in three-hour shifts to staff the booth from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm each day. Many discussions were held and approximately seven hundred bags were handed out. Like all such occasions some conversations were challenging, others encouraging and respectful.

In association with the IPM hand bills about the seminars and a special follow up lecture were delivered to most homes in Ayr. As a result of the handbills, the IPM booth and advertisements in local papers about forty people registered for the seminars, split equally between Ayr and Kitchener. At the “*Learn to Read the Bible Effectively*” seminars in the two locations, almost forty people attended the first evening.

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

CBMA / CBMC Financial Appeal

So far this year, the CBMA and CBMC have been obligated to spend more than \$200,000 than was collected in Donations. The Lord has blessed us with a small Reserve Fund, but at this rate our activities for 2013 will need to be dramatically decreased.

Over 40 Ecclesias and almost 1,000 Brothers and Sisters depend on the support of the Bible Mission. More importantly, some exciting and productive preaching activities are planned for 2013.

We can't continue like this without your increased support.

*We need to collect over **\$350,000** by the end of the year in order to meet our Budget for 2012. ANY support that you can give would be greatly appreciated. Donations via usual methods, or see <http://www.cbma.net/>.*

Have you read these *Tidings* books?

Bible and Science: Design vs. Chance

by John C. Bilello

The concept that the Universe, and all that is in it, came about by chance is counter to Bible teaching. God is the author of both the Bible and nature. \$13.34 US (Hardcover, 254 pages, 2005)

Essays to Believers

by Don Styles

A set of essays on practical Christian living and is suitable for individual meditation as well as group Bible study. \$8.00 US (208 pages, 2007)

My Journey in Faith

by Ronald P. Hicks

A brother shares his life experience in the Truth with Christadelphians around the world, and the joy of mission work. **Special price \$5.00 US** (372 pages, 2010)

How to Order

Online : www.tidings.org (Go to Books). E-mail : tidingsbooks@tidings.org.

Mail : Tidings Books, 11659 Caves Road, Chesterland, OH 44026.

Phone : Karen Guist 1-440-227-0212. Shipping & handling extra.

Make checks payable to *The Christadelphian Tidings*.

The Creation Text: Studies in Early Genesis

by David P. Levin

Forty-nine studies offer fresh insights into early Genesis by examining the text and structure of chapters 1 to 5. \$12.00 US (364 pages, 2011)

The Whole Armor of God

by Ryan Mutter

This story takes place nearly 3,000 years ago, but the spiritual challenges are familiar to today's young people. \$6.00 US (110 pages, 2011)

Understanding the Bible

by A.D. Norris

A classic Christadelphian book useful in preaching work, and especially suitable for those who want to learn to read the Bible effectively. \$5.00 (152 pages, 2007)

NEW BOOK FROM THE TIDINGS



*Soft Cover, 192 pages
\$6.00 US, plus shipping
and handling*

Pictures of Redemption

by George Booker

After the First Principles have been mastered (as they must be), we must face the fact that there is something beyond. As we live out our lives day by day, the important issue is not so much how redemption has been achieved, but rather what redemption means, morally and spiritually – what it means, every day, to belong to God.

We might like to explain the atonement in simple terms, but the Bible doesn't present it that way. This book explores parables, analogies and figures of speech used in the Scriptures to illustrate the many facets of redemption.

News & Notices

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

HONESDALE, PA

We are very grateful to have received a very generous grant for our chapel for a wheelchair lift from the Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation. Thank You God.

Sis. Mary DeMarco held her seventieth birthday party in our cafeteria. Sis. Esther and Bro. Ben Garing celebrated their sixty-fifth wedding anniversary in our cafeteria. We sent plastic tabs from bread to Sis. Marie Washington at the Echo Lake, NJ Ecclesia for obtaining wheelchairs for the needy in South Africa. We welcomed the visit and great exhortation by Bro. Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ). Afterwards the sisters held a very tasty luncheon.

We have restarted our children's' Sunday school using CSSU materials after a rest of several years. Thank you teacher and sister, Denise Kowal. Four of our members attended the Echo Lake, NJ Ecclesia's Bible study weekend. We were greatly uplifted by the lectures and really enjoyed the fellowship.

Stephen J. DeMarco

KITCHENER-WATERLOO, ON

Kitchener-Waterloo, together with the Cambridge Ecclesia, sponsored a booth at the five day International Plowing Match from September 18-22, 2012 which was held at a location not too far from our respective meeting places. Paper bags with the "thisisyourbible.com" logo printed on one side were handed out. Inserted inside each bag was: an invitation to a "Learn to Read the Bible Effectively" seminar, one sponsored by Kitchener-Waterloo and the other by Cambridge, a Bible Companion, a "thisisyourbible.com" refrigerator magnet, and a CBM booklet.

A team of brothers and sisters from both ecclesias took turns in three hour shifts to staff the booth from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm each day. Many discussions, some challenging, others encouraging and respectful, were held and approximately seven hundred bags were handed out. At the "Learn to Read the Bible Effectively" seminars in the two locations, almost forty people attended the first two evenings.

Sis. Grace Butler has transferred from the London to the Kitchener-Waterloo Ecclesia. We welcome her and pray that she may be strengthened with us in the hope of Israel.

Martin J Webster

PITTSBURGH, PA

We are very blessed to have another family join us in Pittsburgh. Bro. Steven and Sis. Kristen Hemingray and their three daughters have moved here. They are a welcome addition. We rejoice in the birth of Ryan David to Bro. Tim and Sis. Holly Pommer on July 24, 2012. May the Lord guide us together with Tim and Holly in teaching him to follow God's ways.

We were thankful to the following brothers and sisters for their visits to our ecclesia: Shane Stuchlik, Jon and Becky Gore, Valerie Ifill, and Ken and Bonnie Burcaw (Ann

Arbor, MI); Art and Linda Hibbs, and Jeff Hibbs (Victoria, B.C.); Steve and Brietta Harper, Haleigh and Rachel Harper, and Shirley Budney (Meriden, CT); Michael Davey and Sarah Telles (Cranston, RI); Gabby Kopjas (Troy, IL); Caleb Folkerts, Kyle and Tyler Misko (Paris Avenue, OH); Peter and Pat Hemingray (Royal Oak, MI); and Dean and Marsha Brown (Avon, IN).

We thank Bre. Jon Gore, Art Hibbs, Jeff Hibbs, Caleb Folkerts and Dean Brown for their encouraging words of exhortation.

Len Budney

SUSSEX, NB

We are very grateful to Bro. Bill Link Jr. (Baltimore, MD) for leading our very uplifting Thanksgiving study weekend on the subject, "Proverbs, Guidelines for Godly Living". Visitors came from England, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Ontario and Nova Scotia.

Bro. John Mark Ghent (Toronto West, ON) will be the speaker for our study weekend April 27-28, 2013. Bro. Mark Carr (Toronto West, ON) will lead our Spring Youth Camp weekend May 17-19, 2013, on, "Elijah", and Bro. Ron Hicks, (Washington DC) will be our speaker for the Thanksgiving study weekend October 12-13, 2013.

Cliff Baines

THOUSAND OAKS, CA

During the past few months we have been pleased to welcome many brothers and sisters from our neighboring California Ecclesias around the table of our Lord. In addition, we have welcomed from afar: Henry and Sharon Wisniewski (Rogue Valley, OR); Dan and Ashley Robinson (Brant County, ON); Dev Ramcharan (Toronto West, ON). We also welcomed these brothers and sisters from Australia: Jim Cowie (Moreton Bay, Aust.); Peter Pullman (Brighton, Aust.); Matthew and Leah Elton (Gosford, Aust.); Damien Croft (Wilston, Aust.); and Samantha Fletcher (Heathmont, Aust.).

Our thanks go out to Bre. Neal Caplan (Reseda, CA), Joseph Palmer (San Diego County, CA) and David Jennings (Pomona, CA) for their exhortations and afternoon classes. Also, we thank Bre. Dev Ramcharan, Jim Cowie, and also Manny Rodriguez (Reseda, CA) for their exhortations.

Again, we were blessed to be able to hold our Kids Camp this year. Our subject was, "Elisha" and we thank Bre. Dev Ramcharan and Jim Cowie for their work in making it the great camp that it was. This year we were able to add another week to our summer youth activities by holding a week long Youth Conference the week following our Kids Camp. Bro. Jim Cowie graciously stayed on to lead those studies on Thessalonians. We were greatly encouraged by the turnout we had, which even included several from overseas. Our plans are to hold both the Kids Camp and the Youth Conference annually. We really appreciate our brethren speaking for us on these occasions as we endeavor to be ready for our Master when he returns.

We are sorry to lose our Sis. Jennifer Vetkos to the Simi Hills, CA Ecclesia by transfer, but certainly wish her Godspeed as she journeys to the kingdom with her new ecclesia.

Tom Graham

VANCOUVER, BC

Since our last report we have been blessed with the baptisms of two of our young people, GAVIN ORSETTI and TREVAN ORSETTI, sons of Bro. and Sis. Dan Orsetti.

We rejoice with the heavenly host and pray for our heavenly Father's guidance and blessing on these new children of God as we walk together to the kingdom.

We lose by way of transfer Bro. Mark and Sis. Sarah Davies who have returned to Wellington, NZ, Bro. Rob and Sis. Janice Alexander who have moved back to Hamilton, ON, and Bro. Steve and Sis. Barbara Darley who have moved to Winfield, BC and joined the Vernon, BC Ecclesia. We thank them all for their fellowship and work amongst us and pray for God's blessing in their new ecclesias.

Our thanks go to Bro. Jim Styles for his encouraging and uplifting words based on "Ezra", at our fraternal gathering.

Terry Fearn

VICTORIA, BC

We have received many visits during the past six months, including our Bro. Ron Hicks who presented a very informative and well received series on, "The Pharisees."

Bro. Abe Rebmann fell asleep on May 22, 2012. He was the husband of Sis. Joan and the son-in-law of our late Bro. Jack and Sis. Ruby Martyn. Our Bro. Floyd Mathers fell asleep in Christ on August 7, 2012. Our brother had lived for some time with his daughter, in isolation, in Abbotsford, BC.

We have transferred our Sis. Becky Brown to the Saanich Peninsula Ecclesia. We have received Sis. Denise Knorr, and Bro. Joel and Sis. Dalen Ferrie by transfer from Saanich Peninsula. We trust that everyone will be well served in their new situations.

We held another Bible Exhibition in October 2012. It was well attended with over 400 visitors. The theme this year was focused on Bible History in general. A Fall Bible Seminar began in October with promising attendance. Preparations are underway for our second Bible Mission Fundraiser to be held February 9, 2013.

We are looking forward to a Spring 2013 visit from Bro. Andrew Bramhill. Our brother will be speaking at our Spring study weekend to be held March 23-24, 2013. Bro. Andrew will be fulfilling various speaking appointments around the Pacific Northwest including ecclesias in Nanaimo, Comox, New Westminster, Seattle and Vancouver.

Our annual Pacific Northwest CYC Conference is scheduled for March 28-31, 2013. Speaking will be Bro. Caleb Lawrence (Surrey, BC). Bro. Chris Sales will be speaking at our Fall 2013 study weekend to be held on November 9, 2013. His subject for the weekend will be, "Pictures of Redemption". For further information please contact the undersigned at victoria@csll.ca.

Clyde Snobelen

NOTICE ABOUT LONDON INTELLIGENCE, NOVEMBER 2012

With reference to the intelligence published in the November issue of the *Tidings* Magazine under London, ON, this was not submitted for publication by the London Ecclesia, neither was the content of the notice approved for publication by the London Arranging Brethren. Unfortunately it was published as a result of a misunderstanding in communication between the London Ecclesia and *The Tidings* Magazine.

Minute Meditation

A small package

“When a man is wrapped up in himself, he makes a pretty small package,” a statement as true now as it was when John Ruskin first said it in the 1800’s. Unfortunately, far too many people are puffed up with feelings of their own self-importance. Bernard Bailly once commented that, “When science discovers the center of the universe, a lot of people will be disappointed to find they are not it.”

“I-itis”, which has been defined as a mental condition of excessive selfishness or self-centeredness, is not a new disease. Jesus knew all about this problem over 2000 years ago. In his parable about a man with this condition, he describes what this man said in his prayer: “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.’ ” Five times the Pharisee uses “I” in two sentences. He is so wrapped up in himself that the entire prayer is telling God how great a person he thinks he is. Jesus notes that the Pharisee prayed with himself, meaning that God was not listening. The publican, to whom the Pharisee refers, also is praying, but he stands some distance away. He is so contrite that he cannot even lift up his eyes, but smites himself on his breast and humbly asks God to be merciful unto him, a sinner. Jesus concludes that God justified the publican and not the Pharisee. The Pharisee was a very small man in God’s eyes, not worthy of notice.

God is able to hear all prayers, but He chooses not to listen to some because the heart of the one praying is not right with God. Solomon tells us, “If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination,” which means if we are not interested in hearing what God has written for us, our prayer is offensive to Him. So if we want God to hear our prayers, we must first listen to Him. He speaks to us through His inspired word, and then, in turn, we respond to Him by praying, which makes it a two-way conversation. We must do our part by paying attention to God’s words to us if we want Him to pay attention to our words to Him. James tells us that the heartfelt prayers of a righteous man have great power. “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

Selfish people think that it is good to be proud of themselves; but pride is part of the problem; in fact, a proud look is one of the things God hates. Jesus tells us that “whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” Peter tells us, “be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”

Humility is not a sign of weakness. Moses, who was always thinking of those millions of people that he was shepherding through the wilderness, showed enormous strength of character dealing with the challenges of his job. Yet, we read God’s

estimation: "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." We, like him, should center our thoughts on the needs of others and lovingly shepherd them in the ways of God. Paul tells us, "Always be humble and gentle. Patiently put up with each other and love each other."

Our great example is Jesus, who was always thinking of others rather than himself. For example, none of us have ever been as hungry as Jesus was after fasting for forty days, and yet he would not do a miracle to feed himself. However, when the crowds who followed him had only missed a meal or two, he performed a miracle to feed them. Jesus describes himself saying, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." He was humble and obedient to his Father, and in his zeal to help his fellowman, he gave his life. His humble life of obedience led to God exalting him to sit on his right hand of power.

Benjamin Whichcote said, "None are so empty as those who are full of themselves." Rather than being wrapped up in ourselves we should follow the examples of righteous men like Moses and our Lord. Paul tells us, "In lowliness of mind let each esteem the other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." A life of humble service to our God and caring for the needs of others will be rewarded. Jesus gave his all and was exalted to sit at God's right hand, and he has promised to reward us if we are faithful. May the day soon come when his righteous servants will be rewarded with eternal life in his kingdom.

Robert J. Lloyd

PRINCE GEORGE BC ECCLESIA APPEAL

I am writing you on behalf of the Prince George Ecclesia and appealing for your help and prayers. Over the last 15-20 years the ecclesia in Prince George has lost as much as 75% of its membership. This leaves our membership at 12 with two of our members living two hours west of the city. We have a total of four children in our Sunday School. We continue to run Sunday School, memorial meeting, Bible classes, and an outreach class for the community.

My appeal is for your support. If any families, young couples, singles or older folks would be able to move to the area this would be the best option. Think of it as domestic missionary work. The other ways that you could support us is by visiting the city and helping with an exhortation or Bible class or even just a visit. The city is located in an absolutely stunning part of the province of BC with many outdoor activities. Finally your prayers are always appreciated, as we can do nothing except the Lord wills.

If you are considering relocating to Prince George here are a few of the benefits available: affordable housing, higher wages, plenty of job opportunities particularly in the trades, financial, health and educational sectors. We are a smaller community but have all the amenities. One of the top ranked universities in Canada, which offers most programs, and a great trades college are here.

If you would like any further information or help moving in please contact us: Bro. Jonathan Lawrence, Prince George Recording Brother, 8311 Flamingo Rd, Prince George, BC V2K 5H2 or (250) 962-8191 or pgchristadelphians@hotmail.com

Coming Events (Lord Willing)

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

DECEMBER 2012

22-28 Ontario Winter Bible School, Midland (ON): Bro. Mark O'Grady (Tawa, New Zealand) — "The Great Secret of Godliness"; Bro. Roger Long (Coventry, UK) — "The Trial of our Faith (1st Peter)"; Bro. David Billington (Brantford, ON) — "The Spirit of Messiah in Zechariah." For registration contact Sis. Linda Cadieux at (905) 820-5209 or lindacadieux@rogers.com or our website (www.ontariowinterbibleschool.com).

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 website at www.texasyouthconference.com.

JANUARY 2013

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

FEBRUARY 2013

1-3 Ladore Youth Camp in Waymart, PA. Christadelphian young people ages 13 and over are invited to spend a weekend of study and fellowship around the Word of God. Bro Steve Cheetham: "*Go in and possess the land*" — Lessons from the Judges". Register at www.cyccamp.com or email Bro. Ryan Mutter at championvegetable@hotmail.com.

24-Mar 1 Palm Springs Bible School. The speakers 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. Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau at Register@christadelphianbibleschool.org or our website www.californiabibleschool.org.

MARCH 2013

23-24 Victoria, BC Spring study weekend. The speaker will be Bro. Andrew Bramhill.

28-31 Victoria, BC Pacific Northwest CYC Conference. Speaking will be Bro. Caleb Lawrence (Surrey, BC).

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.

APRIL 2013

27-28 Sussex, NB Study weekend. Speaker Bro. John Mark Ghent (Toronto West, ON).

MAY 2013

17-19 Sussex, NB Spring Youth Camp. The speaker will be Bro. Mark Carr (Toronto West, ON) on "Elijah".

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.ca, 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), and Bro. Richard Morgan (Hamilton, ON). Please register with Bro. Shannon Strickland, 9305 Nancy Lane, Tomball, TX or Shannonjejh@att.net.

13-20 Manitoulin Family Bible Camp. Bro. Jim Styles (Simi Hills, CA) and Bro. Nathan Badger (Cambridge, ON). Registration will commence January 2013 God willing. A discount for early registration will be available until May 31, 2013. See the website www.manitoulinfamilycamp.com.

OCTOBER 2013

12-13 Sussex, NB Study weekend. The speaker will be Bro. Ron Hicks (Washington, DC).

NOVEMBER 2013

9 Victoria, BC Fall study weekend. The speaker will be Bro. Chris Sales and his subject will be "Pictures of Redemption". Contact Clyde Snobelen at victoria@csll.ca.

Democracy

For democracy to be a workable political system, it is necessary that "the people" be prepared to vote. For this reason, pressure is often brought to bear by society in asserting that all have the responsibility of voting. This pressure, coupled with the misguided desire to improve society, has led some brethren and sisters to vote in national and local elections. (I know a number personally in my own local area.) That some Christadelphians have begun to feel a responsibility to participate in the democratic system may be the result of a belief that democracy is the ideal political system, coupled with the pressures mentioned above. Alas! the criterion used to determine this conclusion is that under such a system the rights of mankind are given full expression and remain inviolate. We have already seen the folly of such thinking.

Scriptural testing of the essence of democracy reveals still more unsound foundations. To affirm that the rule of the people is the most excellent political system is to reject the rule of God as the most just and merciful dominion possible. This is clearly unscriptural. Democracy is dealt a further blow when the kind of rule established by God in His Israelitish kingdom is considered. Then, the monarchical ruler was commanded by God to rule with justice and mercy. In so doing, the king would be reflecting in a small way the attributes manifest in the kind of rule God exercises over His people - God desires rulers "after his own heart". The pattern of God's desire is parodied in democratic rule, for in voting people are seeking to appoint rulers who are after their own (sinful) heart.

In this respect, democracy can be seen revealed as nothing more than corporate licentiousness, or consensus sin.

Bible Student, 1982, p 167

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